

# **Geologist cleared of negligence in Healdsburg's Saggio Hills plan**

**Clark Mason, Santa Rosa Press Democrat, 5-5-11**

A state regulatory board has dismissed a complaint against a geologist after his work was criticized on Saggio Hills, the controversial luxury resort and housing development proposed in Healdsburg.

The case was dropped against William McCormick, the Santa Rosa-based geologist who earlier had been fined and cited for negligence.

The action resulted after McCormick appealed to the state Board for Professional Engineers, Land Surveyors and Geologists.

“There was no basis for a complaint, so it was withdrawn,” said Kimberly Brown, a spokeswoman for the Department of Consumer Affairs, which oversees the board.

In contesting the \$2,500 fine and action against him by the board of Geologists and Geophysicists, McCormick maintained the regulatory agency misunderstood the scope of his 2004 report, because it was a preliminary feasibility study for planning purposes, and not a site-specific analysis for Saggio Hills.

Brown on Tuesday offered a similar explanation.

“I think there was some misunderstanding whether it was a preliminary report, or a design report,” she said. “I think in the beginning it was thought to be a design report and later it was understood to be a preliminary report.”

“I feel gratified that the State of California has authoritatively recognized that this complaint is entirely illegitimate and baseless,” McCormick said in a statement. “I’ve always had faith that the truth would prevail and that the state system for complaint reviews would work as it was designed to.”

McCormick, principal engineering geologist with Kleinfelder, Inc. in Santa Rosa, was found at fault in early 2009 by a board that oversees geologists and geophysicists. The board was reorganized later that year to include other professions, including engineers and land surveyors.

Brown said the regulatory board for geologists was re-shuffled in a cost-cutting measure by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, but insisted there is no less oversight of the profession.

Healdsburg officials two years ago downplayed the significance of the action against McCormick, saying the city drew on a number of geologic studies prior to approving Saggio Hills, not just the work he did for the developers.

And they said before construction commences, much more detailed geologic studies would be required.

McCormick blamed opponents of Saggio Hills for bringing the case against him and attacking his professional credibility, “but I feel vindicated and eager to put this entire episode behind me,” he said.