

The Following is the text of the Statement made by Mayor Louchheim at the January 11, 2010 Work Session of the Board of Trustees regarding 243 Hedges Lane.

The 4-Square

The Village has received a petition – actually three petitions—regarding the possible relocation of the 1930 Percy Hedges house on 243 Hedges Lane. All were submitted by Bill McCoy, who demanded a response to them at this meeting and warned of legal action if his request is ignored. The Board and I are happy to respond to Mr. McCoy, and the Concerned Citizens he says he represents. I would like to add however that the legal threats are not necessary.

The Board holds two meetings every month, and any resident who wants answers to any questions about Village issues is welcome to pose them to us directly or in writing and they will get a response.

For the record, Mr. McCoy's three petitions, which were received last Thursday, were as follows: One, signed by 37 residents, requested on open public debate over moving the house to 129 Hedges Lane, opposite Mr. McCoy's house; a second, signed by 8 residents, opposed moving the house to 129 Hedges Lane; a third, signed by two residents of Hampton Road somewhere (there is no such road in Sagaponack,) requested two-hour parking signs on a portion of Hampton Road.

The petitions, the letter soliciting signatures on them, and Mr. McCoy's covering letter with a list of questions, are based on a series of misrepresentations and factual errors, and unsupported suggestions that under a cloak of stealth the Village Board is committing improprieties and conflicts of interest.

So I would like to take a few minutes to go into the well documented background on this matter and report on what the status is, and isn't, as of today.

Background

The question of the disposition of the 1930 Hedges House was first raised publicly at a meeting of the Village AHRB in August, as part of a request to demolish 6 structures at 243 Hedges Lane to permit construction of a new "estate home" on the property. The proposed demolition included the 1930 house and an earlier 1840s dwelling. It was the first significant demolition application to come before a Village Board since incorporation, and a significant part of the AHRB's mission was to try and prevent, where possible, the destruction of historic village buildings and those that contributed significantly to its agricultural heritage and character.

The issue was openly discussed and debated at the AHRB meetings in August, September, October, November and December, including public hearings that were advertised and specifically noticed to neighbors [as well as before the Zoning Board of Appeals for a variance to accommodate the 1840s dwelling on the subject property in November and December].

During the course of the discussions, the applicant agreed to move the 1840s dwelling to the western front corner of the property and restore it as an accessory dwelling that could be in public view from the street. A majority of the AHRB members also wished to see preservation of the 1930 4-square Prairie-style house that had been built by Wallace Hildreth for Percy Hedges. Two other virtually identical Hildreth houses still exist on Sagg Main Street, along with two similar 4-squares on Sagg Main Street and Hedges Lane. The AHRB majority felt that while not a historic structure, the farm house was an important part of Sagaponack's agricultural history and did contribute to its overall character. Rather than being demolished, they hoped that a new site could be found for it.

At its December meeting, the AHRB approved a resolution that permitted the relocation of the 1840s house, and the demolition of 2 barns and two outbuildings. The demolition request for the 1930 4-square was withdrawn, based on the announced intention of its owner, Alan Schnurman, to relocate it, on his adjacent property if necessary, until a new owner and a new site for it could be found.

Current Status

At some point between the September and December meetings, negotiations commenced between Mr. Schnurman and the Peconic Land Trust regarding donation of the house to the trust. Along with the preservation of land, the Trust also is involved in the preservation of historic or characteristic buildings, either through outright ownership or by holding façade and other easements on buildings that remain in private ownership. According to John Halsey, the president and founder of the Trust, the Trust has reached agreement to accept donation of the house and a cash donation to help fund its relocation. This was a private agreement, and the Village played no part in negotiating it or "brokering" it.

Once that agreement is finalized, the Land Trust will have to find a new location for the building or, if none can be found, request its demolition.

The Trust has been exploring potential sites, including the possibility of placing it on a portion of property owned by the South Fork Land Foundation at

the corner of Hedges and Fairfied Pond Lanes. The South Fork Land Foundation is a separate organization with a separate Board of Directors but it is also a supporting organization of the Land Trust. The land has all of its development rights intact and is still capable of development or subdivision, but only under the guidelines of the Foundation's charter. Mr. Halsey informed me today that he believes the Land Foundation option has been taken off the table, but there are other options currently under review.

Whatever the disposition of the 4-square, the Village would only become involved if a subdivision were necessary to accommodate the house, in which case the matter would be required to go through the mandatory public review process, including a public hearing. Otherwise it would simply go through the normal building permit process, including review by the AHRB.

Finally, I would like to state that there is no "stealth" Village plan or proposal for the 4-square. So there is nothing to submit for public comment and debate. There is no conspiracy to do something out of public view, and comparisons with Rennert are ludicrous. There are no conflicts of interest for any Village Board members or officials, as there is no potential personal gain for any of us in this.

The so-called "uproar" over this matter has been created on the basis of rumor and innuendo over a well-intentioned plan to preserve a building that many people believe is worth the effort, though not all, while at the same time allowing a developer to proceed with a project to replace it.

From a personal point of view, I would like to praise Mr. Halsey and the Land Trust for taking an interest in trying to preserve the building, and I think he deserves the community's gratitude for it. . Given the criticism that the opposition campaign has generated, it only goes to prove that no good deed goes unpunished. I also would like to express my appreciation for Mr. Schnurman's efforts to assist the Land Trust in finding a new home for the 4-square.

That is the current situation. When there is something more to report on this, you can be certain we will do so.