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Controversial Middletown Site Still On Army Corps List

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MIDDLETOWN —

Although a controversial site remains on the list of potential locations for a new Armed Forces Reserve Center, a high-ranking official from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers promised that "in the end everyone would be celebrating the selection of the right site."

State and elected officials, along with city leaders, came to a roundtable meeting with Corps district commander Col. Keith A. Landry Monday in hopes of hearing that the Army would remove a 125-acre, environmentally sensitive parcel off Boardman Lane from the list of potential sites. But the only new information divulged by Landry was that the Army would no longer consider a 25-acre federally owned site on Mile Lane.

The Corps had said it would rank each site in order of preference by early November. But Landry said the locations will remain unranked as the three sites go into a five-month environmental review process. Along with Boardman Lane, the Corps is reviewing the 35-acre Bysiewicz Industrial Park on Middle Street and Louis F. Cucia Park, a 4-acre pocket park with a small pond and 36 surrounding acres at Smith and Industrial roads.

"These will not be in ranked order as we expected until after we have completed the full-blown NEPA analysis on all parcels," Landry said. "The Army has heard the concerns from the community. ... We will make sure it all is taken into account."

State Attorney General Richard Blumenthal said he was still in "very strong disagreement" with the Army's continued consideration of the Boardman Lane site.

"Environmentally, it will never pass the test ... as a viable site," he said, and promised a legal fight if the Army chooses the site.

Mayor Sebastian Giuliano said there are suitable sites in Middletown, but Boardman Lane is not one of them.

"The trouble with this report is it's difficult to gauge. It tells us very little," he said.

"We believe Boardman to be the least likely" site, added U.S. Rep. Rosa DeLauro, D-3rd District, "but we are not absolutely clear. It's only an assumption. We have to have clarity in order for the public to breathe easier over the next five months."

Landry said he's confident the Army has heard Middletown's ideas and concerns.

"I'm 100 percent confident that given all the appropriate information, the Army will make the right decision that works for all of us," he said. "The integrity of the process has to be allowed to move forward. And an objective analysis of the sites will lead to the correct decision."

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