

Burlington Union

Plan saves 100 acres

By Arthur Katz

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Burlington -

There were about twenty residents on hand when the Landlocked Parcel Committee meeting opened at 7 p.m. Monday, Aug. 25. Only five residents remained when the meeting was finally adjourned just before midnight. Several members had tried unsuccessfully to adjourn as early as 10 p.m., but Committee Chairman Nolan Glantz denied the requests.

Highlight of the meeting was a further description of the uses that Patriot Partners would make of the property, if the town decides to sell the 247 acre parcel, which lies to the west of Route 3. Patriot Partners has an option to purchase the property, which is valid until May 2010.

An 80-acre senior housing community would be built on the northern section of the land, accessed by a 250-foot bridge across Route 3, connected to Middlesex Turnpike by Kenmore Road, a laid out but unconstructed way shown on the town precinct map. Kenmore Road is shown as beginning north of Fourth Avenue.

Currently, there is no vehicle access anywhere on the property, with the only legal pedestrian entry through conservation land owned by the Conservation Commission in Lexington, off Turning Mill Road.

South of the housing complex, which would contain as many as 2,500 units, there would be 100 acres of community accessible open space, of which wetlands would cover about 20 acres.

Possible uses shown included two athletic fields, a baseball diamond and an amphitheater.

The remaining 80 acres would become a life science campus, with laboratories, office and manufacturing activities, accessed by another bridge over Route 3. The latter would be more complicated to build than the northern span since the proximity to the intersection of Routes 3 and 128 would bring in state and federal issues.

Richard Alfonso of Tetra Tech Rizzo, consultants to Patriot Partners, said, "We will save as much of the forest as possible. There are four vernal pools, which we will stay away from, and there are gas transmission and power lines that need to be accommodated.

"All development will be away from the wetlands," he added. "The other vegetation on the site is typical of the area."

The four miles of trails for walking and biking already existing on the site would be retained, and could be connected by the access bridges to other trails in Burlington, Lexington and Bedford

Another Rizzo consultant reported there would be negligible effect on the water wells of Burlington from this project. Two-thirds of the moisture falling on the area now drains to the Big Swamp and the remaining third will continue to move into the Aquifer District as it does now.

Availability of additional recreation facilities would be most welcome, according to Don Roberts, director of recreation for the town. Roberts painted a picture of a town that is “program rich and facilities poor.”

“We are using our existing fields five to 10 times as much as they should be used, and we are wearing them out, necessitating taking them out of service and going to the expense of rehabilitating them. It is a terrible waste of money,” he explained.

Roberts went on to say the town could use a four-field complex of multi-purpose fields, a four-field baseball complex along with restrooms and parking. He pointed to the use of artificial turf by neighboring communities as a way of increasing playing capacity – they can be used in all weathers – and reducing overall costs, despite the higher price of installing artificial turf.