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Spotlights in Business

Saving the Griswold Land- Now is the Only Time

By Fillmore McPherson and Al Goldberg

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Selectmen must occasionally stand up and take sides on a controversial issue. One now before us has the potential to alter the character of the town that we serve. In promising to make Madison a better place to live, both of us are committed to preserving the Griswold Airport land from development. We support the purchase of this property and encourage Madison residents to invest in this land.

Open space raises existing real estate values. Think of the reason that you bought a home in Madison rather than in a town with many condominium developments. There is simply no price to be placed on open space. Towns that possess open spaces are the ones in which people like to reside.

This purchase is a rare opportunity to add value to our town. Fifty years ago, Madison had the foresight to purchase the Surf Club. There was no plan in

advance, but residents recognized that it was a waterfront parcel with potential. Today the Surf Club is a beloved municipal facility that enriches our lives, young and old, and increases the value of our homes. If we add the Griswold land to our present treasured spaces at Bauer Farm, East Wharf, West Wharf, the Surf Club, and the Town Campus,

future generations will thank us all.

The Board of Selectmen will establish a citizens' committee to recommend park usage. There will be at least three playing fields (no lights or bleachers), designated walking trails, bird-viewing platforms, and a canoe/kayak launch. Land near the Boston Post Road will be considered for commercial development. We will pursue grants to help with the costs of purchase and

development. But none of this can

happen until we own the land.

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This is the only referendum on the airport property to ever take place. Although many of us wish that (A) Madison had bought the former airport when it could have been purchased for less than the current price or (B) the State of Connecticut had purchased it, the fact is that neither of these things happened. This referendum represents our last chance to own a beautiful coastal property that is currently zoned as buildable land, with all permits in place to build. This project will not have a second chance. If it is turned down, our opportunity will be lost forever.

The zoning makes the price a relative bargain, unlikely as this may sound. Recent appraisals have all come in at or above the agreed-upon price. The cost of the purchase to the median homeowner will be \$68 per year over 20 years.

The two of us ask you to vote "Yes" on Jan. 26 to protect land that contains a rare coastal forest and fronts both the Hammonasset River and one of Long

Island Sound's finest salt

marshes. We are honored to serve a town that is the envy of Connecticut because residents have invested with a view to the future. Let's make the right

decision with this opportunity.

Fillmore McPherson is Madison's first selectman and a registered Republican. Al Goldberg is a selectman, former first

selectman, and a Democrat.

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