

# Pitney Farm rezoning triggers ire

By CHRISTINE LEE  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

**MENDHAM TWP.** — The Township Committee's plans to rezone a part of Pitney Farm for residential construction were called into question at the Aug. 10 committee meeting, with residents asking for more transparency in any decision.

The committee voted at

the July 28 meeting to rezone five of the 12 acres of property on Cold Hill Road. Rezoning could open up the property for sale to a private developer or preservation by a non-profit group.

The balance of the 12-acre tract would remain undeveloped because it was purchased with public open space funds.

The resolution came despite an agreement by

the Planning Board that deemed the ordinance inconsistent with the township's master plan.

The resolution offers several reasons for the rezoning, including that the township must reduce its debt load, the property has not been designated as historic on a state or national register, rezoning Pitney to a CR-2 Zone would make it

consistent with neighboring

properties on Shelton Road and Ballantine Road, and the township will still preserve seven of the area's 12 acres.

"We have more openness and less openness," Monaghan told the committee.

Resident Michael Merritt said a large amount of the discussion on the farm property was being done

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"in ignorance and in private."

"I think that the public is owed a clean summary regardless of what Pitney or a developer might want to do with that property," Merritt said. "This board can and should act in the interests of the community."

Resident Tasos Konidaris said the committee has had a "disappointing" lack of transparency and asked the committee to explain the bidding process for the farm at the committee's next meeting.

Mayor Chris Baumann said the proposal adopted at the July 28 meeting was "another option" in looking at the property. Baumann said the proposal would be an outline of what the property would look like on a long-term lease basis. The specifics of that proposal would need to go through

Dumovic said. The group is reviewing the terms of the proposed lease, he added.

The township bought the historic Pitney Farm in 2009 to avoid further residential development on the tract. The purchase included about \$2 million from the township, \$1.5 million from Morris County's open space trust and \$500,000 from the township's open space trust fund. The 12.5-acre farm was built in 1722 and purchased by Jonathan Pitney in 1760.

Various ideas have been floated for the future of the property, from developing a library for the Mendhams, to relocating the police station and municipal offices to subdividing and selling off the estate and leaving the balance of property as a township park.

In June, the structure was listed by Preservation New Jersey's list of 10 Most Endangered Historic Places in the state due to a lack of public funding.

### EDITOR:

Finally after years of research and hundreds of hours of deliberations, it appears that there is hope to save the historic Pitney Farm. Thank you, Frank Cioppettini for proposing what appears to be an equitable solution to this situation. i.e. The Friends of Pitney Farm can take full responsibility for the project and pay the town an annual sum of \$20,000. This will give the Friends of Pitney time to obtain the necessary grants and

funds to preserve this historic home and farmstead. I urge the Township Committee to write a Resolution to do this, adopt and pass it.

JANE MACNEIL  
East Main Street  
Mendham Township

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Back plan to lease Mendham Township tract