

Marin Independent Journal

Novato ends talks with mobile home residents over purchase deal



Marin Valley Mobile Country Club in Novato, Calif. on Wednesday, Dec. 17, 2025. (Alan Dep/Marin Independent Journal)

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Novato has once again rejected an effort by residents of the Marin Valley Mobile Country Club to purchase the property.

The city terminated the exclusive negotiating agreement with the Park Acquisition Corp., or PAC, the group of residents working to purchase the park. The action capped an 18-month period of negotiations.

The purchase attempt was the third for the community, a neighborhood geared toward affordable homes for residents 55 and older. Previous attempts took place in 1997 and 2008.

In a statement on Dec. 11, Novato said the residents did not have the financial ability to purchase the park while maintaining stable rent conditions. The Park Acquisition Corp. disagrees.

The groups will continue discussions to try to meet residents' concerns over security, sustainability and affordability under city ownership.

On Dec. 17, PAC leaders met with residents for their comments. The organization says it is focused on having productive discussions with the city in its continued mission to eventually purchase the park.

"This is not the end. Our goal is to become resident-owned," said Brad Witherspoon, a member of the PAC. "We will not give that up."



Brad Witherspoon, left, speaks to other residents of the Marin Valley Mobile Country Club during a community meeting in Novato, Calif., on Dec. 17, 2025, regarding the status of plans to purchase the property. (Alan Dep/Marin Independent Journal) The Marin Valley Mobile Country Club is home to about 400 residents in 300 homes on a 63-acre property. Residents formed the Park Acquisition Corp. in 1988.

After the park went up for sale in 1997, the residents reached out to the city to help them purchase the property because they were not eligible for financing. The city borrowed \$17 million to purchase the park, which has been nearly paid off by the tenant rent payments over the years. The city has acted as the park's landlord in some form or another since then.

The city's purchase has been the subject of continued debate because many residents say the original agreement was made with the understanding that the residents would own the property once the loan was repaid.

In 2023, the city received an offer from Novato resident Dean Moser to purchase the park for \$30 million. While Moser said his plan was to keep the area as a mobile home park, and the city ultimately declined the offer, the exchange renewed concerns among the residents that the property might be sold to a developer.

"Our future is at stake here," Witherspoon said. "We can't just pick up our houses and go someplace else, so if the city sells us, they're basically throwing us to the wolves."

The city entered into the exclusive negotiating agreement with the PAC last year, following an appraisal, set the price for the property at \$26 million.

A separate appraisal for the Park Acquisition Corp. came in lower. The residents offered the city \$21.3 million for the

property to be paid in monthly installments over 35 years. The PAC said the offer would have kept their rents stable, provide reserved funds for capital improvements and maintain a stable cash flow for the park.

The city countered, saying this was against the city's policy and did not meet its appraisal.

"The city does not provide loans to outside agencies or entities," said Sherin Olivero, a city spokesperson.

The PAC returned with a new \$23.5 million offer with traditional financing methods, but with varying adjustments to rents. The city declined the offer on Sept. 17.

The PAC said it was working through additional requirements, like a new community vote on the potential purchase, when the city terminated the negotiating agreement.

"After careful analysis, the City Council believes continued City ownership is the best way to protect residents and ensure rents remain affordable for years to come," the city said in its statement on Dec. 11.

The group maintains the park is financially secure and self-sustaining, saying it has never taken money from the city's general fund.

The city differed, citing money put into the park's pump station and administrative costs from overseeing the park.



Residents of the Marin Valley Mobile Country Club in Novato meet on Dec. 17, 2025, to discuss the status of plans to purchase the property. (Alan Dep/Marin Independent Journal)

At the meeting this month at the community clubhouse, residents discussed potential next steps and aired frustrations. Some said they felt blindsided by the city's termination, and others said they felt the city never intended to sell them the park.

"They went through the motions of the negotiation," said resident Alan Gump.

The city said it worked in "good faith to evaluate options" for the residents to purchase.

Some residents said they might move if they can.

"Not having assurances of long-term protection from the city makes me feel very vulnerable," said resident Sue Meyer. "I've already looked at other resident-owned mobile parks as a backup plan. I don't want to be broadsided by a predatory developer making an offer the city can't refuse."

The City Council and the PAC will meet in the new year to discuss mutual goals for the park's future. Residents said they don't think the current City Council intends to sell the park, but they have concerns about future councils and are working to secure the park.

"They say they want to protect us and keep us, so they're going to have to prove how they plan to do that before we trust them," said resident Serena Fisher.



The Marin Valley Mobile Country Club in Novato, Calif., on Wednesday, Dec. 17, 2025. (Alan Dep/Marin Independent Journal)