

OUR TOWNS

BROOKHAVEN TOWN

Prized Carmans watershed acreage bought for \$12M

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Brookhaven Town has verbally agreed to pay \$12 million for 120 acres of prized open space in the Carmans River watershed, settling a decadelong court dispute between the town and the property owner.

The town will pay \$5 million to the property owner by year's end, and \$1.4 million annually through 2019 as part of an out-of-court settlement.

In addition, Brookhaven must pay costs such as the appraisal, environmental audit, insurance and tax adjustments as part of the acquisition, town documents show.

Brookhaven gains prime real estate in the environmentally sensitive watershed and will add an additional 22 acres of land once the deal is finalized. The land owner, Silver Corporate Park LLC, will be able to build on its 50 acres of property, zoned for light industrial, near the river. Calls to the corporation were not returned.

"This is a prime parcel, probably the number one parcel in the Carmans River," according to Brookhaven Councilwoman Connie Kepert, who said she voted against the development of the land years ago.

Brookhaven adopted a Carmans River Conservation and Management Plan last year to protect the Carmans River water-

shed from overdevelopment.

"It's one of the top three targets of acquisitions for the Pine Barrens Society on Long Island. We've been looking at it for a decade," said Richard Amper, the society's executive director.

He added that purchasing the land is critical to protecting the river. "It's a key picture-puzzle piece that needed to fall into place," Amper said. "It's extremely good news."

Silver Corporate Park LLC owns 192 acres of land in the watershed on the North Service Road of the Long Island Expressway, about 95 feet west of Patchogue-Yaphank Road in Yaphank.

In August 2003, the corporation applied for a change of zone use from light industrial to planned retirement community, which would have allowed 22,400 square feet of retail and 620 senior and assisted living units.

The town board initially approved a change of zone for 9,600 square feet of retail, 59 industrial park acres and 544 senior housing units on Dec. 20, 2005. Ten days later, the adoption was amended, increasing the housing units to 622.

But in a reversal the following month, the board suddenly rescinded the decision, stopping all development. The property owner then filed an Article 78 lawsuit in State Supreme Court against Brookhaven on Jan. 24, 2006.

The suit ends with the land acquisition by the town.