

Klein Defends Suffolk Against Scout Attack

Hauppauge—Attempting to wipe away the label of “dummy” pinned on him by an irate Boy Scout, Suffolk Executive Klein insisted yesterday that the county is just an innocent bystander in the controversy over the Nassau Boy Scout Council’s plans to sell most of Camp Wauwepex in Wading River.

Klein’s attempt at image-repair during his weekly press conference was prompted by about 350 letters he said he has received from Nassau scouts and scout leaders in recent weeks. Scouts are protesting a plan by the scout council to sell most of the 420-acre camp to Suffolk County to help erase the Nassau Council’s debt of more than \$1,000,000.

“Don’t buy Wauwepex . . .” wrote a scout from Hicksville. “There are animals that attack you when you buy [sic] Wauwepex. You will be hated if you buy Wauwepex.” Another scout likened the proposed sale to “tearing down paradise and putting [sic] a parking lot,” and another wrote Klein that he would be “hated by all the scouts in the world” if the county bought the land. One short letter bore the word “dummy” in large letters.

“I’m very much concerned about the county’s image being that of a land-grabber,” Klein said. “We would not touch it with a 10-foot pole if the scouts are going to hold onto it. But if they’re going to dump it, we’re going to move in and take it.”

The Suffolk County Planning Commission voted unanimously Feb. 26 to recommend the acquisition, a day after the Nassau County Boy Scout Council had voted 35-1 to offer the property for sale. The council has said that its continued existence is imperiled by the \$1,000,000 debt that is costing \$100,000 a year in interest. Scoutmasters contend the debt can be handled without selling Wauwepex.

Klein also announced at the press conference that two hearings will be held next month to discuss community improvement and rehabilitation needs that could be met with \$1,100,000 in federal funds the county is to receive under the Housing and Community Development Act. The first will be on Tuesday at the Riverhead County Center and the second next Thursday at the Hauppauge County Center, both at 7:30 PM. The funds are to be used in towns and villages that agreed to participate with the county in applying jointly for the funds.

—Bob Keeler