

BDC, Navy ink Bainbridge cleanup agreement

By Katie Tabeling ktabeling@cecilwhig.com Oct 23, 2019



Bainbridge Development Corporation Chairman Carl Roberts greets the board during the annual meeting on Monday night. Steve Cassard, the BDC executive director on the right, would later reveal details about the environmental services cooperative agreement signed that would start cleanup work on Bainbridge.

CECIL WHIG PHOTO BY KATIE TABELING

PORT DEPOSIT — The future continues to look bright for the former Bainbridge naval base, as the Bainbridge Development Corporation leadership revealed on Monday more details about the upcoming environmental site work agreement.

In the \$4.2 million environmental services cooperative agreement (ESCA), the U.S. Navy named BDC a contractor to start remediation work. In turn, the BDC signed on Weston Solutions and GTA to start cleanup, although more subcontractors may be added to the agreement. Federal funds are used to pay for the cleanup while the BDC would have oversight of the process.

With an unnamed prospect still eyeing 400 acres for warehouse and distribution use, the ESCA symbolizes a changing tide not only with the U.S. Navy but also continued energy in Bainbridge itself. Development is targeted to start in spring 2020.

"[The ESCA is] the best news of all," BDC Executive Director Steve Cassard told the board during its annual meeting. "The next six months are critical. You will see activity on the site, you will see things happening."

For years, soil contamination cleanup has stymied development efforts since the BDC took over the 1,200-acre site from the state in 1999. Original plans were for a residential, office, retail and industrial use but soil contamination forced the developer Manekin-Turner-Paterakis and Michael (MTPM) to reassess those plans.

The ESCA's first phase would include contractors walking the site, identifying and retrieving asbestos on the site, and removing any of it at least 2 inches in size and burying it.

After that, MTPM would start to clear pad sites with environmental contractors' oversight. As the soil is disturbed, those contractors would be able to identify asbestos-contained material if found, and test and remove it.

Ideally, the contamination would be buried on one location on Bainbridge with a restriction on digging there without Maryland Department of the Environment approval. In some scenarios, some of the material could be buried under the building slab, Cassard said.

The MDE expects by the end of this process to have a site ready for manufacturing or industrial use with no further action required.

Details on the agreement cap off a year of milestones to get Bainbridge reinvented and back on the county's tax rolls. Cecil County started work on a long-awaited sewer treatment plant off Route 222, with targeted completion in January 2020, providing the ability to treat 150,000 gallons per day.

A bill passed by the General Assembly authorizes the Maryland Department of Planning to study the reuse of historic sites, with three sites used as test cases. The historic Tome School for Boys campus on the western edge of Bainbridge was named one of them.

That study could open new doors for the Tome School, since it is not included in current redevelopment plans. The study is expected to be complete by Dec. 15.

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Infrastructure continues to be the biggest question the BDC, the county and town are left to answer. But there may be hope coming from Gov. Larry Hogan's office, as the BDC requested \$4 million in a special appropriation the Fiscal Year 2021 budget.

Wherever the funding comes from, Cassard said that there's buy-in from Port Deposit.

"The town has clearly indicated to us: it's not if, it's how they get water to the site," he said.

With these strides forward, BDC Chair Carl Roberts said his first year in office has been extraordinary in thanks to the team he's worked with. He was re-elected to a second term, along with county Economic Development Director Chris Moyer as vice-chair and Chick Hamm as treasurer.

"The people sitting around this table are in this for one reason and one reason only: to get out of business. We want that property developed and we want Port Deposit to take it over and have full reign," Roberts said. "When you have good people to work with and take their positions seriously, it can't get much better than that."