

BALTIMORE REGION

DIGEST

Arundel decides not to buy treatment plant

Anne Arundel County will take a pass on buying the Piney Orchard sewage treatment plant, allowing a developer to pursue his plan to build 1,600 homes near Fort Meade, County Executive John R. Leopold said yesterday.

While a deal brokered this week by John C. Stamato gave the county the right of first refusal to purchase the wastewater plant from Constellation Energy, Anne Arundel has enough sewage capacity in that area and upgrading the plant would be too costly, Leopold said.

The decision clears the way for Stamato to assume control of the facility this summer. He intends to use the plant to provide service for his proposed \$500 million Arundel Gateway project.

Stamato would seek to bring sewage lines west three miles toward a mostly barren two-mile strip of Route 198, where he wants to build 1,600 homes and a town center on 300 acres abutting the Patuxent Research Refuge.

Leopold said the county would not help to bear the estimated \$10 million cost of extending the sewage line, but he's committed to helping Sta-

mato negotiate with the National Park Service to bring water lines from Maryland City across the federally controlled Baltimore-Washington Parkway to the project site.

"In that sense, I am trying to be helpful," Leopold said.

The County Council must approve changes to the county's sewage master plan and the project site's industrial zoning to make the project a reality.

Stamato estimated that it would take two to three years to bring the utilities there. By then, the county likely will have completed a review of its growth blueprint, the General Development Plan, and Stamato will have gotten his zoning change.

"I am always an optimist," Stamato said.

[PHILLIP MCGOWAN]