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Plumsted decides to relocate sewer facility

By **KEITH RUSCITI** • STAFF WRITER • July 21, 2010

PLUMSTED — The township Municipal Utilities Authority has decided not to divert 30 acres from its Recreation and Open Space Inventory list as part of a plan to build a water-treatment facility in the township.

Board members said Tuesday that they will focus the construction of the facility on about 20 acres of privately-owned parcels near the Woodlands Manor development in the northeastern section of the township.

"No, we're not going to proceed with the Green Acres parcels," said Walter Bronson, a PMUA board member.

Bronson also said the board will continue to explore other options but for now will focus on four, 5-acre parcels after a study on a revised plan was conducted by Gregg W. Barkley of Van Cleef Engineering Associates.

The new plan calls for a smaller facility capable of recharging up to 250,000 gallons of sewage in the area known as Lakewood Properties located off North Success Road.

Barkley's revised study was presented to the board earlier this week and presented to the public Tuesday.

The overall cost for the project is estimated at about \$44 million.

Peter Ylviskaler, executive director of the township MUA, said Plumsted has access agreements to those private properties.

The original plan for the water-treatment facility was for it to be built on about 50 acres, 30 of which are preserved as open space through the state's Green Acres Program. The facility would've been able to recharge up to 840,000 gallons of water per day.

That proposal attracted a large number of local opponents, highlighted by a June 29 hearing, where

the majority of the approximately 100 residents in attendance voiced their opposition.

One question remains: the amount of space needed for the water-treatment facility.

"I don't see how you're going to fit everything onto those four pieces of property," said Karen Tantom, who owns a 20-acre farm on the eastern edge of Lakewood Properties. "Those parcels are surrounded by preserved farmland and Green Acres."

Ylviskaler said the new proposal leaves a smaller margin for error. He also said more information regarding the engineering study will be posted later this week on the authority's new webpage.

Local officials have been promoting the need for a township-wide sewer system for a couple of years — a move they hope will invigorate its business district on Main Street.

As part of its redevelopment plan, the township hopes to build a 336-unit senior community just outside its downtown area. The Kokes Organization was accepted as the developer for that project back in 2007 by the Township Committee.

Ylviskaler said The Kokes Organization and New Jersey American Water will contribute to the water-treatment facility. He estimated the two companies will donate a total of \$8 million to help fund the facility, with The Kokes Organization donating about \$6 million.

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He said the redevelopment project also will receive state funding through the Payment in Lieu of Taxes, or PILOT, program.

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Rich Eggert of Plumsted points out deer tracks at a site where the Municipal Utilities Authority had planned to build a water-treatment facility. (STAFF PHOTO: BRADLEY J. PENNER)

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