

# Daily Times Chronicle

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*Landlocked area...*

## Developer outlines plans for Burlington site

By JOHN WHITE

BURLINGTON - The plan under consideration by Patriot Partners for the landlocked parcel would consist of a senior residential community and a life sciences campus, while retaining considerable open space.

That information was revealed by Stephen Rice of Patriot Partners during an initial presentation to the Landlocked Parcel Committee this week.

The committee was approved by Town Meeting in May to study the future of the town-owned property with regard to an option for commercial development being held by Patriot Partners, known locally for the Wayside Commons development.

The nine-member panel consists of five Town Meeting members (Nolan Glantz, who is chairing the committee, Thomas Conley, Shari Lynn Ellis, Phyllis Roussell, and Richard Howard); and representatives from the Board of Selectmen (Ralph Patuto); the

Planning Board (Albert Fay); the Board of Health (Terry McSweeney), and Conservation Commission (Larry Cohen).

While Rice, who attended the meeting with partner Joseph Zink, outlined his company's plans, he stressed that Patriot Partners wants input from the town and can be somewhat flexible in finalizing a proposal.

"We view this as a very interactive process," he stated.

However, Rice later noted there are "very large costs ... so the project would have to have some scale."

He said a company called Erickson Retirement Communities is looking to locate a development in the area and has an agreement with Patriot Partners. If a development is approved for Burlington, it would involve a land sale to Erickson.

Erickson has a development in Hingham, and Rice and attorney Robert Buckley of the local firm of Riemer & Braunstein, representing Patriot Partners, said arrangements would be made for committee members and others to go to Hingham to view that development.

Rice stated a retirement community is "a fabulous concept" for the property as it would have low impact on traffic and town services.

As for the life sciences component, Rice commented, "Burlington is woefully underrepresented in that industry."

He said the overall proposal is based on "smart-growth principles," designed to minimize impact on infrastructure.

Buckley said his client wants "open dialogue" about its proposal. He stated a web site is being designed to provide information to committee members and the public.

The final decision will rest with Town Meeting, noted Buckley.

"When the day is done, it's your call," he stated.

The town has owned the land since a 1986 eminent-domain taking. The stated reasons for the taking are to preserve open space and protect the water supply.

Any change in use, which would be needed for the Patriot Partners' proposal, requires two-thirds votes from Town Meeting and the Legislature.

As for the price if the town wants to pursue the option, both Buckley and

Rice said Patriot Partners does not expect to acquire the property for the option price.

"We will negotiate a commercial, reasonable price for the town," stated Rice.

"We're not trying to get this at a discount price," reiterated Buckley.

Buckley and Rice also stated that, in their view, the town is better-served working with one party than going through the bid process. Putting the property out to bid would be an extremely lengthy process, contended Buckley.

Patriot Partners acquired the option through the Delaware Chancery Court as it was named receiver for a defunct entity called PC Burlington, Inc. An investor in that company was the State of Washington Investment Board.

The option was part of a negotiated settlement after a jury awarded the three major property owners \$10.5 million for the land in 1987. The settlement reduced the figure to \$8.2 million and included a 20-year option, which expires in 2010.

#### Members comment

Cohen said the Patriot Partners' plan is a short-term option and he wants to look at the longer view.

He said the 270-acre parcel has "a certain conservation value."

Cohen stated that on a recent visit to the property, which borders Lexington and Bedford, he noted wildlife, considerable wetlands, and said the land could be part of the town's watershed.

McSweeney said the committee provides "a great opportunity" to listen to the developer's proposal.

The committee is planning to visit the property, located at the interchange of routes 3 and 128. The land is basically inaccessible by motor vehicle.

Fay commented it is early in the process and the committee needs to gain a lot more information.

Glantz explained the committee's role is to gather information and make a recommendation to Town Meeting. He said the goal is to gain a consensus and "understand what the community wants."

The committee is scheduled to meet twice a month. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, July 21.