

The Berlin Sun

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Proposed Pike property purchase falls through

By EDITH TUCKER
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CONCORD — N. H. Trails Bureau chief Chris Gamache said the proposed state purchase of land owned by Pike Industries Inc. on the west side

of Route 2 in Gorham is “formally off the table.”

The once-proposed purchase that would have provided a large parking lot for OHRV enthusiasts’ vehicles and trailers would have been accessed

by riders via a one-lane St. Lawrence and Atlantic railroad underpass off Route 2, north of the Route 2 & 16 intersection.

In an interview last Thursday at a buffet breakfast in the State House

cafeteria sponsored by the N.H. Snowmobile Association, Gamache said it is his understanding that one or more of the residents who recently filed a

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lawsuit against both the town and the state had been in touch with Pike, leading the company to become concerned that it could become entangled in the case.

Gamache said that he had spent two years working to find a way to move OHRV parking from a lot on Route 2 west of town on the Presidential Rail Trail to a new location.

Negotiations had reached the point where a draft agreement had been prepared and he was hoping to schedule a public hearing on the state’s proposed purchase. Gamache said that the state is being represented by attorney Francis Fredericks of the Justice Department, specializing in the Highway Division.

Now, the Trails chief said he hoped to soon find a mutually convenient time in which he could meet with the selectmen and town manager Robin Frost to discuss this disappointing development.

The seven plaintiffs — four of whom live on Lancaster Road (Route 2) and three on Crestwood Drive — are asking that the town and state “per-

manently remove the OHRV trail head and trail from their neighborhood in compliance with defendants’ clear legal duty under the law” and pay damages for the loss of fair market value of their homes and award attorney fees, expert fees and expenses of litigation. They allege that the town and state, “both independently and collaboratively, approved, sanctioned and promoted the use of the trail head and trail in (their) neighborhood well knowing and admitting that the impacts on residences was significant yet failed and refused to correct the situation.”

When asked to about this winter’s snowmobile season, Gamache said it “wasn’t bad,” but that changing snow conditions and temperatures had kept paid registrations at around 43,000. Last winter’s registrations, in contrast, were over 47,000, and the department had based its current budget on 50,000 registrations.

ATV registrations last year were in the 34,000 to 35,000 range, and Gamache said he anticipates that in the foreseeable future that figure would likely either remain static or drop.