

Burlington Union

Town Meeting nixes money to appraise landlocked parcel

By Arthur Katz/Correspondent

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BURLINGTON - Having already refused to support funding to fight the ICE building permit, Town Meeting members were in no mood Monday evening to approve money for a current appraisal of landlocked land.

Consisting of 270 acres of undeveloped land across Route 3 from the commercial and industrial buildings at Sun Microsystems, Northwest Park and the Gutierrez properties, the land presently has no access, and has not had since the building of Route 3.

It is abutted on the south and west by Lexington and Bedford, and both towns created a one-foot wide conservation easement along their borders, effectively blocking access from those directions.

It was acquired by the town in an eminent domain taking from 35 landowners in the early 1980s, and has been paid for with a 20-year bond, the last payment of which will be made in 2010. The worth at the taking was adjudged in court to be \$8,000,000. With legal and other expenses, Burlington has \$13,000,000 to \$14,000,000 invested in the site.

Town Administrator Robert Mercier told the meeting, "If the land is to be used, access must be found. A flyover across Route 3 is a possibility, but we should know more than we know now in terms of the value of the land, which could reach \$50,000.

"We should also be prepared to do something before the Nordblom and Gutierrez redevelopments begin in earnest and block any proposed access across Route 3.

"The \$100,000 we are asking for will give us a current value of the land, and also throw light on the access issue."

Mercier said there is continuing interest on the part of the development community in the property, situated at one of the most visible sites in the Route 3/Route 128 corridor.

No roll call vote was taken, but a sizable majority of Town Meeting members stood to vote against the article.