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Amazon has reportedly held advanced talks about opening its planned second headquarters in Northern Virginia's Crystal City business enclave, but Philadelphia officials aren't indicating that they've given up hope of claiming the massive, job-creating corporate complex for themselves.

The Amazon.com Inc. discussions have revolved around specific buildings in the Arlington County district and have included such details as when employees may move in and how an announcement of the site's selection might be made, the [Washington Post reported Saturday](#), citing public- and private-sector officials it did not identify. "There's a lot of activity," one unidentified person reportedly close to the process told the Post. People "seem really positive, and they seem pretty confident."

The area, part of metropolitan Washington, is, along with Philadelphia, among the 20 locations that remain under consideration by the Seattle company for its so-called HQ2 office development, where it has said it will employ as many as 50,000 people. The company has said it would make its decision before the end of 2018.

Whether or not Crystal City is the final victor in the competition begun by Amazon last year when it issued an open invitation for cities to pitch themselves as headquarters hosts, the reported negotiations indicate that the company is entering a final phase of its selection process, garnering concrete proposals from public officials and evaluating specific real estate options.

John Grady, president of the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corp., which has teamed with Philadelphia's Commerce Department on the city's HQ2 bid, declined in an interview Saturday to speculate on what the reported talks meant for Philadelphia's hopes or to remark on any potential recent activity regarding the city's bid. "We think Philadelphia has competed well and shown itself through this process," he said. Commerce Department spokeswoman Lauren Cox said in an email that her office has "no new information to share about the status of the HQ2 process."

Jerry Sweeney, who is overseeing the development of one of the Philadelphia sites pitched to Amazon — the Schuylkill Yards project in University City — as chief executive of Brandywine Realty Trust, said the city will have benefited from its overtures to Amazon even if it is not selected. "If we don't win we will congratulate Amazon on orchestrating a game-changing process, and also the winning city," Sweeney said in an email. "Just as importantly, we will use all we learned during this process to both pursue and capture another job-growth success story."

'We are in a battle for America's soul'

Leaders of other development companies associated with sites proposed as potential headquarters locations by the city — Wexford Science & Technology's uCity Square project in University City and Liberty Property Trust in South Philadelphia's Navy Yard — either declined to comment or did not respond to messages. A message seeking comment from Amazon also yielded no response. Mike Grella, Amazon's economic development director, reacting to the Post's story, posted on Twitter: "Memo to the genius leaking info about Crystal City, VA as #HQ2 selection. You're not doing Crystal City, VA any favors."

Amazon's plans call for spending more than \$5 billion on the new headquarters, which it has said could eventually encompass eight million square feet of offices, an amount of space equal to more than six Comcast Center towers. The Washington area — Northern Virginia in particular — has topped many analysts' lists of likely choices, thanks to an existing regional presence of Amazon workers, as well as its easy transit options, available office space, and accessible airports. Amazon chief executive Jeff Bezos also has a home in Washington and owns the Post newspaper.

There is no indication that any company representatives have returned to Philadelphia since their initial forays to each of the finalist cities earlier this year. The Post said in its report on Saturday that Crystal City area officials "have discussed how to make an announcement to the public this month, following the midterm elections" and that JBG Smith, the enclave's dominant real estate developer, has stopped marketing some of its buildings for lease so they'll be available for Amazon's use.

John Boyd, a Princeton-based corporate-location adviser whose company has helped Boeing Co., PepsiCo Inc., and others with site searches, said he was especially interested in what Bezos had meant last week when he said in an onstage interview that he planned to rely on his intuition alongside the quantitative data Amazon is compiling for his HQ2 site deliberations. "You immerse yourself in that data, but then you make the decision with your heart," Bezos told journalist Walter Isaacson during the Thursday event in New York hosted by the education nonprofit FIRST.

The comment was "very significant and indicative of this idea of social impact," Boyd said, "and I think that's something for Philadelphia and Chicago and Newark, N.J., to feel good about." — ***Philadelphia Inquirer***

Verizon Communications Inc.'s new chief executive is restructuring the carrier's business lines, including its massive wireless business, in one of the first major organizational changes under his leadership. Hans Vestberg is reorganizing the company's divisions by the types of consumers served, rather than by the type of service provided, the company said Monday. "The customers will actually have access to all the assets we have," including 4G and faster 5G wireless, broadband and wireline service, Mr. Vestberg said of the changes in an interview.

Ronan Dunne, 55 years old, currently group president of Verizon Wireless—the firm's biggest unit—will now lead the new Verizon Consumer Group. That new division includes consumer-focused wireless and wireline service. Tami Erwin, 54, who is currently executive vice president of wireless operations, will lead a new business-focused unit. That division, called Verizon Business Group, will include wireless and wireline services for businesses and enterprises, including small and medium-size businesses and government contracts. She will also oversee Verizon's telematics business.

The changes are a promotion for Ms. Erwin, a company veteran who started her career as a wireless customer-service representative and rose within the company to hold several senior positions. A new unit, called Global Network and Technology, will be led by Kyle Malady, 51, who is now chief technology officer. Guru Gowrappan, the 38-year-old leader of Verizon's digital media and advertising unit, will head a newly formed media group that houses Oath.

Mr. Vestberg, who was previously the chief executive of Ericsson AB, became chief executive on Aug. 1, succeeding Lowell McAdam. He has led a companywide push to cut costs and has made building a faster, 5G, network the center of the carrier's strategy. The changes will take effect in January and Verizon will change the way it reports its financial performance in the second quarter.

The wireless business accounted for \$23 billion of the company's \$32.6 billion in third-quarter revenue. Verizon's purchase of Vodafone PLC's 45% stake in Verizon Wireless in 2014 helped paved the way for the changes, Mr. Vestberg said, because it gave the carrier full control of the wireless business. While Verizon's rivals have pursued large deals to transform their businesses in recent years, the largest U.S. wireless carrier by subscribers has opted instead to focus primarily on building a faster network.

Large U.S. carriers haven't yet articulated how they will charge customers for 5G service in the coming years, but some analysts say the faster service could be an opportunity to generate new revenue. "We would not be surprised to see more, higher-usage plans introduced as 5G comes along, offering higher price points for the customers who want the best service," JPMorgan Chase & Co. analysts wrote in a note after meeting with top Verizon executives Friday. — *Wall Street Journal*

My first Election Day wish, always and of course, is that you vote.

As Thomas Jefferson put it, the basis of our government is "the opinion of the people." That's you. And this year, both unusually *and* understandably, it appears that you will vote. At least in greater numbers than in the last midterms, in 2014. But then 2014

drew the lowest national turnout in 70 years. And here in the cradle of democracy, city and state turnout was just 36 percent.

And now? Well, last week's Franklin and Marshall College [poll](#) shows 87 percent of registered voters say they're "certain to vote," an 11 percent jump since June. So, that's good. Though people tell pollsters lots of things. And lots of people don't trust pollsters (or anyone, including the press). But it sure feels as if folks are more engaged than normal. Plus, absentee ballot requests are way up.

On Friday, the Pennsylvania Department of State had a statewide number approaching 230,000 — more than double the requests in 2014. Counties with the most absentee ballot requests: Allegheny (26,658); Montgomery (21,091); Bucks (17,251); Chester (15,709); Philadelphia (13,460); Delaware (11,215). I'd just note that there are 8.4 million registered voters in the state.

Still, this makes me wish, as I have before, that Pennsylvania would join a majority of states that do not, as we do, require an excuse to vote absentee. I also wish we'd get through every Election Day without polling place nonsense that calls the purity of the vote into question. I just think we've all had it with losers' croaks about "rigged" elections and voter fraud, which rank at the same level of veracity as claims that criminal, diseased, Honduran hordes are racing north to vote for Democrats. Enough with the nutso junk.

Another wish? Pennsylvania steps toward joining the current century in terms of gender representation. Our 18-member congressional delegation has no women. Throughout history, our state elected just seven women to Congress. [Eight women](#) are running now. They all can't win. Two are running for the same seat in the Fifth Congressional District in Philly's burbs, where it's Republican Pearl Kim vs. Democrat Mary Gay Scanlon. But some will win. So that's a start.

And save the whining about how character, not gender should be the focus. I've seen enough male characters whose very presence in office pleads for gender parity. Also, representation should be the focus. We've got no women in Congress. While I'm at it, I wish election days were national holidays. Or that elections took place over multiple days, including a weekend. Why wouldn't a democratic republic encourage greater participation?

Oh, and I wish Pennsylvania had legislative leaders who believe in democracy more than protecting incumbents, and who'd replace our outdated voting laws with same-day registration, open primaries, and early voting. And I wish young people would vote. In 2016, just 46 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds cast ballots. As usual, the lowest voting-age group.

I wish it weren't so but as long as it continues, Congress and legislatures can disproportionately address issues of those who vote ([U.S. Census](#) says 71 percent of those 65 and older voted in 2016) and

downplay concerns of those who don't. As to stuff we think we know? I dove into the latest Franklin and Marshall poll with its methodologist Berwood Yost, looking for "blue wave" evidence — because I'm suspicious of same. After tinkering with turnout models, Yost offers this: Although all voting groups, Republicans, Democrats, independents, say they're interested in the election and likely to vote, 95 percent of those who say they're "strong Democrats" plan on voting straight ticket.

On the other hand, says Yost, of those who say they're "strong Republicans," 75 percent say they'll vote straight GOP. Yost says this suggests Democratic voters are "more cohesive" than Republicans, which can help all D candidates. Finally, (cliché alert) the only poll that counts is on Election Day. The only way it counts is if you vote. And I wish Pennsylvania would start leading the way in expressing "the opinion of the people." — **Political columnist John Baer in the Philadelphia Daily News**

