

Shooting range plan rejected in DuPage

By Jennie Korb

Staff writer

Though DuPage County officials say any thoughts of building a firing range at the sheriff's department at the Greene Valley Forest Preserve near Woodridge are past, Woodridge officials still have taken a stand against the possibility.

The Village Board passed a resolution Dec. 11 "strongly opposing the county's proposal to use land near the Greene Valley Forest Preserve for an outdoor firing range and a 250-car impound lot," according to a statement from the village.

Assistant Village Administrator Peggy Halik said the village thinks both uses are "wholly inappropriate" for that area.

Thomas Bennington, a representative for District 3 on the DuPage County Board, said the proposal to build a firing range for law enforcement personnel on county-owned land adjacent to the Woodridge water treatment plant "is dead."

"It's exactly the wrong place

for an outdoor shooting range," he said.

The sheriff's department has a firing range in West Chicago on 800 open acres. However, that use is not compatible with the DuPage County technology park slated to be built there, so the sheriff's department began looking for a new location several months ago, said Dan Wagner, chief deputy to DuPage County Board Chairman Robert Schillerstrom.

The suggestion of the land near Greene Valley came out of a discussion between the sheriff's office and the county's Public Safety Committee, but it was "just a discussion item," Wagner said.

"It was never an issue that was truly at the point where it was going to happen," Wagner added. "It was just a discussion. It will never happen at this site," Wagner said, adding it is "unfortunate" the proposal caused so much "fervor and concern among citizens."

According to a statement from Woodridge, a number of groups, including the Woods of

Hobson Greene homeowners, a consortium called Preserve the DuPage County Forest Preserve District, and the Illinois Prairie Path Corp., spoke out against the firing range and impound lot proposals.

According to a copy of an e-mail sent from Schillerstrom to a constituent, Schillerstrom questioned "the suitability of locating either (the firing range or the impound lot) in a neighborhood that borders one of our forest preserves."

He wrote that in October, "county staff provided the sheriff with a list of all county-owned property that could potentially be considered for use as a firing range. County staff is not endorsing any particular site and I have encouraged the sheriff to work with our municipal law enforcement agencies to find a more appropriate location."

Woodridge Mayor William Murphy said although he got a verbal indication that the firing range was not going to be built there, "nothing has been in writing."

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The Village Board passed the resolution so it would be on record in opposing both uses, Halik said.

The resolution opposes the firing range or impound lot being located "at or near the DuPage County Waste Water Treatment Plant and/or the Greene Valley Forest Preserve," which "directly conflicts with the purpose of the Forest Preserve District and places an undue burden on DuPage County citizens residing near this location."

Regarding the impound lot,

Wagner said there is discussion at the staff level but no decisions have been made.

According to Carol Roegner, a spokeswoman for the DuPage County sheriff's office, state law requires the sheriff has a storage facility for vehicles seized by county and local law enforcement. The lot by the highway department in Wheaton is close to or at capacity, she said.

Bennington said many municipalities also do not have the room to store impounded vehicles, so the thought was to build a gravel and grass parking lot on vacant county-owned land surrounded by the Greene Valley

Forest Preserve. The property already is fenced off, and the lot could be used by all municipalities in the county, he said.

Woodridge forwarded a copy of the resolution to Schillerstrom and Forest Preserve District Board President Dewey Pierotti, Jr., and asked that the village be notified in writing about what happens regarding those uses anywhere in the county.

"They've said these are uses they have to address, and we want to know how they're going to address them," Halik said.

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