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## Hunterdon County Democrat

### Tentative deal slashes size of development in Clinton Township

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By Curtis Leeds

Clinton Township has reached a tentative settlement that would end the years of lawsuits and negotiations over the controversial Windy Acres housing development. It calls for the number of homes to be nearly cut in half. Details will be revealed Wednesday night.

The proposed settlement would cut the size of the project to 365 age-restricted homes and 90 "affordable" homes to help fulfill the township's state-imposed quota. The township would also acquire property on the Windy Acres site that it could use for 60 future "affordable" housing units.

Details of the settlement will be revealed Wednesday night. "We want the public to come and see it and participate," said Mayor Tom Borkowski. "We're hoping for a big turnout." That's why the Township Council meeting will be held in the new gym at North Hunterdon High School.

Windy Acres is the name of a farm southeast of Lebanon between Main Street and the railroad tracks. The developer, Pulte Homes, initially sought to build 1,140 units, then cut it to 911 homes, but the township Planning Board denied Pulte's plans in 2001. Pulte then sued and the matter is in Superior Court. Pulte has also sued to obtain sewer capacity and has challenged the township's affordable housing plan.

The May 11 meeting will be a special meeting of the Township Council. Borkowski said Township Attorney Albert Cruz, special counsel Howard Cohen and Township Planner Michael Bolan will present "details of the settlement discussions" with Pulte, the mayor said. "Most important, we're seeking public comments."

Critics of the mayor lambasted his settlement announcement. "It's absolutely grandstanding," said Nick Corcodilos, who's opposing the mayor in the June 7 Republican primary. He said that based on his "layman's calculations," Windy Acres can't support more than 100 units.

Councilwoman Rose Marie Malaker also accused the mayor of grandstanding. "He's ready to tell the people what will happen (with Windy Acres), but people on the Township Council aren't being told," she claimed. "We're being kept in the dark so that the mayor can use this as part of his campaign to be re-elected," she said.

Both the mayor and Corcodilos spoke on the development at Tuesday's township Republican club meeting. Corcodilos highlighted the threat Windy Acres presents. "We are in crisis mode here. Once you let that infrastructure in, you're toast"

The developer, he said, "can only build this if the town caves in, allowing sprawl to spread like cancer across the township."

Borkowski argued that losing the COAH substantive certification would "open every site in the township for builder's remedies (lawsuits.) We would have multiple lawsuits overnight. There is a clear choice between me and my opponent: age-restricted ratables or a blank check condemnation," with a jury deciding now how much the township would pay to buy the Windy Acres land. "A solution is to settle with Pulte. You don't get exactly what you want, but you don't get the worst-case scenario" and "another 15 years of litigation."

The Wednesday council meeting will be followed by a special township Planning Board meeting on Monday, May 16, also in the North Hunterdon gym. Both sessions will start at 7:30 p.m.

The mayor said that at the sessions he'll explain how the site will be served with public water and sewers.

He said Pulte representatives are not expected to attend.

Responding to his critics, the mayor remarked, "You can't please everybody. I'm criticized when I don't disclose the Windy Acres negotiations. I'm criticized when I do." He said all Township Council members have been kept informed of the details of every meeting with Pulte. "Every council member knows what's going on," he said.

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