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Air Force base in Stillwater goes up for sale this summer

By MARGIE LAW
Staff Reporter

STILLWATER — The federal government plans to sell the U.S. Air Force Radar Base here sometime this summer, according to Renee Patrone, spokeswoman for the U.S. General Services Administration.

"No definite date has been set yet," she said.

The GSA has not decided on the method of sale, but it would probably be by sealed bids or public auction, Ms. Patrone said.

"The sale would be open to anyone, including municipalities. The state has expressed the fact it is no longer interested in the site. We've never had any indication of interest from Saratoga County and it's too late now for the town to come up with a plan," she said.

If the town of Stillwater had come up with a 30-year plan for public use on the site about a year ago, it would have been able to purchase the radar base, which is federal-surplus property, for a \$1.

Meanwhile, Town Supervisor William Herrick said he doesn't know yet if Stillwater

would opt to purchase the radar facility and added the decision would be up to the Town Board.

"I wouldn't rule us out, but I wouldn't rule us in either. I'd like to see it go to a private buyer and get back on the tax rolls," he said.

Herrick also said he asked the federal government to notify him when the radar base is put up for sale.

"I don't want it to go by without knowing about it. I've had a lot of private individuals contact me about it. Whoever buys it will have to have money," he said.

The 30-year proposal requested by the GSA had to include amendments, "with the threat that the site could revert back to the government if the plan changed," Herrick said.

Local officials toyed with ideas for the base which ranged from a pig farm to a retirement village, but without success, he said.

"Everytime we would come up with a plan we would get halfway through it and then get stuck," he said.

In April, the state expressed interest in turning the radar base into a medium-security prison, but later discarded its

plans because of the facility's deterioration.

The state's prison proposal was met by strong local opposition and about 15 residents from the towns of Stillwater and Saratoga banded together to form an on-going citizens planning committee for the base, with Herrick as chairman.

Although the town received a letter from Thomas A. Coughlin III, state Department of Corrections commissioner, saying the state discarded all prison plans for the base, Herrick said he wants a similar letter from the governor's office.

Saratoga County officials looked at the facility in the past, but decided it would be too costly to renovate, Herrick said.

Members of the citizens planning committee, "will talk to everyone in the neighborhood and the town about the base," he said.

The former U.S. Air Force base has about 35 buildings and sits on 3.7 acres of land on the northwestern side of Stillwater, about five miles from the central part of town, near Ketchums Corners. The facility has been vacant for more than four years.