

# *Burlington Union*

Government

## **Patriot, study committee meet on landlocked parcel**

**By Arthur Katz**

**Wed Jul 23, 2008**

Burlington -

More flesh was put on the bones of the proposal for development of the 247-acre landlocked parcel as Patriot Partners principals described their concepts in some detail before the Landlocked Study Committee.

The parcel lies across Route 3 from Northwest Park, the former Sun Microsystems property, and land in the area now being redeveloped by the Gutierrez Company.

Meeting Monday night, the nine-member committee received more information on the two developments Patriot Partners wants to put on the north and south portions of the site. The center section would be preserved as open space.

Lexington and Bedford, which border the parcel on the west, have taken conservation easements directly abutting the property to prevent access through their neighborhoods, and Route 3 prevents access from Burlington.

The result, according to Stephen Rice, principal of Patriot Partners, is that, "Engineers have told us that putting a flyover across Route 3 to gain access to the land has a ballpark cost of \$15 million and we would need two such flyovers for the two developments we are suggesting.

"That kind of investment in infrastructure, plus the expense of water and sewer to service the site, dictates commercial development if the town wants to do anything with the land," he said.

The development the company wants approval for is a premier senior housing development on the north end of the property, closest to Bedford, and a life sciences campus near the junction of Routes 3 and 128.

"We have an agreement with Erickson Retirement Communities to develop 1,500 to 2,000 units for middle-income seniors, if this proposal is approved. Such a community will have relatively low impact," said Rice. "With a minimum age of 62 for the occupants, there will be virtually no effect on the school population; there will be an estimated 700 jobs created for the community; and there will be low traffic generation, because there are many amenities built into the campus, as Erickson has done in its other developments."

On the southern parcel, Patriot, wants to attract biotechnology companies that have been moving out of Cambridge and into Lexington and Waltham in search of lower rents, and better working and living conditions for their employees.

According to Patriot, since 2001, 27 biotech companies have relocated to Waltham and Lexington, 19 of them from Cambridge. They now occupy 1.69 million square feet of space in those towns.

“We believe this project can provide \$50 million in new tax revenues to Burlington over the next ten years,” Rice said. “When fully operational, we estimate the taxes will be about \$12.5 million annually.”

The committee, chaired by Nolan Glantz, appeared divided on the issue of its purpose. One group, including Al Fay, Terry McSweeney and John Howard argued the purpose of the committee is to recommend to Town Meeting that the site be opened to commercialization or left alone.

“We need some tax revenue,” Howard said. “Our job is to decide if this proposal is reasonable, not to micromanage the details. Is the town even interested? Access is so expensive that we will never get it if we don’t permit commercial development.”

A second group, which included Glantz, Joseph Impemba, Shari Lynn and Tom Conley, wants to explore other alternatives to the one proposed by Patriot Partners before bringing a decision to the Selectmen and Town Meeting.

“We need to look at all the alternatives and not focus on just this one,” said Glantz, who also argued for more public input into the process, including a poll of residents about their view of the land and its potential uses. He promised time for public comment at the next meeting, scheduled to start at 7 p.m., Monday, Aug. 11, in second floor meeting room at Town Hall.

Patriot Partners is expected to present a financial analysis of the project at that meeting.

In response, Robert Buckley, of Reimer and Braunstein, representing Patriot, said beginning Tuesday, July 22, Patriot Partners would open a Web site devoted to the project.

The Web site is [www.LandlockedParcelBurlington.com](http://www.LandlockedParcelBurlington.com)., with opportunity for public comment at the site.