

Recently there has been some emotionally worded letters written to the editor regarding the so called land swap between St. Johnland and the Nissequogue River State Park (formerly the KPPC property). St Johnland wants to build a Continued Care Retirement Community (CCRC) on 50 acres of relatively pristine land across from their nursing home on Sunken Meadow Road. This property has many environmentally sensitive acres, lies within the Nissequogue River Corridor and is surrounded by two State Parks. Residents throughout the community have asked many of our elected representatives for years to make this property a priority for preservation. Within the last couple of years, we suggested the State purchase the St Johnland Property and offer St. Johnland a section of the former KPPC Property just west of Old Dock Road for development of their CCRC.

The key word here is "purchase" not swap. This concept does not fit the true definition of a land swap. No one should expect St Johnland to agree to swap 50 acres of pristine woodlands for land in need of millions of dollars in remediation costs. However, if the state offers to purchase the St Johnland property at fair market value, and is also willing to give them land on the former KPPC grounds for their CCRC and assist in its remediation, I would expect St. Johnland to accept this offer.

State Senator Flanagan, State Parks Commissioner Ash and many of the civic organizations have embraced this "purchase" proposal and why not. St. Johnland is keenly aware that they are not entitled to build a CCRC on their property because it is currently zoned 1 acre residential. The town does not even have a zoning ordinance allowing for the construction of a CCRC. If St. Johnland chooses to sell their property for the purpose of preservation, the town should then consider establishing zoning for this type of development. St Johnland will benefit handsomely from this agreement - millions of dollars for their land, required special CCRC zoning and land and money for development of their CCRC. The community benefits by receiving 50 acres of additional parkland, remediation and redevelopment of part of the former KPPC property and increased tax revenue for our schools and town.

We have an opportunity to do exactly what is right for everyone involved. Now is the time to come together and make this concept come to fruition for the good of our entire community.

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