

Avon

Home near traprock ridge to be energy-independent

By Sloan Brewster
Staff Writer

A home with a view does not always come easy.

David Gordon tore down a single-story colonial home built in 1962 on Deercliff Road and thought he would encounter no problems getting approval for the new one he wants to put in its place. Though the two houses are similar in size and footprint, the builder razed the old one because he hopes to build a zero energy house — something for which homes built in the 1960s were not designed.

But, he ran into some unexpected snags when he learned of a local ordinance to protect the town's ridgeline.

The home will be within 150 feet of a traprock ridge and is protected by Connecticut state law, said Town Planner Steve Kushner. While Gordon now has permission to build it, he must follow certain guidelines, including reducing the size of the house to 6,000 square feet, pulling it back from the cliff, saving and planting

trees, and no cliff-side swimming pool at this time.

"He was anxious to get started on the house," Kushner said, so he agreed to come back at another time for the pool.

But Gordon, while he agreed to wait, does not understand why the commission denied the pool as it would not be visible. He said he was disappointed with the commission and displeased because the compromise puts him in a position to waste hot water.

In the summer, the expensive solar electric and solar thermal system will make more hot water than his family will require, so Gordon thought he would put it in the pool, he said. Now he will have to dump it back into his well.

The commission's response was "very negative," Gordon said.

"I'm very discouraged, because what we're trying to do is build a unique home," he said. "They could've been a little more lenient... This hot water needs a home."

State regulations to protect ridgelines are analogous to those that protect wetlands, Kushner

said. There are no outright prohibitions against building, but towns can adopt ordinances that protect them, and Avon has done so.

"Ridge tops are recognized as important natural resources," he said. "It's a balancing act with private homeowners using land in a right of way ... balancing property rights with protecting ridge tops."

Since the town began protecting the ridgeline, about a dozen applications have been submitted, Kushner said. In each case, the view is studied from certain vantage points, and a landscape architect must advise the commission how the view will be affected.

"It really is a unique environment in the state," Kushner said. "This does host unique plants and animals."

The commission is not allowed to measure such things as energy efficiency when determining whether an application meets zoning or ridgeline protection restrictions, Kushner said. He also said energy independence, geothermal heat and solar power are positive features for a new home.

"When all those things are added together, he may be in a position where he doesn't have to buy any power, no fossil fuels or oil," Kushner said. "In some ways, that kind of balances the test."

Gordon is building one of two homes in town that Connecticut

Light & Power is sponsoring for a competition on zero energy homes. He hopes to break ground sometime this winter, a delay — due to issues he encountered with the Planning and Zoning Commission — from his original plan to do so last July.

Candelight Opening tradition continues

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"We've cut expenses and are on solid ground. We're paying the mortgage."

Twenty artists rent studios at the

pate and all proceeds go to FVAC," Crawford said.

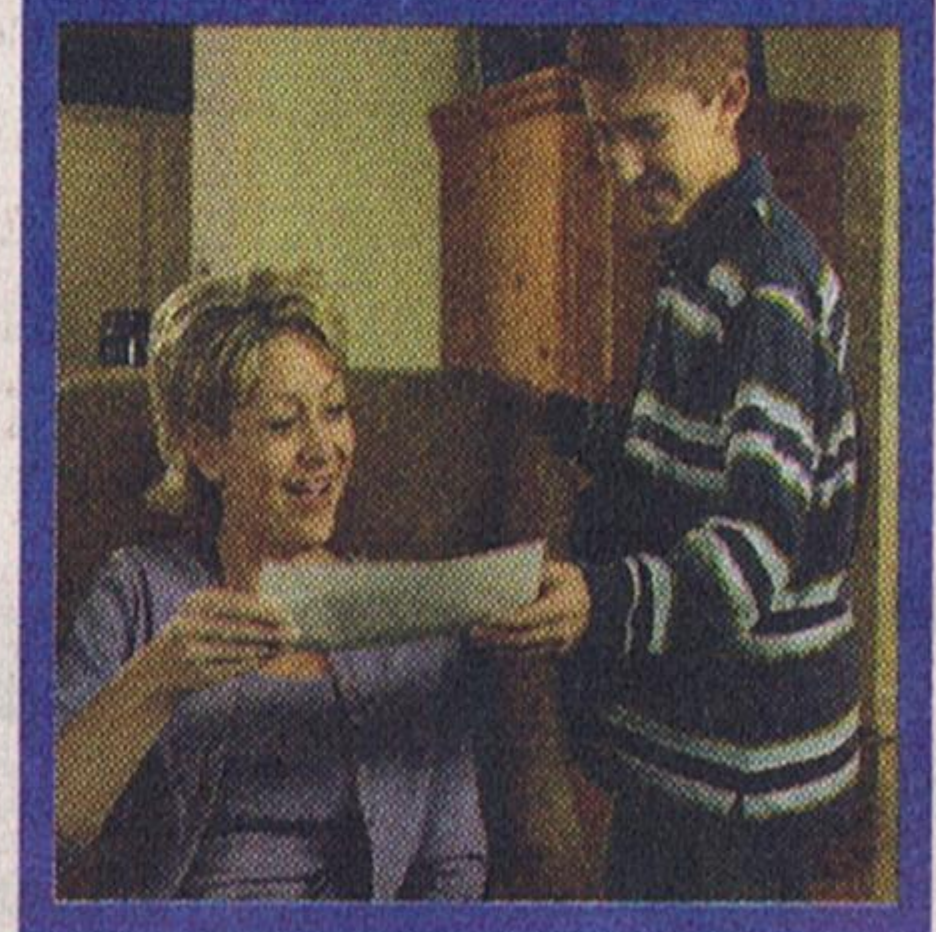
At the opening, visitors can stroll on the center's boardwalk, enjoy food and a wine tasting, and do some holiday shopping.

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