

MIDDLETOWN

Employee wants shot at ownership

The man who wants to run the township-owned country club is a familiar face there.

By CHRIS ENGLISH COURIER TIMES

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The man who runs day-to-day operations at the township-owned Middletown Country Club would like to be his own boss.

Rick Begley, general manager and superintendent of the facility on Bellevue Avenue, has made a proposal to buy the license agreement and take over operation of the country club under his own company. He now works for the current operating company, Mitchland Inc., a group headed by Newtown Athletic Club owner Jim Worthington.

Begley said he's trying to work out an extension of the license agreement with township officials, but he didn't want to get into specifics, other than saying he's confident outstanding issues could be resolved.

"It's a couple of little things," he said. "It's up to them [township officials]."

Begley has worked at the country club since 1994. Since 1999, he's been an employee of Mitchland Inc. Before that, he worked for the previous operating company, the Golf Corp.

Worthington said putting the country club in Begley's hands would be a good move.

"It's kind of been Rick's dream," said Worthington. "He's essentially run things there for the last three or four years anyway. I haven't really been there in two years. The country club really needs someone who is on site and really into golf and wants to make a living from the golf business, and that's Rick. I hope the township works things out with him because it would make sense."

Worthington said he's offered to sell the license agreement to Begley for "less than half" of the \$1.4 million Worthington paid for it in 1999.

"I'm giving him a substantial discount because Rick has worked really hard and been loyal and deserves this shot," said Worthington. "If the township can't work things out with Rick, we'll actively put the license agreement out there for what it's really worth, more than a million dollars."

The country club includes a golf course, a swimming pool and banquet facilities. While Begley wouldn't comment on his plans, Worthington said all current operations would be continued and Begley might even reopen the restaurant that was closed several years ago.

While declining to talk about specifics of the proposed extension being negotiated with Begley, township supervisors Chairwoman Lisa Pflaumer said she's hopeful things could be worked out.

"We've ironed out some details and I think just a few more remain," said Pflaumer. "I think we can come out with a good plan that can suit everyone concerned."