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Williams Lake owner mum on resort plan, for now
By William J. Kemble , Correspondent

BINNEWATER - Anita Williams, the owner of the Williams Lake resort, said Monday she will be willing to discuss efforts mounted by the group Save the Lakes to block Canopy Development's plan for a luxury resort at the site, but cannot until the sale of the property is finalized.

Earlier this month, the opposition group joined the Shawangunk Ridge Coalition, a private environmental organization, and began working through the nonprofit Friends of the Shawangunks to begin accepting donations to contest the developer's application to the Rosendale Planning Board. Canopy Development is owned by America Online founder Stephen M. Case.

"I am in binding contract and I have no comment other than that," Peck said. "When it is a done deal I'll talk an hour, two hours, three hours, whatever anybody wants."

The 737-acre property on Binnewater Road has been listed for sale through Heather Croner Real Estate for \$7.9 million.

Canopy Development officials were not immediately available for comment Monday.

Members of Save the Lakes contend plans for a "100-room exclusive, high-end Miraval spa hotel and 100 to 200 residential housing units spread throughout the William Lake property" as part of a gated resort community will have serious environmental consequences.

Save the Lakes spokeswoman Noelle Damon said on Monday it is troubling that the project has received support from candidates for Town Board.

"This is all being looked at as if our taxes are going to go down because they're going to carry the lion's share of the weight of the taxes of the town, which sounds utopian," Damon said.

"Housing developments are a nice economic engine, but this seems to be a turbo-driven steamroller, unfortunately, in terms of the scope," she said.

Damon said support from groups dedicated to preservation of Shawangunk Ridge views was in reaction to what it sees as the developer's view that "the best way to protect the environment is to develop it."

"They're going to put in a lot of buildings and they're going to have to make it profitable to their investors," Damon said. "What they've talked about is filling in some wetland area for a beach, dredging another part of the lake in order to extend the lake, building around and on top of some of the existing cement mine caves."

The property was purchased in 1929 by Gustave William, a native of Germany, who died during the 1950s. The resort was run by his son, Walter Williams, until his death in 1987, and has continued to be used as a wedding venue during the past year.