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Ocean County

Pine Beach to consider six Farragut proposals

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PINE BEACH — All of the options the borough council is considering for the use of the 5-acre former Admiral Farragut Academy will be brought before the public at a town meeting Sept. 9, the mayor and council said at a special meeting yesterday.

The council met in an executive session beforehand, where they were expected to eliminate a few of the proposed options, but decided to bring all six bids, as well as the previously discussed proposal by the borough for an "open-space" alternative for the property, to residents, Councilman Joseph V. Boyle said.

Boyle said the council decided it better to bring detailed versions in front of the public, in order for them to "see the extent of the proposals." The "open-space" proposal, the council said, will require more discussion regarding plans for the area, and the tax impact.

The meeting will tentatively begin with an informal "mingling" with the mayor and council, where specific questions could be answered, followed by a formal meeting where general questions and input would be taken.

Pine Beach residents brought a number of questions and concerns before the council. High-density use of the property was the most predominant worry of residents, who claimed it would not only change the character of the borough, but heighten traffic. Corby said these concerns are being taken into account.

Schools, the council said, would not be affected because the high-density proposals are all age-restricted, but any high-density housing would effect the revenues used for emergency services.

The original purchase of the property was an opportunity to "maintain the character of the borough," Ocean County Freeholder John C. Bartlett, a Pine Beach resident, said.

"Maximizing financial gain should not be the priority," he said. "(It should be) what element keeps the character of the town and enhances the value of the properties."

Corby said the designation of the property as re-development gives the borough ample control over the usage, until the development is complete.

Scott Slickers of Lincoln Avenue brought up an apparent connection between one bidder and the previous developers,

Pennrose Properties, whose project for the property fell through. Slickers called the previous project a terrible experience and said there is "no way the borough should get involved with associates of Pennrose."

Corby said all proposals are on the table and being weighed, and that any bidder's association with Pennrose would be a part of the public discussion. Boyle said "at least five, if not all of the bidders were proven to be financially sound," which became a problem with the previous developer.

Boyle said after hearing the public's opinion and reaction to the proposals, and answering all questions, a decision will be made as soon as possible, but will not be rushed. All of the proposals are amendable, the council said, and further discussion with all of the bidders likely will be part of the decision.

Residents can expect a mailing from the borough soon that will include the information on the meeting, which the council hopes to hold in the firehouse, and essential information on the proposals. Information is currently available at borough hall.

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