



‘Cordial’ Conversations: Trust for Public Land and Leyland Discuss Griswold

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By Marianne Sullivan, Source Senior Staff Writer:

The Trust for Public Land (TPL), a non-profit land conservation organization, and Leyland Alliance, developer of the proposed Madison Landing at the former Griswold Airport, have had “a couple” of conversations.

Persons familiar with the conversations—but not a part of them—hope the conversations will open a door to possible negotiations for sale of the 42 acres for open space preservation.

Alicia Betty, project manager with TPL, said this week, “All I can say is that we are talking. There have been a couple of discussions so far.”

She added that the phone conversations with Howard Kaufman, Leyland’s executive vice president, have been pleasant.

“He is willing to talk and willing to listen. I hope we can continue the discussion,” Betty said. “I think we are likely to talk again.”

Kaufman said, “We have known TPL for quite a few years. We have worked with them on potential projects in the past and we have a great deal of respect for the organization. They have very good people and they do great work.”

He confirmed that he and Betty have had “a conversation or two” and added, “They are looking to see if there is a role for them here and we are open to hearing what they might propose. We are always open to listening to ideas.”

On several occasions over the last eight years, when comments about a possible purchase of the property from Leyland have surfaced, Kaufman has contended that the parcel is not for sale.

“But again, we are open to listening to ideas and that is the discussion now with TPL. It’s very cordial, extremely preliminary. I would call these exploratory discussions. Nothing has been talked about seriously at this point,” he said Monday.

He also added that should these initial conversations progress to some more definite ideas, “The town would also have to be very much involved.”

Acting as a negotiator and facilitator is one of the roles TPL plays in its efforts at land conservation.

“We talk with all different types of property owners all over the state for a variety of reasons,” Betty explained.

Leyland has spent the past eight years planning for the development of Madison Landing, a 127-unit active adult condominium community at the former airport. It has been controversial from the first

application for a zone change. In September, after a lengthy process that spanned almost two years, Leyland received the permit it required from the state Department of Environmental Protection for its planned wastewater treatment system.

Opponents have contended that the acreage is environmentally sensitive—too sensitive and ecologically important to be developed. It abuts Hammonasset State Park, the Hammonasset River, and the tidal marshes of Long Island Sound.

Earlier this month the developer sought and received a five-year extension on the approval of their plans from the Planning and Zoning Commission. Leyland is now meeting with the town's Water Pollution Control Authority to develop an agreement that will allow it to build and operate the wastewater treatment system for the complex.

In February 2007, Leyland Alliance purchased the airport property for \$4.4 million.