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**TOP STORIES**

# SUFFOLK SELECTS

## Multipurpose stadium part of project to develop 40-acre Ronkonkoma site

BY JIM BAUMBACH  
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A proposal for a 17,500-seat arena designed to lure a professional sports team to Suffolk County has been selected as the centerpiece for development of a 40-acre parcel between MacArthur Airport and the Ronkonkoma train station, a county spokesman said.

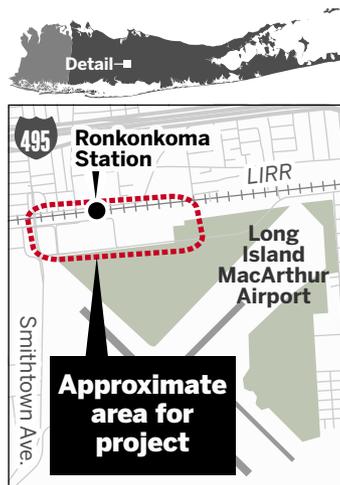
A committee overseeing a request for qualifications to develop the Ronkonkoma site on Friday selected a bid from Chicago real estate developer Jones Lang LaSalle and investment banker Ray Bartoszek to be the property's master developer, Suffolk spokesman Jason Elan said. The planned sports and entertainment venue would be nearly the same size as a new 19,000-seat arena the New York Islanders are preparing to build about 40 miles west at Belmont Park.

According to the proposal, the Ronkonkoma site is "an ideal location for a multipurpose arena/entertainment center," and the proposed arena "will enhance and complement the operations and marketability of other venues in the market while not conflicting with the catchment areas of the Barclays Center or Madison Square Garden."

John Cameron, managing partner of Woodbury-based Cameron Engineering, which is involved in the JLL-Bartoszek proposal, said last week the more than \$1 billion effort would be privately financed by JLL and Bartoszek's group.

"The JLL/Ronkonkoma Vision Project Team is excited to develop this important transformative project for the residents of the Town, the County and the Island," the investment group said in a statement. Cameron said they were informed of the county's decision Sunday evening.

Bartoszek, who lives in Big Sky, Montana, and has a home in Southampton, referred a call seeking comment to Ben Bouma, one of his partners. Bouma, a for-



NEWSDAY / GUSTAVO PABÓN

mer Penn State hockey player who worked for the Pittsburgh Pirates and Washington Capitals, did not respond to a message seeking comment.

DuWayne Gregory, the Suffolk legislature's presiding officer, said Sunday he had questions about traffic that would be generated, community support, the economic benefit and any costs to the county from the development.

"It's nice to build an arena, but is there a team that's going to come there?" Gregory (D-Coppage) said. "What's the likelihood of that? We certainly would not like to see empty buildings."

Cameron said last week that no professional sports teams or leagues have committed to their group, adding he expected sports teams and leagues would take greater interest once they won the bid.

**Arena choice questioned**

Gregory said he wanted to see all the proposals submitted to the county's request for qualifications and learn why the committee selected the arena pitch. The joint venture between Jones Lang LaSalle, which has offices in Manhattan and Melville, and Bartoszek, a minority owner of the Yankees who in 2015 tried unsuccessfully to build a hockey arena in Seattle, was one of four proposals received by the county.

"I'm surprised that they [the

**THE PROPOSAL**

Developer Jones Lang LaSalle and investment banker Ray Bartoszek submitted the winning proposal to develop 40 acres south of the LIRR station in Ronkonkoma.

**17,500**-seat sports arena

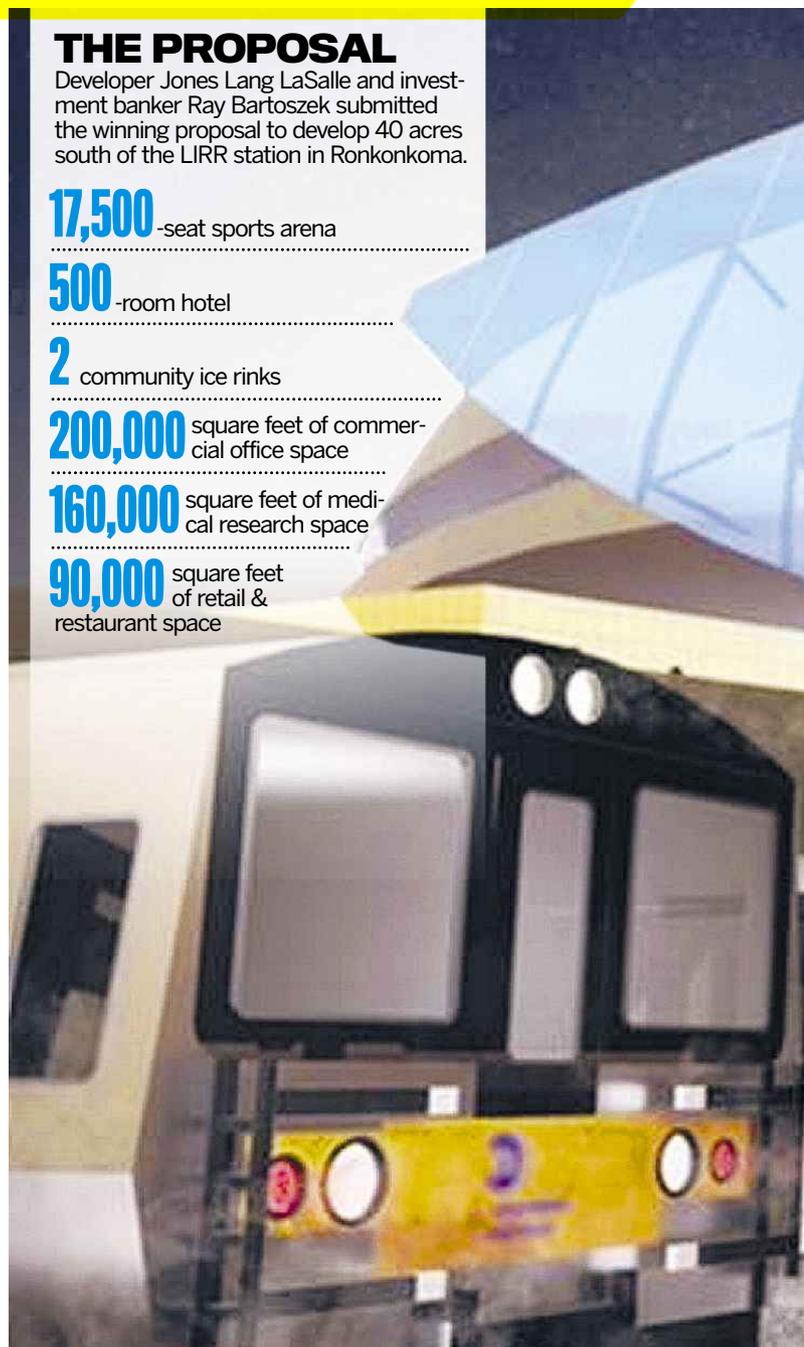
**500**-room hotel

**2** community ice rinks

**200,000** square feet of commercial office space

**160,000** square feet of medical research space

**90,000** square feet of retail & restaurant space



county review committee] moved so quickly after just presenting the four proposals to the community a couple of weeks ago," Suffolk Legis. Tom Cilmi (R-Bay Shore) said.

Cilmi said the arena proposal had "intrigued him the most" but significant questions still had to be answered.

A spokeswoman for Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo, who has

backed plans for an arena at Belmont Park and committed \$6 million in state money to upgrade NYCB Live's Nassau Coliseum so the Islanders could play some games there, did not respond to a request for comment.

Ronkonkoma civic leaders have long advocated for development of the property, currently occupied by sprawling county-owned parking lots that serve

# \$1B SPORTS ARENA PLAN



A rendering shows the arena complex proposed by developer Jones Lang LaSalle in Ronkonkoma.

the Long Island Rail Road station. Islip Town owns parts of the land on the northern border of the airport.

The JLL group pitched a mixed-used project featuring the arena and a 500-room hotel, two community ice rinks, retail, dining, offices and a sports medicine facility, according to a copy of its 76-page proposal submitted to the county.

The proposal cites the location's proximity to the LIRR, MacArthur Airport and the Long Island Expressway as reasons why such a large-scale arena development project could succeed there. It makes no mention of the Coliseum, which opened a year ago following an 18-month, \$180 million renovation, or the Islanders' planned arena at Belmont, which isn't ex-

pected to open until, at the earliest, 2021.

The proposed Ronkonkoma venue would be more than twice the size of a 7,500-seat hockey arena proposed last month by Bayville developer Bernard Shereck, who said he hopes to purchase a 32-acre site in Medford owned by Suffolk County Regional Off-Track Betting Corp. Shereck has said he would move a

minor league East Coast Hockey League franchise to Medford.

The Ronkonkoma arena plan, which requires the Suffolk legislature's approval before proceeding to an environmental review, was selected over bids from major Long Island developers RXR Realty and Tritec Real Estate, which proposed separate retail and residential developments, and Renaissance Down-

towns, which pitched an e-commerce distribution center.

East Setauket-based Tritec last year broke ground on the Ronkonkoma Hub housing and retail development on the north side of the LIRR tracks. The arena proposal is for the south side of the tracks.

"We have strong private sector interest in this site for three main reasons: An amazing community-driven process, the transformative investments Governor Cuomo has made in the LIRR with Double Track and Third Track, and Supervisor Carpenter's leadership in revitalizing MacArthur Airport," Elan said in a statement, referring to LIRR efforts to improve service on Long Island by adding additional tracks on existing lines and Islip Town Supervisor Angie Carpenter. He would not comment further on the selection decision.

## Luxury suites proposed

According to the proposal, Bartoszek and two sports executives who partnered with him on the Seattle arena project in December created the investment group Ronkonkoma Vision Project LLC, which is listed as JLL's partner on the group's submission to the county. Spectra, a subsidiary of Comcast Spectacor, which also owns the NHL's Philadelphia Flyers and the Wells Fargo Arena in Philadelphia, would manage the proposed arena, which is to include as many as 60 luxury suites.

The group's proposal includes 45,200 square feet of office space adjacent to the arena that is dedicated for the use by the facility's professional sports team, citing the need for its "training, hockey operations, administration."

Bartoszek, who graduated from the Merchant Marine Academy in Kings Point in 1986, has publicly expressed an interest in professional sports team ownership in recent years. He tried to buy a piece of the Mets in 2011 before purchasing a minority share of the Yankees that year. According to reports, Bartoszek also tried to buy the NHL's Arizona Coyotes in Phoenix in 2013 and move them to Seattle; two years later he and his partners tried to build a sports arena in Seattle.

With David M. Schwartz