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Buyers unlikely for at least 6 A&P-owned supermarkets in Bergen, Passaic counties

OCTOBER 8, 2015, 8:21 PM LAST UPDATED: THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2015, 8:30 PM

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CHRIS PEDOTA/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

The A&P on Route 46 West in Woodland Park was one of eight stores in Bergen and Passaic that had not been bid on going into the Thursday auction.

Most of the A&P-owned stores that have not received bids most likely will close rather than go to potential bidders, real estate experts and a local union leader said.

In Bergen and Passaic counties, eight stores did not receive bids in auctions last week. Winning bidders are expected to be announced for two of those stores, but the remaining stores are likely to close, which could mean the loss of more than 500 jobs.

Montvale-based A&P, which filed for bankruptcy July 19, held a third day of auctions Thursday and will schedule an additional auction at a later date, according to sources familiar with the bankruptcy proceedings. Results of the Thursday auction were not known, but the odds of finding a buyer don't look good for the stores in Bergen or Passaic still on the auction block as of Thursday.

Related: [Eight A&P stores in North Jersey fail to find buyers in auction](#)

The eight stores in Bergen and Passaic that weren't bid on going into the Thursday auction were the A&P markets in Pompton Lakes, Washington Township, Wayne, West Milford and Woodland Park, and the Pathmark stores in Fair Lawn, Hackensack and Ramsey. Sources familiar with the bidding said the Washington Township store is expected to be purchased by an operator of Foodtown supermarkets, and that the lease on the Fair Lawn store is expected to be purchased by the landlord.

Matthew Casey, of Matthew P. Casey & Associates, a New Jersey-based real estate analysis firm specializing in supermarket properties, said it is unlikely A&P will receive an eleventh-hour burst of bidding after Thursday.

"Everybody's come out of the woodwork already," Casey said. While A&P may pick up buyers for a few more stores, he added, "I don't see a mad rush" for the stores that have not been bid on at the auctions. As of last week, 73 stores in four states had not received bids.

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"Anybody who may be interested in these properties has had more than ample time to look at, evaluate and consider these locations," said Casey. If another supermarket bidder hasn't surfaced yet, he said, it is unlikely they will do so now.

John Niccollai, president of Little Falls-based Local 464A of the United Food and Commercial Workers, the union that represents more than 7,000 A&P and Pathmark store employees, said the results of the store auctions conducted last week weren't as promising as the union had hoped. He said workers at the unsold stores have been told by A&P managers to expect that their stores will close by Thanksgiving.

Niccollai said he has heard from potential bidders that the rents on some of the unsold stores in Bergen and Passaic were too high to be attractive to a new supermarket tenant. The unsold stores most likely will close and "go dark" or become vacant, he said. However, he expects that a number of them will eventually land new supermarket tenants after A&P turns the stores back over to the landlords.

"I just don't see them staying empty indefinitely," he said. "The locations are too good."

Niccollai said some 4,500 of Local 464A's more than 7,000 members who work at A&P-owned stores have secured jobs with Acme, Stop & Shop or other bidders who have purchased stores and retained union employees. Acme bought 71 stores and is in the process of converting them to its brand. The first replacement Acme store in Bergen County was scheduled to open today in Edgewater, at a site that was a Pathmark store up until Tuesday. Another replacement Acme will open today in West New York.

Stop & Shop said Thursday that it had begun converting the 25 stores it purchased. It expects to close groups of up to five stores for remodeling, and the work will last about seven days before the stores are reopened. The first converted stores, all located in New York, will open Oct. 16. The Closter A&P that is being converted to a Stop & Shop is expected to be completed in mid-November.

Niccollai said Acme notified the union Wednesday that it is "looking to hire a significant number of people" at its new stores in North Jersey and elsewhere, and on Thursday union representatives visited the unsold A&P stores to collect résumés to give to Acme. About 200 résumés were sent to Acme on Thursday evening, he said. "A&P was bare-bones in terms of the workforce," Niccollai said, adding he expects both Acme and Stop & Shop to offer employment to a number of the workers who will lose their jobs when unsold stores are closed.

There are multiple reasons why the unsold stores in Bergen and Passaic haven't received bids, Casey said.

Some of the A&P and Pathmark stores had such low sales volume "that no other supermarket wants to tackle the location because A&P or Pathmark have already proved it's a poor location," he said.

The factor scaring potential bidders away from several of the unsold stores most likely is the proximity of a very successful ShopRite store, Casey said. The Ramsey location, for example, has to compete with a thriving ShopRite, also in Ramsey, on the other side of Route 17, and probably no one wants to take that on, he said.

Bankruptcy law gives A&P 120 days to assign the store leases to new buyers or return the stores to landlords, with the option to request a 90-day extension. The original 120-day period for A&P expires in November.

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