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SPOTLIGHT

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TOP STORY

Bainbridge cleanup to begin next week

By Katie Tabelaing ktabelaing@cecilwhig.com 17 hrs ago



Currently, the only entity utilizing the many miles of abandoned roads on the former Bainbridge naval training center is Cecil College's CDL program, but that may change as soon as next year.

CECIL WHIG PHOTO BY SCOTT SERIO

PORT DEPOSIT — After almost 20 years, the slumbering Bainbridge property will stir next week as contractors begin the long-awaited environmental site work, bringing the property one step closer to redevelopment.

Weston Solutions and GTA, subcontractors with the Bainbridge Development Corporation, will start cleaning up any bulk materials with trace asbestos on the 400 acres of the immense property slated for commercial and industrial development.

After the environmental clean up has finished, developers Manekin-Turner-Paterakis and Michael (MTPM) and MRP Industrial will break ground in spring 2020 for a modern distribution center.

The distribution center is projected to be 3.6 million square feet in size and poised to bring 1,500 jobs with an unnamed industrial tenant, said BDC Executive Director Steve Cassard.

“It’s coming together after 20 years, for a real prospect — shovels in the ground and earth will be moved this spring,” Cassard said during the county’s Economic Development Commission this week.

Bainbridge has been dormant since the U.S. Navy decommissioned the 1,200-acre naval training site and conveyed it to Port Deposit in 2000. At that time, approximately 650 buildings were razed, with the end goal to create room for unlimited mixed-use development for people to work and live.

But when it was clear that those buildings contained asbestos-based materials, which later mixed into the ground, those plans came to a halt as the BDC and the U.S. Navy began discussions about appropriate remediation and clean up.

After several talks between both parties and federal officials — and the threat of a lawsuit against the Navy — the Navy funded most of an environmental study on the site in 2016. When another prospect showed interest in the site, the BDC and the Navy struck an agreement to clean up a portion of the land. The Navy would agree to pay up to \$4.2 million of remediation, with the BDC signing on as subcontractors.

This environmental services cooperative agreement covers 400 acres as a test. To clean up the entire 1,200 acres would take about three to five years.

“We did not want to lose that tenant because of a long timeline,” BDC Project Coordinator Toni Sprenkle said.

The first step is to have contractors to start cleaning up the bulk material. By spring, the environmental clean-up will start soil contamination cleanup, and the developers will start grading and the pad work. The materials will be buried and capped on the site.

Beyond this first stage, Cassard said the Navy is considering expanding the cleanup agreement to the rest of Bainbridge.



In the meantime, the county and Port Deposit are working to ensure Bainbridge's success. Port Deposit is reportedly in the process of revising its comprehensive plan, which will ultimately outline the new vision for the site.

The town plan will see Bainbridge as a place that welcomes jobs in industrial, commercial and research and development, as well as warehouse, manufacturing, office parks and workforce development. It will also allow for small segments of retail use to serve workers on the site.

At the same time, the county is moving forward with building a sewer treatment plant to serve the site. The plan will be in operation in spring 2021.

In the upcoming legislative session, the Cecil County delegation plans on requesting \$4 million in Gov. Larry Hogan's budget to lay a sewer line to that plant to Bainbridge.

"This project is more important that people even realize," County Executive Alan McCarthy said. "Steve, Toni and [BDC] Chair Carl Roberts have moved this at a rapid rate. Once we got started, it's going."

