

## **Middletown OKs development of 190 homes at Bamm Hollow**

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Written by [Kevin Penton](#) | [Staff Writer](#)

**MIDDLETOWN** — Sand traps and fairways would give way to swimming pools and garages as part of an agreement between the township and the Bamm Hollow Country Club for future residential development at the Lincroft site.

In order for years of litigation by the country club to go away, Middletown has until the end of the year to rezone the property to allow for 190 single-family homes, said Brian Nelson, the township's attorney.

None of the homes, which are expected to have an average footprint of 3,000 square feet, would comply with state Council on Affordable Housing regulations, he said.

While the average lot size under the deal would be slightly more than 1 acre, some of the subdivided properties could be as small as a half-acre, said Anthony Mercantante, Middletown's administrator.

Bamm Hollow sued Middletown because the township did not include the property in its current affordable housing plan, Nelson said. Generally, developments included in a municipality's affordable housing plan are allowed to be denser than those that are not, he said.

Should the Bamm Hollow property be subdivided using Middletown's current zoning regulations, the minimum residential lot size would need to be 5 acres, said Jason Greenspan, the township's planner.

But under COAH, Bamm Hollow argued it could build 1,204 units on the property, an achievable amount given the site's topography and its proximity to public sewer lines, Mercantante said.

"They probably could have tried to squeeze more in there if they had really wanted to," Mercantante said.

John Giunco, an attorney representing Bamm Hollow, declined to comment on the terms of the settlement.

"The matter is in litigation," Giunco said. "We are seeking to settle."

On Monday, Middletown Township Committee voted 5-0 to proceed with the settlement.

"I take this vote not because I want to but, unfortunately, because I have to," said Mayor Anthony Fiore, who believes it would have been too risky for Middletown to allow for the possibility of hundreds of units to be built at Bamm Hollow.

### **Board approval needed**

Before humans can begin displacing gophers at the site, the Middletown Planning Board must approve the settlement agreement, the zoning changes and Bamm Hollow's proposal, which has yet to be filed. Township Committee must also sign off on the zoning changes.

Lincroft residents who attended Monday's meeting and spoke were just about split between supporting the deal and arguing that Middletown should have done more to fight.

Paul Oster argued that the 1,200 units would have been far worse.

“I think it’s a win for us,” Oster said. “It’s making the best of a bad situation.”

But Diane Sweeney believes Middletown should have continued to fight Bamm Hollow, rather than give in.

“Middletown is setting a really poor example,” Sweeney said. “I just don’t understand how in America we can be bullied into this.”

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