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Windham Foundation Looking Toward Future with Property Purchase

By Michael Ryan

WINDHAM - A transformational purchase of property has been brought to pass by the Windham Foundation, meaningfully deepening their commitment to their adopted home of Windham.

The historic transaction was announced in a September 27 press release issued by the Foundation, setting aside a 34-acre parcel for future community-shared recreational and civic opportunities.

In addition, a doorway has been welcomingly opened for an expansion of the popular Windham Path, some day down the road, extending it to the new land, located on the outskirts of the hamlet of Hensonville.

And the timing of the half-million dollar buy brings serendipitous resolution to controversy embroiling the town the past six months

about a proposed plan to build little league fields at the Windham Path.

The intense turmoil over the ballfields is not mentioned as such in the press release, emerging after Foundation leaders say they had decided to become financially supportive of some type of little league project.

Foundation president Paul Mutter, in a phone interview, said conversations about the fields date back to November, 2023, and a Foundation dinner in New York City attended by Windham town supervisor Thomas Hoyt.

Hoyt, at that fundraising gathering, explained a dilemma surrounding the little league diamond which is being squeezed for space and becoming unsafe at its traditional location, along South Street in Windham.

"We talked about how we could maybe be constructive," Mutter said, with the

Foundation having assisted the town in multiple ways since its inception, two decades ago.

The Foundation ultimately teamed with Hoyt, town assessor Richard Tollner and former town attorney Larry Gardner, scouring tax rolls to perhaps acquire real estate for the ballfields and/or to pay for them.

"There wasn't a lot of land that wasn't already taken," Mutter said, noting all the involved parties agreed to circumspectly and silently proceed so as to not inflate or jeopardize the delicate deal.

Supervisor Hoyt broke the news at a September 26 town council session, saying in a prepared statement that, "for the past six months I have been working with the non-profit Windham Foundation to secure property to expand recreational programming in Windham.

"I am pleased to announce that, with the generous support of the Windham Foundation, about 34-acres of vacant land along County Route 65A in the hamlet of Hensonville has been secured."

The Foundation, in their press release, stated they are a, "nonprofit philanthropic organization founded in 2004 to enhance and enrich Windham's community through charitable grants for historical preservation, the arts, education and recreation.

"The property is now under contract to The Windham Foundation and is expected to close within 60 days," the release states.

"The \$500,000 purchase price for the land was agreed to, thanks to the multi-generational, community-minded spirit of its current owners, Sotrios and Georgia Econopouly and their chil-

dren Demetrios, Kathy and Joanne.

"The Windham Foundation will initiate a new capital fundraising campaign to pay the balance of a seller's note, and to facilitate further development of the land and other causes," the press release states.

"The now-undeveloped land, nestled along Greene County Route 65A, known locally as Seeley Road, was at one time home to Kallithea Farm."

Further, the Kallithea site was home to the "Orchard Grove House, a hotel property which was destroyed by fire in 1988," the press release states.

"The parcel will take on a new use as home to a seven-acre Little League Baseball facility. Construction of the ball fields is expected to begin in 2025, with the remainder of the land set aside for future community use.

"Separately, the Town of Windham, facilitated by [Mutter] and [Foundation] vice-president Matt Rodrigue, received approval from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to establish a 1.5 mile extension of the Windham Path through adjoining woods on town-owned land known as the "Dent Loop."

"Following Phase 1 of clearing the new trail [on the DEP land], which will also begin next year, Phase 2 of the project envisions linking the Dent Loop to the Econopouly property.

"When that work is completed, the Windham Path and the land acquired by The Windham Foundation, connected by the Dent Loop, will provide an extraordinary multi-use recreational asset for the Town of Windham."

Supervisor Hoyt, earlier

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HAVE DRUMS WILL TRAVEL
H-T SOCCER PHOTOS

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this year, reported an unfolding agreement with the DEP, allowing a portion of their lands, adjacent to the Path, to be cleared for a walking trail, minimally impacting the woody terrain.

Mutter, in the press release, stated, "over the last year, as we reconstituted and expanded our Board of Directors, we have watched, listened to, and spoken with community leaders, citizens and other interested parties about Windham's current and future needs.

"We are now pleased to be able to take constructive action to help address them," Mutter stated, then apparently touched upon the ballfields issue.

"When good people on all sides of a debate can come together creatively to find solutions for the benefit of Windham's year-round

and weekender families and children, and the visitors who help grow our local economy, everyone wins," Mutter stated.

"Acquisition of the 34 acres of the Econopouly land, and the multi-use activity that will evolve at the site in the coming years, will likely spur continued growth in and around Hensonville, which has benefitted from significant recent entrepreneurial and residential investment," the press release states.

Supervisor Hoyt, in the press release stated, "I grew up in Windham, living and working here all of my life, and count as friends both people who were born and remain here, as well as those who have discovered our beautiful corner of the Catskills later in life and enjoy everything we have

to offer.

"Healthy debate is vital to a town's long-term growth, and we have all heard and learned much from one another, resulting in an unprecedented act of generosity from The Windham Foundation."

The Foundation's action,

Multiple Win Awards During Recognition Gala

By Michael Ryan

ASHLAND - The mountaintop-based Windham Manor served as host for the 2024 Greene County Chamber of Commerce Recognition Gala, on September 25, honoring businesses and individuals.

Awards were presented for Businessman of the Year (Joseph M. Pilatich), Businesswoman of the Year (Kitty Kelly) and Not-For-Profit of the Year (Hudson-Athens Lighthouse Preservation Society).

Honorees also included Distinguished Service, (Greene County sheriff Pete Kusminsky), Small Business of the Year, (Willa's) and Large Business of the Year (Tip Top Tent Rentals), featured in our September 27 issue.

BUSINESSMAN OF THE YEAR

Dr. Joseph M Pilatich III was born to the late Joseph M Pilatich II and Rita Pilatich. He Joe attended St. Patrick's elementary through 7th grade until switching

"will help us build a 'Field of Dreams' for our young people, and so much more, in years to come," Hoyt stated.

An all-volunteer board runs the Windham Foundation, to date awarding \$5.5 million toward cultural and community initiatives, recreational and educational programs and disaster relief efforts, the press release states.

The Foundation will have a central location at Windham's 30th Annual Autumn Affair on October 12-13, allowing leaders to respond in person to inquiries about plans for the Econopouly

land, the press release states.

Board of directors members are Mutter, Rodrigue, Robert Pollichino (treasurer), Christine Ciampa (secretary), Christine Anderson, Vincent Angiolillo, Huw Daniel, Phyllis Parrish, Robert Greifeld, Josh King, and erman D. Smith.



Businesswoman of the Year, Kitty Kelly (left), congratulated by Alex Horton, representing Congressman Marc Molinaro.



Joseph M. Pilatich III, DDS (left), Businessman of the Year, accompanied by his wife Anna (center), welcomed by Greene County Chamber of Commerce deputy director Beth Stewart.

to Catskill High School where he graduated in 1984.

He then attended Siena college, graduating in 1988 with a BS in Biology. He obtained his dental degree in 1992 from the University of Maryland and completed a general practice residency at the Albany VA in 1993.

Joe has coached Catskill youth baseball and basketball. He has been a member of the Catskill Elks Lodge for 25 years and a lifelong member of the Catskill St. Patrick's Parish.

Joe donates to many local charities and sponsors many events. He has spoken at his high school Alma Mater on three separate occasions; twice as the Commencement Speaker in 1992 and 2020 and also in 1998, during National Honor Society inductions.

He has also been a Guest Speaker at Career Day at Columbia Greene Community College for many years.

Joe's impressive resume began with his first paid job

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Informational Collaboration Session
Presented by WARF and Preserve The Windham Path
Windham Senior/Ambulance Center
October, 18th 2024 at 7pm Snack and Refreshments
<https://windhampath.substack.com/>
Preserve The Path



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