

The Middletown Press (middletownpress.com), Serving Middletown CT and surrounding areas

News

Army sites whittled to 3, still unranked

Monday, November 10, 2008 10:11 PM EST

By SLOAN BREWSTER, Press staff

MIDDLETOWN — The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is no longer considering a site on Mile Lane for an Army training facility.

Monday, at a roundtable at the Inn at Middletown, Lt. Col Keith Landry, commander of the Louisville, Ky., District of the Corps, announced the Mile Lane site was no longer in consideration, but government officials in attendance were more concerned a site on Boardman Lane site remained an option.

Attorney General Richard Blumenthal promised to do battle to keep the facility off the 88-acre site with an active farm and two species of concern — sedge grass and the eastern box turtle.

"If the Army chooses Boardman Lane, it is in for a fight," Blumenthal said. "It is in for a reactive and hard-felt battle that will take years."

Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro, Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz, state Sen. Paul Doyle, 9th District, State Rep. Gail Hamm, D-34th District, and Mayor Sebastian N. Giuliano echoed displeasure that Boardman Lane had not been removed from consideration.

For months government officials, along with residents, have opposed putting the facility there.

Additionally, in August, Gov. M. Jodi Rell reduced the scope of the project by removing the National Guard 250th Engineering Company from inclusion in the facility.

Taking the division out of the picture meant the facility could be smaller and reduced the acreage necessary to build the facility.

Many expected Boardman Lane would be removed from the list then. When it was not, officials began to take steps such

as writing letters to corps leaders protesting its inclusion.

Monday, they expressed disappointment and consternation over the process.

"I was deeply concerned and very disappointed that the Boardman Lane site has shown up on the list," DeLauro said. "I think that all parties have made it clear that this is an unacceptable site."

Additionally, officials conveyed confusion the three sites remaining on the list — Cucia Park, Boardman Lane and the Bysiewicz Industrial Subdivision — had not yet been ranked in order of preference. According to the corps' own schedule, they were expected to be ranked by the end of October.

David Dale, deputy district engineer of the Louisville corps, also previously stated a site would be selected by the end of October.

When asked why the sites had not been ranked, Landry said a National Environmental Policy Act assessment would be completed on each before they would be ranked.

After the assessment, there will be a 30-day period for public comment.

The idea Boardman Lane will be assessed for environmental viability did not sit well with some officials.

"As a taxpayer, I have to say that I'm even more distressed that we're going to be spending money on an environmental review on sites that people think are not suitable," Bysiewicz said "Why would we do that?"

The center is a response to the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Act, which mandates smaller individual reserve bases be closed and replaced with larger combined locations where reservists train on alternate weekends.

According to corps officials, the center will resemble a college campus with the type of training, including firearm training, completed on computers and in classrooms. Outdoor drills will be done elsewhere. The Middletown facility will also have storage space, but will not contain firearms. The facility will have the capacity for 655 reservists, but will house a full-time crew of 70 workers.

URL: <http://www.middletownpress.com/articles/2008/11/10/news/doc4918f5c5dcbeb121941884.prt>

© 2008 middletownpress.com, a **Journal Register** Property