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Nike site cleanup could cost \$400K

By **Katie Liesener**/ Daily News Staff

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WAYLAND -- The committee advising selectmen on development of the former Nike missile site for affordable housing, recreational use and conservation land, reported this week the cost of permanently filling the missile silos on the site could run anywhere from \$80,000 to \$400,000.

The two missile silos at the Nike site off Oxbow Road in North Wayland will have to be filled with clean crushed debris (such as brick or concrete) before the land above can be used, the Nike Site Reuse Advisory Committee told selectmen last week.

"This is going to be an expensive issue to address," said selectmen Chairman Joe Nolan. "You can't do this temporary fix, cover it with dirt and just have mounds out there."

The site, acquired by the federal government in 1953 and used as a missile base for the next two decades during the Cold War, was deactivated in 1974 and used by the Massachusetts National Guard until 1997.

The town acquired the land from the federal government with a vote at 2004 Town Meeting, paying \$400,000 for a 2.75-acre section of the 13-acre site and receiving the rest for free. The town allocated \$200,000 in Community Preservation Act funds for clean-up of the site, including the removal or in-fill of existing structures.

Committee members said the silos were always anticipated as a significant expense. The cost range projected now varies so widely because of a number of unknown variables, they said.

For example, one factor of considerable cost will be whether the town will have to pay for fill or can acquire it for free from partial demolition of the silo, debris from the town's own road projects, or companies looking to get rid of excess material.

Also, if the state Department of Environmental Protection determines that lead paint in the silos must be removed, the town may be responsible for lead abatement, which can cost between \$60,000 and \$80,000.

The committee found that the government could not be held responsible for a potential clean-up, committee Co-Chairwoman Gretchen Schuler said in an interview.

"It (the paint) is nothing the government put there," she said. "The people who were stationed there painted murals on the walls."

The committee will have a better idea of the total cost of filling the silos once it has applied for a Better Use Determination permit from the state, members said. As part of the process, the state will then notify the town if the lead will have to be removed.

Once a permit is issued, the committee would start looking at the potential costs for fill material, Schuler said.

She said the silos would have to be filled all at once.

"You can't do it in steps," she said. "Every time, you'd have to move the concrete slabs, which gets expensive."

The committee has not discussed possible funding for the \$80,000 to \$400,000 to fill the silos.

"That will happen when someone decides what they want to do with that property," said Bill Sterling, committee co-chairman. "It's a crystal ball thing, we really don't know."

The committee is focusing instead on short-term safety measures within its own budget to prevent injury to trespassers who frequently break through the chain-link fence surrounding the property.

"The bottom line is that we don't have the money to do the final job. We have to do something, we have to secure it, make it safe," Schuler said. "This was the least expensive way to make it safe."

The committee recommended covering the deteriorating silo platforms and bunker bulkheads with heavy concrete slabs, completing a lead paint assessment and applying for the state Better Use Determination permit. The total cost for these short-term measures is estimated at between \$26,000 and \$35,000.

The money, committee members said, could come from the \$47,760 that remains in its \$200,000 budget for site clean-up and the demolition of structures.

The Nike Site Advisory Committee, a committee that preceded the current committee studying the

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site, had recommended the \$200,000 amount that was allocated at 2004 Town Meeting.

"I don't think we did a lot of research on what it would actually cost to fill those things up. It wasn't part of our charge," said Ira Montague, chairman of that former committee and a member of the current one. "We knew we couldn't just weld the thing shut and cover it with dirt."

Montague said committee members always knew the silos would have to be addressed, but that the land's benefit to the town more than made up for that cost.



"If the town had not taken ownership of the property, it would have been sold on the open market," he said. "I definitely think it was worth it, and hopefully it will produce affordable housing and maybe a ball field."

(Katie Liesener can be reached at 508-626-4436 or kliesene@cnc.com.)

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