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Inside ExploreLI

TOP STORIES

Campus owner vague on plans

'Very early in process' in creating school at Dowling's Oakdale site

BY RACHELLE BLIDNER
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Plans for Dowling College's Oakdale campus have not been "solidified" as the new owner studies the best educational use for the property, a company official said Tuesday.

Mercury International LLC representatives laid out their plans to run a higher education institute at the shuttered campus at its first public meeting Tuesday.

Mercury wants to open a school with "an international flavor" but it is "very early in the process" and does not have a curriculum, said Don Cook, director of operations, at the meeting in Islip Town Hall West auditorium in Islip.

"We want to do a market study to see what's needed out there," Cook, of Huntington, said.

"At this point, we're just trying to get the zoning to

allow us to explore our options."

Cook said he expected a school would not be up and running for at least a year and a half.

Mercury, of Delaware, was formed to operate the campus and has three full-time employees, plus security guards, Cook said. Its parent company is NCF Capital Ltd., a China-based multinational financial management company seeking to establish its first U.S. educational venture, Cook said.

NCF purchased the 25-acre property for \$26.1 million in August after Dowling closed and declared bankruptcy in 2016.

Mercury applied last month for a zoning change that would preserve some buildings' exteriors while allowing the interior to be used in alternative ways.

The zoning change would protect Idle Hour Mansion, the Performing Arts Center,

the Kramer Science Center, and the well, Cook said.

Thomas Wassel, a Cullen and Dykman LLP attorney representing Mercury, said the company was focused on obtaining an Islip Town permit needed to operate a college and couldn't "speculate about possible development of the property five to 10 years down the road."

Campus buildings are being heated and maintained after years of neglect under Dowling management, Cook said.

The company will also look at ways to generate revenue before opening a school and is in talks to purchase other parts of campus not included in the sale, Cook said.

Residents said they were glad to discuss the property's fate after years of uncertainty but expressed concerns about a lack of details.

"It's too vague," said Eileen Penny, who lives across the street from the campus. "Their plan is good but I can't see why they would invest all that money and have to wait four or five years to get income."

Tsunami warning? No, only a test

BY PATRICIA KITCHEN
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While Tuesday morning brought no real threat of a tsunami for the East Coast, a routine test did give rise to some finger pointing between the National Weather Service and AccuWeather, a private forecasting company.

The weather service said it was looking into how a routine test message issued around 8:30 a.m. by its National Tsunami Warning Center came to be released as an official tsunami warning by at least one private sector company, which it did not name.

That led to reports of tsunami warnings being received by phones and other media by those in the East

Coast, the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean, according to a weather service statement.

"There is no tsunami threat," the weather service said, and it did not disseminate the test message to the public.

At close to 12:30 p.m., AccuWeather, which had passed a warning along, said that, while the weather service's test message was clearly labeled a test, it was miscoded as a real warning.

The company "has sophisticated algorithms to scan the entire message, not just header words, as from the time of a warning to the actual event can be mere minutes," the AccuWeather statement said.

But the weather service said an investigation into

"this routine monthly tsunami test message confirmed that it was coded as a test message."

In a statement, it said it is working with private sector companies "to determine why some systems did not recognize the coding," adding that it will work with its partners "to prevent this from occurring again."

The Washington Post reviewed the alerts sent by the weather service and an article written Tuesday by Angela Fritz, an atmospheric scientist with a degree in meteorology, said: "All of them were coded with a 'T' at the beginning, which indicates it is a test," with archives showing that previous tests used "the same type of coding."

Liftoff


SpaceX's Falcon Heavy successfully launched on its first test flight on Tuesday. The rocket is the most powerful in use. **STORY, A29**