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Landlocked parcel

Panel backs two articles

By STEVE DeMARCO

BURLINGTON — After circuitous discussion Monday night, over four-and-a-half hours' worth, the Landlocked Parcel Committee voted to put two articles on the warrant for September Town Meeting. The first centers on whether the town should continue to pursue the proposal from Patriot Partners. The second raises the possibility of exploring other alternatives for the land.

Patriot Partners, which developed Wayside Commons, which opened two years ago, holds an option and right-of-first-refusal for any commercial development on the town-owned property. These rights were granted as part of a 1990 settlement agreement.

The 270-acre, undeveloped parcel was acquired by the town through an eminent-domain taking executed in 1986. The site borders Lexington and Bedford and is basically inaccessible by motor vehicle.

Patriot Partners has announced preliminary plans for the parcel, they include senior housing community known as Erickson Re-

tirement Communities, which a representative Monday night could contain between 1,500 and 2,000 units; a life sciences campus, and possibly work force housing.

However, Monday night, Steven Rice, a principal with Patriot Partners, said, "Work force housing or Section 8 housing doesn't have to be a part of the project."

Patriot Partners' option on the land expires in 2010, with a one-year extension under certain conditions.

The Landlocked Parcel Committee was formed by Town Meeting in May in order to study the aforementioned proposal from Patriot Partners.

Articles

The first article passed by a 7-1 vote.

It will be a report from the Landlocked Parcel Committee, and some of the language from the article reads, "based on this report, to see whether Town Meeting would like this committee to continue investigating Patriot Partners' proposal in more de-

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tail.”

The second article, which passed unanimously, reads, “To see if Town Meeting will re-authorize the already-appointed Landlocked Parcel Committee to seek out and explore alternative uses in addition to those proposed by Patriot Partners ... and to make a recommendation to the town on a potential plan for the site.”

Before the votes, the committee debated for about one hour and 45 minutes what its exact charge should be.

“Getting astray”

“We’re here to decide if this proposal has any merit to it at all,” said committee member Richard Howard. “We will make recommendations if there is merit to it ... We’re here to see if it is a valid proposal, to take it to Town Meeting and ask them.

“We’re getting a little astray here,” Howard said. “We’re here to take this to Town Meeting.”

“Does this proposal keep in fitting with why we took the land?” asked member Shari Lynn Ellis. “It doesn’t fit that reason, which is for open space and recreation ... We need a directive from Town Meeting, maybe the next step is to see their feelings on that issue.”

Chairman Nolan Glantz then acknowledged that “the goal of this (Patriot Partners) proposal is not in line with that initial purpose.”

“But, it’s not that it violates it, either,” Glantz went on to say. “I can see it

going back to Town Meeting.”

“We can’t look at other proposals; right now, we have one proposal to look at,” said committee member Albert Fay. “I don’t think at this particular time we should entertain other options ... I think we have gotten away from that (the Patriot Partners’ proposal).”

Member Larry Cohen read a prepared statement that included his personal views on the proposal.

In part, he read, “What is the rush There is no deadline for the town to make a decision regarding the landlocked parcel. The only time constraint is the date of expiration of the right of first refusal for Patriot to buy the land. While one can understand their interest in making the most value out of this potential asset, it should have no bearing on a town decision of when or what to do with this property.”

“It is not in our interest to proceed at top speed with a green light,” Cohen said. “Town Meeting should weigh in on this before we get into it for another three or four months.”

“Our job is to uncover the issues and give them a recommendation and bring forward insight before that,” said Glantz. “We should present a report to Town Meeting for Town Meeting to take action, positive or negative.”

“Considering this proposal and reporting to Town Meeting is the charge of this committee,” said attorney Robert Buckley of the local firm of Riemer & Braunstein, representing Patriot Partners.