



November 28, 2023

Erik Kulleseid, Commissioner  
NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation  
Albany NY, 12238

Dear Commissioner Kulleseid,

**RE: Belden House**

Dear Commissioner,

We write to request a new historical assessment of the Belden House located on New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) watershed land near the West Branch Reservoir in Carmel, NY, in Putnam County. While the Belden House is not a designated historic site, it is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

The first section of this house was built around 1760 by Thomas Belden, a land agent for the prominent Philipse family. DEP bought the property in 1896 and used the house as an office and residence for a site custodian. Over the years, though, the Belden House has fallen into disuse and disrepair.

A 1995 assessment prepared by the New York State Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation (PRHP) reported: "It is (PRHP's) opinion that this property meets the criteria for inclusion in the State and National Registers of Historic Places."

In the intervening years, the Belden House has been the subject of halting restoration and preservation work. Different government agencies have periodically contemplated investments to rehabilitate the site, but ultimately, to date, none of these proposals have come to fruition.

The Belden House is now designated for demolition in a DEP Self-Assessment report of Water Supply Operations. The DEP has razed one old house on Croton Lake Road in Yorktown, and they are in the process of razing another 19th century home by the Amawalk Dam in Somers. Currently, DEP has not commenced demolition at the Belden House.

There is now renewed public interest in preserving the property. We should use this window of opportunity to make a determination about whether the site should be preserved, and how so. For these reasons, we request PRHP conduct a new assessment of the site.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter B. Harkham".

New York State Senator Peter Harkham  
District 40

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt Slater".

Assemblyman Matt Slater  
District 94