



## PINE TRACE GOLF CLUB

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May 14, 2014

William F. Boswell, Chairperson  
Rochester Hills Planning Commission  
City Municipal Offices  
1000 Rochester Hills Dr.  
Rochester Hills, MI 48309

Dear Mr. Boswell and Commission Members,

I am sending this letter to you in regard to the proposed Shadow Pines condominium development on South Blvd. in Rochester Hills. My name is Mike Bylen and I am the president of Pine Trace Golf Club, which leases the golf course property that is adjacent to the proposed development.

Pine Trace has traditionally welcomed its new neighbors, having recognized that new developments in the area are good for both Pine Trace and the City of Rochester Hills. However, in the current situation, I am duty-bound to register my objection to the proposed condominium development as it is currently designed.

My objection is simple but very serious: as currently proposed, the dwellings along the western border of the Shadow Pines complex will necessarily be unsafe, and will expose the condominium owners, guests, and others to an unacceptably high risk of being injured by an errantly struck golf ball. If erected in accordance with the most recently proposed plans, these dwellings will fall well within the standard setback area that accepted guidelines recommend for homes to be developed next to a golf hole. It is not a matter of if someone will be hurt should this development proceed, but when.

I met with Mr. Mark Gesaule of Wolverine Development last fall, and I expressed these very real concerns to him. His response, which is telling, was, essentially, let the "buyer beware". Although there is a great deal of settled case law that supports Mr. Gesaule's statement, it also shows a lack of concern for the safety of the very people he intends to sell these units to. Of course, he will not have to deal with this issue for the next 25 years. Rather, he will move on, leaving behind the inevitable issues that will be caused by errant shots into the development to be addressed by me and the City (Pine Trace sits on land owned by the City of Rochester Hills).

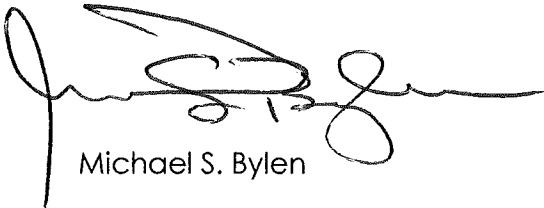
Mr. Gesaule also tries to minimize the dangers associated with the design he has submitted by pointing to the findings contained in a letter dated October 15, 2013 from golf course architect, Chris Wilczynski. While nothing in Mr. Wilczynski's letter suggests that a very real danger will exist should this development proceed, even a cursory review of his letter shows that he contradicts himself and understates the dangers associated with the proposed design of the development.

In fact, a review of the aerial layout of the golf course and the proposed design of the development should be enough to demonstrate the dangers inherent in placing the condominium development in the location proposed by the developer. As the aerial photos suggest, the location of the proposed development will be well within the area commonly reached by golfers with errant golf shots, and would leave residents and guests in very real and constant danger of being seriously injured or perhaps a worse outcome.

To bring this point home, I am also submitting to the Commission a letter from a noted golf course architectural firm, Hills & Forrest. The letter is written by Steve Forrest who, along with his partner Arthur Hills, was the golf course architect for Pine Trace Golf Club. Hills & Forrest is a world renowned firm that has created hundreds of golf course designs throughout the golf world. As a coincidence, Mr. Wilczynski worked for Mr. Hills and Mr. Forrest for almost 20 years. As you can see from Mr. Forrest's letter, his firm has a completely different view of the dangers that would arise if the proposed Shadow Pines development proceeds as designed. Mr. Forrest's letter powerfully rebuts the safety claims made by Mr. Wilczynski, and conclusively lays out the case that locating the development in the proposed location will pose a clear, yet unnecessary, threat to the health and safety of occupants and guests of the development (among others).

With all this in mind, I am requesting that the Planning Commission deny the final site plan approval of Shadow Pines development, and that it require the developer to resubmit a plan that takes the safety of future residents of Shadow Pines into consideration by locating the development in an area that is outside the appropriate "safety cone" as identified in Mr. Forrest's letter. I am confident that ultimately the issues raised by the location of the condominium complex will not involve an "either/or" question of development vs. safety; rather, I am confident that with the proper planning for the location of the condominium complex, the parties can promote both development and safety to work in harmony with one another as to this project.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael S. Bylen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Michael S. Bylen



May 14, 2014

Mr. Mike Bylen  
Pine Trace Golf Club  
3600 Pine Trace Boulevard  
Rochester Hills, MI 48309

Dear Mike:

Per your request, we have reviewed the October 15<sup>th</sup> (2013) report by C.W. Golf Architecture concerning the safety associated with the current design of the proposed Villas at Shadow Pines development and its relationship to the 11<sup>th</sup> hole at Pine Trace Golf Club. We have the following comments:

- 1) On page two of his report, Mr. Wilczynski identifies a recommended safety cone or corridor width of 350 feet. On the same page, he provides dimensions ranging from 200 to 245 feet as the "width across the middle of the landing area". Clearly, there is an obvious safety discrepancy of at least 100 feet using the author's own calculations. This means that errant shots will cross the property line by 100 feet and hit not only the residential structures, but the street in front of the structures!
- 2) Mr. Wilczynski applies "the 350-foot-wide safety cone" to a theoretical "dogleg point" on the 11<sup>th</sup> fairway. There is no physical stake or post structure to alert any golfer of the presence of this theoretical point. The only frames of reference for the golfer are the pond edge on the left and the tree line on the right. Again, the distance between these two frames of reference is 200 to 245 feet according to the Wilczynski report. Therefore, if one applies his 350-foot safety cone guidelines, one must conclude that the proposed development as currently designed is unsafe. For the record, many golf course architects today apply a 400-foot-wide safety cone when a hole borders residential property because technological advances with golf equipment have allowed players to hit the ball further (including further out of bounds).
- 3) Even if the safety cone placement established by C.W. Golf Architecture were accepted (which it is not), we are led to believe that it is OK for errant shots to land in the "setback zone", which measures 30 feet in depth. In reality, residents (including small children) who are using their backyards for play and leisure activities are more likely to be seriously injured by errant golf shots than those inside a dwelling. The "property line" is the critical line, not the location of the structures.
- 4) Mr. Wilczynski's report fails to mention the prevailing winds (from the west) which will cause high "sliced" shots that may otherwise stay in bounds to travel beyond the property line. Similarly, those shots that would be out-of-bounds in any event will travel even further into the proposed development area.

- 5) Slight design adjustments (as proposed in the report) to tee elevations / alignments and the installation of trees and bunkers will do nothing to alter the trajectory of a high slice up in the wind and will certainly not eliminate the danger to the residents of Shadow Pines.

Mike, as you know, we were able to create the 11<sup>th</sup> hole with its current dimensions because of the existence of the "protected and regulated" wetland area to the east and the assurance from the previous owner that no development would take place there because of the wetlands. This wetland "buffer" has made it possible for hundreds of thousands of golfers to enjoy Pine Trace over the past twenty-five years without fear of liability from slightly errant golf shots landing in a residential area. The "natural wilderness" character of the golf course is surely one of its primary attractions for golfers in an urban area.

As a licensed landscape architect in Ohio, I was charged with "protecting the public health, safety and welfare." As a golf course architect with over 35 years of experience on four continents, I am compelled to warn of the very real dangers of building condominiums as proposed along the east side of the 11<sup>th</sup> hole at Pine Trace. It should not be done.

If you have questions or if we can be of further assistance, please let us know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Steve Forrest".

STEVE FORREST  
Chairman and Chief Design Officer