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Baron's property South

To be read at 10/20/98 RTM Meeting

From: Ellie Lowenstein, Westport Planning and Zoning Commission Chair

This past May, I stood before the Board of Finance and spoke to them from the Planning and Zoning Commission in favor of purchasing the Baron's Property South. The previous April of 1997, the P&Z sent the same message. And, I am here this evening with full support of the Commission to again emphasize how important this piece of property is to the Town.

Although you may think from recent newspaper articles that we are only a zoning commission, we spent two years developing the Westport Town Plan of Conservation and Development and when we find time, between acting on subdivisions, commercial changes and houses being constructed in the CAM zone, we do plan.

One of the things that concerns this P&Z Commission is the overuse of land. We see it everywhere in Westport, with both municipal and private development. Projects are being built to the limits allowed. We have many Town projects needing land - but this Town does not have options when it comes to finding space for those needy municipal projects.

A few years ago, we sold land - Burr School Road property and Greens Farms Road land, to pay for Winslow Park. Now, those properties contain homes - and many private open ^{Tracts of land} pieces of properties have been developed, increasing the need for municipal services, and increasing traffic. They are not available for our municipal needs. This year, the First Selectman has established a Land Acquisition Committee to address in a methodical way, our present and future municipal land needs - for buildings, ballfields, parks and passive open space.

We have to realize that we all want schools that are not overcrowded; plenty of recreation space; open areas for conservation, for preservation of natural resources and to enhance the visual look of Westport; Town Government offices that are convenient and efficient; and a Public Works Dept. that will take our sewage, leaves and garbage and make it disappear. We also do not want to have these facilities too close to our homes. Well, we need space to accomplish these needs.

In the past also, Town Plans have suggested acquisition of land - it is good planning to have land to use rather than to have to purchase in crisis. The Baron's South property is listed as the top priority parcel for acquisition in the 1997 Town Plan. It has been known that this parcel was a gem - the last large private parcel of land, centrally located in Westport. It meets criteria suggested in the 1997 Town Plan for retention or acquisition of property for municipal purposes and in addition has access to three roads. Don't pass up this opportunity - vote for purchase.