

LOCAL/STATE**Futia still seeks to build cen**By **ANDY DANZO****Knickerbocker News Reporter**

Joséph N. Futia Sr., the developer-promoter who first proposed an Albany County civic center last fall, is not withdrawing his proposal, but he is growing impatient.

Futia, who has been publicly silent in recent weeks, Thursday denied a report he had withdrawn his plan to build an \$11 million civic center adjacent to his Colonie Coliseum in Latham.

However, he said he would not keep the proposal open indefinitely and expressed irritation with the number of civic center plans that had been advanced since he announced his with Albany County Executive James J. Coyne in October.

"If Albany drags its feet, we'll have to bring the center somewhere else," Futia said. "If they (county officials) keep finding other proposals, I think they're voiding their agreement."

There has not been a formal agreement between the county and Futia, but Coyne has worked closely with the developer on his proposal.

Rensselaer County officials have expressed strong interest in having the civic center and have discussed possible sites in East Greenbush and a \$6 million private financing offer.

Futia said while he was tempted by Rensselaer County, he still would like to build his center in Albany County. Previously he said he would only wait until March 1 for a commitment from Albany County, but Thursday he declined to put a specific deadline on his offer.

Coyne said Thursday he was asking the county civic center review commission to make a recommendation on the best proposal by March 12. The special bipartisan commission's recommendation would not be binding, but Coyne said he wanted it before making his own recom-

mendation to the County Legislature, which is meeting March 12.

As Futia left a commission hearing on the State University at Albany proposal Thursday, he said he was keeping his Albany County proposal open.

The university has proposed a \$25 million combined field house and civic center on university land. The civic center would be 140,000 square feet and have 11,000 seats.

The state would be pay \$10 million of the \$25 million project cost, with the city of Albany and Albany County backing the remaining \$15 million.

The arrangement could leave local residents paying \$1.34 million a year in principal and interest for the project's financing.

Futia originally proposed an 80,000-square-foot civic center seating 6,000 to 10,000, depending on the type of event, and costing \$11 million. Construction

ter, but hits delay

would be financed by Futia, but the county would buy the complex on completion and lease it back to Futia. Coyne has estimated the annual debt cost of that plan at about \$1 million.

Futia has since said he could change the size of the facility if the county desired, but he has not publicly offered details.

Coyne said Thursday he was willing to commit the county to a maximum \$1.5 million annual debt service for a civic center, but added he still hoped to get one for nothing.

He said he hoped in several days to discuss with Gov. Mario Cuomo state backing for a center on Albany Housing Authority land on the southeast side of the Empire State Plaza.

"Phone calls are being made every hour (to set the meeting)," Coyne said. Two weeks ago Coyne also said he was

seeking a meeting with Cuomo.

Coyne has said he hopes the state will build the civic center by extending the arrangement that financed the Empire State Plaza. Under that arrangement the county issued bonds for construction, but the state is repaying them in full through leases on the facility.

State officials have said extending the Empire State Plaza financing to a civic center would require the approval of the state Legislature in addition to Cuomo's endorsement. The County Legislature also be would required to rule on the issue.

Hypothetically, Coyne said, if the university site and the Empire State Plaza site were to cost the county the exact same amount, he would favor the latter because it would help redevelopment efforts in downtown Albany.

Albany Mayor Thomas M. Whalen III is backing the university site, saying he



Joseph N. Futia Sr.
... denies he is quitting

considers a downtown site less feasible. He said the city could pay up to \$200,000 a year for the campus center.