

NOVATO

Residents raise offer for site

Mobile home complex willing to pay city \$23.5M

By **Krissy Waite**
kwaite@marinij.com

The Marin Valley Mobile Country Club in Novato has increased its offer to \$23.5 million to buy the property from the city.

The club's Park Acquisition Corp., which submitted its counteroffer to the city Monday morn-

ing, has been in an exclusive negotiating agreement with Novato since May 1, 2024. It is the third attempt the community has made to own the site.

"Do they want more money, or do they want to preserve affordable housing? That's the question," said Mary Currie, a spokesperson for the group.

The city bought the property for \$20 million in 1997. The community fears being sold to a for-profit company, which could price residents out of the affordable housing. In 2023, HCA Property Management offered \$30 million for the site, but the city declined.

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Residents at the Marin Valley Mobile Country Club in Novato are trying to acquire the city-owned property.

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Offer

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More than 400 seniors live in the neighborhood, and 91% of residents are low income or very-low income, according to Park Acquisition Corp.

"To become a sustainable, low- and lower-income-affordable, senior resident-owned mobile home park, the PAC board's counteroffer, with overwhelming resident support, does not meet the city's ultimatum for \$26 million," said John Hansen, president of the corporation. "We will meet in the middle at \$23.5 million."

In June, the organization offered \$20 million. The terms included zero interest and annual payments of \$500,000 to the city. The rest would be covered by a loan and grant funds.

The city countered at \$26 million with no city financing. The price would cause rent to rise about \$185 to \$300 per household, according to the Park Acquisition Corp.

"It was painful for us to receive that offer from the city for \$26 million because we came up with an offer that we felt was fair and in good faith," Currie said. "It's kind of hard, with the city's counteroffer at \$26 million, to see a win-win situation."

Sherin Olivero, a city official, said the counteroffer was based on an appraisal done by Semple Appraisals Inc. The residents' appraisal valued the site at \$21.3 million, after deducting \$1 mil-



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Marin Valley Mobile Country Club residents have raised concerns that a for-profit company could buy the property from Novato and price them out.

lion for deferred maintenance and capital improvements.

Currie said a sticking point has been deferred maintenance like a new roof for the clubhouse. Olivero said the responsibility for repairs and maintenance has been shared among the city, the resident board and a property management contractor.

"The city is committed to timely and thorough property maintenance," Olivero said. "As such, city staff members are currently advancing a roof repair project and preparing a bid package to solicit qualified contractors."

The Park Acquisition Corp., a nonprofit led by residents, has been working with ROC USA and the California Center for Cooperative Development for two years. The programs help residential communities gain ownership and develop financing plans.

The corporation's recent

offer relies on a loan from ROC USA Capital and a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The full cost will be paid to Novato when escrow ends, and the offer does not rely on any city financing. The new offer could increase the charges for each household by about \$140 to \$185 a month.

The corporation said that Mayor Tim O'Connor has assured it the city would not sell the land to a for-profit entity. O'Connor said he is unable to comment as negotiations are conducted confidentially in closed session.

"The city is deeply committed, and in certain instances compelled by regulatory authority, to the preservation of existing affordable housing options in the community, and those in the Marin Valley Mobile Country Club are no exception," Olivero said.

Residents are not so sure of the city's commitment.

Serena Fisher said the community was stunned when it learned that a private owner had placed an offer on it last year. She said it's one of the only stable, affordable housing options for seniors.

"Their latest demands to us are really a slap to the face," said Fisher, a resident for more than 12 years. "Everything they have demanded from us has been in their favor."

Julie Manson, a resident for 23 years, said she isn't hopeful that the city will negotiate fairly. She said the stress of housing insecurity in the community has serious health effects.

"It's about politics and money, but at some point we have to ask, when do we put humans into the equation?" Manson said.

Pauline Hawkins, 90, a resident for 24 years, said she wants to live out her life in the neighborhood without all the stress the city is causing. She lives on an income of \$26,000 a year and likely won't be able to afford a large rent increase.

"It seems to me the city is more interested in greed than keeping this amazing over-55 affordable community intact," Hawkins said. "What they are asking for is immoral."

"The city greatly appreciates the efforts of the Park Acquisition Corp. on behalf of the residents of the Marin Valley Mobile Country Club related to the acquisition proposal," Olivero said. "The city team looks forward to the next steps in the negotiation process."