

September 30, 2010

Ms. Maria White
169 Harmon Avenue
Pelham, New York
10803

Dear Ms. White and Fellow Board Members of Pelham Preservation and Garden Society:

Thank you again for allowing Susan Seither and Roger Wines to speak before the June 21 meeting of the Pelham Preservation and Garden Society. While those of us sending this letter are members of the Committee convened by the Village of Pelham Government, *we do not speak on behalf of the committee*, but rather as members of that body advocating for the preservation of the Highbrook Bridge and in favor of conservation of the entire 1.9 acre parcel of land known as NYW&B property. We would like to briefly summarize information gathered since we met with you in June.

Recent Developments

In general, our activities have focused on spreading the word about conservation of the property and research as to the viability of obtaining grant funding to make the bridge and property safe, and eventually creating a linear, passive park to be known as the Highbrook Highline.

- A submission has been made to Katy Hite of the Westchester County Historical Society for the property to be on the list of Westchester County Historic Sites. We are informally exploring State and National designations. If we were to eventually receive eligibility as an historic place we will be able to receive grant funding for repairs to the bridge and other work to make the property safe for use by residents. This status of “eligibility,” if received, does not obligate or bind the Village to undertaking any particular course of action with respect to the use of the property. It is our hope, however, that if grant funding is possible, the Village Government will allow and support concerned residents to raise funds for preservation and ultimately recreational use as a passive, linear walk-way or trail.
- In addition to the Board of PPGS, we have been very gratified by advice, **information and encouragement for preservation** of the property and bridge from many sources, including:
 - + Rails to Trails
 - + Kitty Henderson, Executive Director of the Historic Bridge Foundation
 - + Barbara Davis and Larry Sheldon, Historians at the New Rochelle Public Library
 - + Jim Maisano, County Legislator
 - + Jill Smythe, Executive Director of The Merritt Parkway Conservancy
 - + Trust of Public Land, New York Office
 - + Eric DuLony, engineer, architectural historian and author Landmark Bridges
 - + Robert Silman. SE, structural engineer for The Highline in New York, NY
- In June the renowned **engineering firm of Modjeski & Masters** of Troy, New York, visited the property with Sue Seither and Susan Mutti and also met with Village Manager, Robert Yamuder. Their *preliminary opinion*, based on a visual evaluation, is that the structure is sound and that there are ways to stabilize the façade and make it safe without undertaking a multi-million dollar project. They will likely respond with a proposal when the RFP for bridge safety is released by the Village.

- **Westchester Land Trust, Executive Director, Tom Anderson** toured the site with Mayor Hotchkiss, Trustee Marty and several residents in mid-June. Following the tour he spoke briefly before the Committee, Mayor Hotchkiss and Trustee Marty and made clear the ways in which his organization could assist the Village in conserving the property. The WLT can work with Village Government, if invited, to help create a coalition between Village, Town and County organizations and residents; assist in grant preparation; facilitate consensus-building activities to be sure that all views are heard and considered; raise awareness as to the importance of open space and conservation in Lower Westchester County.
- On July 12, Sue Seither and Susan Mutti spoke briefly before the **Town of Pelham Trustees and Town Supervisor, Joe Solimine**. Sue and Susan offered an overview of the options the Committee is considering (see page attached to this letter) and shared several of the developments shown above. The Town Government suggested that there may be opportunities for the Town and Village to cooperate in grant writing.
- The creation of a website for the Highbrook Highline is presently in progress and will be launched in early October. We hope that this will be a way for residents and other interested parties to obtain information and ask questions about the future of the property and also build enthusiasm for the creation of a passive park – incorporating a piece of our regional and local history.

How PPGS Can Help

When we spoke to you along with Trustee Marty in June, PPGS Board Members asked how they could help us. There is one important way that you can help – immediately and in the near future -- by helping us to get the following message out to your friends and neighbors:

It is essential that all Village and Town residents understand that the goal to create this conservation area through the use of grants and donations – NOT using tax dollars.

As more information is gathered through the Committee's work, (see the following page listing some of the information that the Committee will evaluate,) we will certainly call upon your help in the following ways:

- appoint a PPGS Board Member to function as a liaison to the Friends of the Highbrook Highline
- participation in public meetings when the Committee Report is made available to the public
- advice and support for grant writing
- advice and support in planning of fund raising initiatives
- advice and support for public relations and communications efforts
- advice regarding planning and design issues

In addition, we would be very pleased to have all of you **see the property first hand**. Please contact us if you would like to tour the area. With the proper planning as a passive recreation area, it can be available to Village residents without disturbing the privacy and security of the immediate neighbors. When you see it, we feel that you will agree that it takes little imagination to envision a linear path with safe passage over a busy street, passing by a natural spring and leading to a tree-lined green.

Once again, thank you for your support of the preservation and conservation of the NYW&B property. We believe that what is now considered by many as a liability and eyesore, can be gradually transformed into a safe, accessible and beautiful area to be used as a public amenity for many years to come.

Very truly yours,

Emily Freidberg

Susan Mutti

Susan Seither

Ann-Dumas-Swanson

Cc: Joseph Marty, Village of Pelham Trustee
Roger Wines, 31 Linden Avenue, Pelham, NY

The Committee Convened by the Mayor and Trustees of the Village of Pelham

This Committee, facilitated by Trustee Joseph Marty, has been charged with research and analysis to provide the Mayor and Trustees information they will use to determine the fate of the property.

It has been stated that once the options of the property have been evaluated, public meetings will be held that allow the residents to express their opinions. The information to be gathered and considered near term -- in support of understanding the options -- by the Village Trustees includes:

- Obtaining quotes for soil testing and the ensuing remediation of the soils, if necessary
- Obtaining quotes for demolition of the bridge
- Obtaining information or quotes for engineering services to study the storm water run off caused by bridge demolition
- Obtaining quotes for a study of the condition of the bridge
- Obtaining quotes for renovation of the bridge for safety only (not historic preservation)
- Obtaining information to assess the cost and viability of creating a street that would link "Little Young" and Young Avenues, (there has been discussion of funding this with the building and subsequent sale of a house adjacent to this proposed street)

Trustee Marty stated in the September 7, 2010 Village Trustee meeting that drafting RFP's for professional services for some of these services will be begin.