

## **Looking for a developer for Batchelder property**

By Brian Saxton  
THE NEWS-TIMES

2001-11-01

NEWTOWN — The town is about to woo investors into redeveloping the abandoned Batchelder aluminum smelting plant on Swamp Road.

A “conceptual” remedial action plan, developed by environmental specialists hired by Newtown, outlines what needs to be done to clean up remaining ground water and soil contamination on the 31-acre site and the estimated 12,000 tons of metal dross there.

“Now we have a handle on what’s there and what it will take to clean up the property,” First Selectman Herbert Rosenthal said Wednesday. “The next step is to market the property for reuse.”

Rosenthal said he wants to see the site turned into something “compatible” with the town’s character and start generating property tax revenue.

“We want to make it environmentally safe as well as viable and productive,” said Rosenthal.

The town has received no taxes from the property since 1984.

The current assessment is \$1.6 million; the town is owed \$1.2 million in back taxes, tax liens and lien fees.

The Charles Batchelder Co., which ran the plant for 40 years, closed in 1987 after filing for bankruptcy.

For years the site was known as a hangout for teen-agers, scavengers looking for scrap metal, and bike riders.

In 1996, an inspection by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency reported deteriorating buildings, hazardous materials, soil contamination and unrestricted access to the site.

A year later, the EPA removed some materials defined by federal law as “hazardous,” such as asbestos and lead, and then sealed the boundaries of the plant with high chain-link fences and razor wire.

In 1998, the town hired Arthur Bogen, president of a Milford firm of environmental specialists to study the site.

Bogen helped to secure a \$30,000 grant from the state Special Contaminated Properties Remediation and Insurance Fund to pay for the work.

A second SCRIP loan of \$15,000 was used to develop a remediation plan. It was drawn up by Handex of Connecticut, environmental specialists, in Monroe.

“It’s a conceptual plan,” said Rosenthal. “The state Department of Environmental Protection has looked at it and has verbally approved it.

“How it will be applied and how much it will cost depends on what a potential developer wants to do with the property.”

Town Director of Economic Development Elizabeth Stocker said Newtown plans to work with the Connecticut Development Authority and the state Department of Economic and Community Development to market the site.

“Working with these two agencies,” she said, “we should be able to put together an attractive package to find an end-user of the property.”

The property is zoned for commercial and industrial use and has about 100,000 square feet of floor area.

Stocker said advertising would begin this month. He cited warehousing, light manufacturing, and research and development as potential uses.

Rosenthal says he believes there could be some cost-sharing effort between the state and federal agencies, the town and a developer to clean up and reuse the site.

"We believe the ultimate cleanup costs with the right end-user would be less than the market value of the property," he said.

Contact Brian Saxton  
at [bsaxton@newstimes.com](mailto:bsaxton@newstimes.com)  
or at (203) 426-3711.

© The News-Times November 1, 2001