

WESTFIELD RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION, INC
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29 August 2008

Richard Blumenthal
Attorney General
55 Elm Street
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Attorney General Blumenthal:

I am writing, on behalf of the Westfield Residents Association, about the issue of the Military Training Facility that the army insists must be built in Middletown. I want to update you on the Army Corps of Engineers' presentation Wednesday night, which was hosted by Rep. Ray Kalinowski. Below we outline issues of great concern to us:

1) Timeline. The army has an extremely aggressive timeline for making assessments and awarding the contract. They have given themselves and the community the following deadlines:

- September 8: Develop initial list of sites in seven (7) working days.
- September 17: Complete initial screening in seven (7) working days.
- September 29: End all community input in eight (8) working days.
- October 1: Rank all of the sites in two (2) working days.
- October 17: Complete Site ID report in twelve (12) working days.
- November 1: Obtain right of entry to site(s) in ten (10) working days.

We are concerned that this timeline makes a reasoned and successful choice of a site for this important facility virtually impossible. As someone with construction experience put it at the meeting, "This is not an aggressive timeline, it is FOOLHARDY!"

2) Pre-selection of Boardman Lane. The army is currently conducting environmental assessments at only one site -- the Boardman Lane property. The army corps representatives specifically said that no other sites were undergoing an environmental assessment. They further said that no site selected in October (the time line above) would undergo the type of environmental assessment that they are doing at the Boardman Lane property. We are dismayed at the narrow-minded, continuing focus on Boardman Lane: since this is the only site that will have these assessments made, the list of alternative sites is simply a sham. Boardman Lane is being fast-tracked while all potential other sites sit idle. This is in direct contravention of your letter to Ms. McCartin (August 4, 2008), in which you wrote:

More importantly, the Corps cannot permissibly at this point designate the Boardman Road site as the preferred site. Such selection is illegally premature, and unauthorized.

3) Deception and lack of candor. In your August 4th letter to Ms. McCartin, you requested copies of all the documents relating to the sites that were considered. We think that those documents will reveal that the Corps deliberately withheld important information from Middletown as they presented Boardman as their preferred site. On June 10th, the Corps rejected at least two sites because of "NDDB Maps species of concern".

Clearly the Corps examined those maps as they evaluated sites. However, when they said that Boardman Lane was the preferred site, they strangely neglected to mention that Boardman Lane also has several species of concern on the NDDDB Maps.

4) Legal Interpretation of the BRAC Legislation language. The army stated that their legal counsel has interpreted the language that even though the word "IF" is contained in the language, the site "MUST" be in Middletown. As you know, they were asked if they would provide this legal opinion/interpretation under the Freedom of Information Act and we were told emphatically "NO." This secrecy seems to belie their claim that this process will be "open and collaborative", we thank you for pursuing this.

5) Gov. Rell's removal of the 250th Engineering Unit from the Consolidation. Wasn't part of the rationale behind Gov. Rell's reducing the size of the base to move it from Boardman Lane for all of the reasons stated previously?

6) Non-Compliance with local and state ordinances. Again the Army stated that they are "not bound" by the municipal ordinances and regulations regarding Inland Wetlands, and our city's Zoning Ordinances. When wildlife and vegetation endangered and/or species determined to be "of concern" was cited - they responded something to the effect that there was a difference between "State-recognized" versus "Federally-recognized" endangered and/or "of concern" species of life.

At the August 18th meeting, which you attended, Colonel Landry made two significant statements. First, that the search for a training facility site was starting from scratch, and second that this site selection process would be "open and collaborative". The actions of the Army Corps of Engineers give the lie to both of those pledges: they indicate that they are quickly and unabashedly continuing with Boardman Lane as their only viable option.

We respectfully request your continued assistance with the site selection process to ensure that it follows proper and legal protocol, and that their current actions, and inaction are not leaving us with only one bad choice, Boardman Lane, for a facility of such importance to our soldiers. We would be grateful to receive copies of the Corps' response to your request for the legal documents. We think there are other important and undisclosed internal documents that are also influencing this process. We would like to know how many personnel will be transferred to the new facility. We would like to know which site planning and design manual is being used for this facility. We would like to receive copies of the engineering studies that resulted from the personnel number and design manual. Throughout this process the Corps have given wildly divergent statements about the number of soldiers and acres, and the citizens of Middletown deserve to know which numbers are real and where they came from.

We look forward to your continued involvement in this issue of such great importance to both Middletown and our Armed Forces.

Sincerely yours,

Stephen H. Devoto
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