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ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

Middletown Buys Lot To Block It As Training Center Site

By MONICA POLANCO

March 25, 2009

MIDDLETOWN —

City officials said Tuesday that they have effectively blocked the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers from building its planned new training center in the Bysiewicz Industrial Park.

The city has agreed to buy a 2-acre parcel there, prompting the park's owner, Ted Bysiewicz, to sell three other lots to Norpaco Inc., opting for a firm sale rather than risk the possibility that the Corps might ultimately reject his land for its proposed training center, said William Warner, the city's planning director.

Mayor Sebastian Giuliano said Tuesday that he believes the land sales will force the Corps to choose between two other sites, Louis F. Cucia Park, which the city prefers, and a site on Boardman Lane.

New Britain-based Norpaco employs about 100 and produces Italian specialty foods such as stuffed hot peppers. The company, which has outgrown its current location, is expected to pay about \$100,000 a year in taxes and move its manufacturing plant to Middletown within two years.

Warner said the city will pay Bysiewicz the market rate for the parcel, \$286,000, but said the deal will be effective only if the Corps builds its training center on the 37-acre Cucia Park and rejects other proposed sites. The city plans to use the money generated by the Cucia Park sale to pay Bysiewicz.

In the meantime, Bysiewicz would continue to market the city-owned lot at his property and buy it back from the city once another company steps forward to buy it, Warner said.

Giuliano said the Corps should not build its tax-exempt training center on the Bysiewicz property

because it would deprive the city of revenue that could be generated by as many as 11 commercial tenants there. Instead, Giuliano said that the sale of Cucia Park — the city's least-used park — would generate revenue and provide the Corps with an appropriate site.

Corps spokesman Todd Hornback said the group had not been notified of the land sales and could not comment yet.

The Corps plans to build the training center because several of its facilities across the state are scheduled to be closed as a result of the 2005 recommendations of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission. The new center is expected to serve up to 450 reservists during drill weekends and 100 full-time staff, Hornback said.

The Corps is completing a draft of its environmental assessment — required by federal law — of the three sites and expects to release the document by mid-April. The public will have 30 days to respond. The Corps will consider the public's concerns and either issue a finding of "no significant impact," which would list a preferred site, or an environmental impact statement, Hornback said.

Gov. M. Jodi Rell has said that she supports building the center at Cucia Park.

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