

Developing the land, however, would deprive the township of an historical marker of its past beauty that could never be replaced.

Preservationists like Advocates for New Jersey History in Princeton have suggested preserving the farm into something similar to the Kennedy-Martin-Stelle (KMS) Farmstead in Bernards Township.

But an obvious concern of some officials is that funding to pay for preservation doesn't materialize and the town is left with a white elephant like the Glen Alpin estate in Harding Township.

Harding Township had grand ideas when it joined with the Harding Land Trust to buy the estate in 2005. But funding possibilities dried up and the estate has been left in severe disrepair while officials pull their hair out over what to do.

A preserved Pitney Farm would be a far better asset to the residents than the construction of more homes on the land. There may be questions about funding preservation but there is no question that once the land is sold, there is no turning back.

The Township Committee has been considering the fate of the estate for several years. They don't want to spend taxpayer money on the estate and that is understandable. But there is no reason to rush into anything; potential buyers of the land will still be around.

There should be no sale until all potential funding sources are exhausted.

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• EDITORIAL •

Slow down on Pitney

There can be no dispute about the rich history of the 300-year-old Pitney farm and estate off Cold Hill Road in Mendham Township.

The township realized the land's importance when it decided to stave off development by buying the 12-acre tract in 2009 for \$4 million; the township paid half, another \$1.56 million came from the Morris County Open Space Trust and \$500,000 was drawn from the township's open space fund.

In its heyday, the estate once totaled 740 acres but through the years most of it has been sold off for development. Seven of the 12 acres will remain as open space but the issue is what to do with the remaining 5.1 acres. Should the 5.1 acres be sold or kept or possibly a portion sold and a portion preserved?

Two sides have formed.

One side has coalesced with a highly organized effort and heavy attendance at meetings to convince the Township Committee to preserve the land. But most recently, the committee indicated its preference not for preservation but to sell the land for development.

The Friends of Pitney Farm, the township's Master Plan and the Mendham Township Historic Preservation Committee all want to preserve the 5.1 acres. But most recently, the Township Committee directed Township Attorney John Mills to start the process for a public auction.

It would be costly to renovate the structures on the old homestead while preservation also would deny the township the added tax ratables that would come from development.