

Sale of Scout Camp Opposed

By Tom Incantalupo

Wading River—Top Nassau County Boy Scout officials, faced with a \$900,000 debt and a continuing decline in the number of Scouts, now have encountered a petition and bumper-sticker campaign by two dozen lower-echelon Scout officials protesting a plan to sell Camp Wauwepex here.

The conflict began March 20 when the 40-member executive board of the Nassau County Boy Scout Council authorized negotiations for sale of the 550-acre camp to Suffolk County. The county has held \$3,000,000 in its capital budget for the past three years to buy the land for its north-south greenbelt in Brookhaven Town, according to Chief Deputy County Executive Arthur Bergmann.

The council has been operating at a deficit for the past 10 years, its president, Francis Looney, said in explaining the proposed sale. The county's scout registration has dropped sharply from the high of 49,000 in 1962, he said.

Scouting officials expect to gain as much as \$5,000,000 for the land, according to Looney. Some of the money will be used to modernize the Nassau Scouts' 5,900-acre facility near Livingston Manor in the Catskills, he said, while the rest will be invested to gradually eliminate debts.

The council says that only 4,800 of their Scouts used Wauwepex last year. But the newly formed Ad Hoc Committee to Save Camp Wauwepex says that the correct number is actually about 7,800, according to Irving Schrom, president of the group and assistant commissioner of Nassau's "Great Bear" Scout district.

The committee also claims that weekend Scout campers would be inconvenienced by having to travel to Livingston Manor. But Looney said that they could use a campsite at Baiting Hollow owned by Suffolk Scouts, a Woodbury camp owned by Queens Scouts, or a number of public parks. Schrom's group remains unconvinced. "We're not in the real estate business," said Schrom. "You can't camp on a dollar bill. You can't drive a tent pole into a trust fund."