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# Hunts Point Stays Put

By SUMATHI REDDY

The Hunts Point wholesale produce market in the South Bronx has reached a tentative agreement with city officials to extend its lease for three years.

As part of the deal, the cooperative that runs the market has agreed to negotiate exclusively with the city for nine months over the terms of a long-term lease and the construction of a new facility.

The market's cooperative association is expected to vote on the agreement on Thursday.

The market, said to be the largest such facility in the world, was eyeing several sites in New Jersey for a potential relocation when its lease expired at the end of May.

The one-million-square-foot facility in Hunts Point employs 3,000 union workers and supplies produce to some 23 million people a day within a 50-mile radius, according to business owners.

"It's great news that the co-op will remain in the Bronx for at least the next three years, and we're more optimistic today than ever that it will thrive there for many more years to come," said Mayor Michael Bloomberg in an emailed statement.

Stephen Katzman, co-president of the Hunts Point Terminal Produce Cooperative, said in a statement that the lease extension "keeps us in the Bronx for at least the next three years."

But New Jersey officials say don't count them out yet. Fred Snowflack, a spokesman for Lt. Gov. Kim Guadagno, whose office was working to lure Hunts Point to New Jersey, said the Garden State is confident that a move across the Hudson is still possible.

"This really is only a temporary agreement," Mr. Snowflack said. "So basically our feeling is after the nine month period is up, New Jersey will still be in a very good position to convince Hunts Point that New Jersey is really the best place for their business."

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