

FRIENDS OF BELDEN HOUSE RESIDENT RALLY KICKING OFF THE NEW YEAR



**CORNERSTONE PARK BUILDING-FAIR ST./RT 52
WEDNESDAY, JAN 24TH - 10:30AM
THURSDAY, JAN. 25TH - 6:30PM**

**REALIZING THE VISION - CHARTING THE COURSE –
DEP LITIGATION TO COMPEL IMPLEMENTATION OF
FINANCIAL COMMITMENT;
TOWN LEGAL OBLIGATION AND COUNTY AND STATE
POSSIBLE COMMITMENT; MEDIA PUBLICITY.**

COMMUNITY SPEAK OUT - VISION GENERATION

**PLEASE ATTEND, JOIN, WRITE, SIGN TO REALIZE THE VISION:
REBUILDING BELDEN HOUSE TO HELP PRESERVE THIS UNIQUE
EXAMPLAR OF PUTNAM'S HISTORICAL, ARCHITECTURAL AND
CULTURAL LEGACY**

INFORMATIONAL PACKET; REFRESHMENTS AND SWEETS SERVED

**PAID BY: FRIENDS OF BELDEN HOUSE
www.friendsofbeldenhouse.org**

Contact: Ian Michaels (718) 595-6600

DEP Announces Plans for \$2.9 Million Rehabilitation of Belden House in Putnam County

Commissioner Emily Lloyd of the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) today announced the DEP's plans to renovate the historic Belden House in Putnam County. The \$2.9 million project will restore the exterior of the building to almost its original condition and will allow DEP to use part of the interior space for its local Land Management offices.

Additional office space will be provided in the building for the Friends of Belden House, which will also have the opportunity to decorate public areas of the building, including its main foyer.

"We are pleased to be able to coordinate with the County and with the Friends of Belden House to rehabilitate this historic structure," said Commissioner Lloyd. "The DEP's investment in this project will guarantee the future of Belden House and help preserve an important part of the region's heritage. The City's land holdings have expanded considerably over the last ten years and the restoration of the Belden House will help our staff be exemplary land managers and continue to provide excellent recreation opportunities and water quality benefits."

Bruce Heilman, Chair of The Friends of Belden House, said, "The Friends of Belden House, the Putnam County Coalition for Open Space and the over 600 people who have signed our petitions now know that we, in turn, have friends: the New York City DEP and the Administration of Putnam County. With this announcement they are fulfilling our plea to 'Save Belden House.' We commend the DEP for their actions; it is the right thing to do."

Ann Fanizzi, Chair of the Putnam County Coalition to Preserve Open Space and a member of the Friends of Belden House, said, "The campaign on behalf of the Belden House was a unique partnership and we realized our joint goal of preserving Belden House in the history of Putnam County. We are very pleased that this historic treasure is being saved for all to enjoy."

The project includes \$400,000 for architectural/engineering design services and construction management, \$500,000 for environmental remediation within the building of items such as lead paint and \$2 million for construction. Following a one-year design period, construction should begin in fall 2008 and take about 18 months to complete.

The original Carpenter Gothic-styled structure was built around 1760 by Thomas Belden. A later descendent, George Montimer Belden, transformed it into its modern appearance in the 1870's by providing ornate wood doors and trim, decorative plaster moldings and marble fireplaces. The City of New York acquired the house in 1896 during efforts to construct the West Branch Reservoir. The house had been used as a residence for an on-site custodian, and later for City offices. The house is located on Belden Road in Carmel, between the West Branch Reservoir and Lake Gleneida.

The project will enable DEP's Land Management Group to relocate from Mahopac. This group, including land stewards, foresters and property managers, is responsible for managing the City's East of Hudson land holdings and recreation programs. Belden House will also become the new location for rowboat steam cleaning.

SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
COUNTY OF PUTNAM

FRIENDS OF BELDEN HOUSE, INC. and ANN FANIZZI

Petitioners,

for a judgment pursuant to CPLR Articles 78 and 30

-against-

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION,

Respondent.

VERIFIED PETITION

Index No. EF

Petitioners by their attorney, respectfully alleges to be true upon his own knowledge or upon information and belief as demonstrated by the pleadings submitted herewith as follows:

1. This action brought pursuant to Articles 78 and 30 of the New York State Civil Practice Law and Rules (CPLR) seeks an order declaring that the historic "Belden House" in Putnam County owned by respondent New York City Department of Environmental Protection, (DEP), is protected by the New York State Historic Preservation Act of 1980, New York City Landmarks Law, New York State Public Buildings Law and the Carmel Town Code and pursuant to these laws and DEP's allocation of funds to restore Belden House, DEP must refrain from demolishing Belden House and instead protect, repair and renovate the structure.

PARTIES

2. Petitioner Friends of Belden House (FBH) is dedicated to preserving Belden House for future generations and educating the public as to its significance. FBH was granted provisional charter status in 2007, was incorporated in 2023 and has filed for not-for-profit 501(c)(3) status.

2023. <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/dep/downloads/pdf/watershed-protection/east-of-hudson-ms4/nycdep-ms4-tri-annual-self-assesment-report-2021.pdf>.

20. Thus, petitioners commence this action to prevent DEP from demolishing Belden House and require DEP to spend the allocated 2.9 million dollars to renovate and preserve Belden House, as detailed in DEP's press release and as required by local and state law.

As and for the First Cause of Action

The Carmel Code Requires the Upkeep of the Belden House

21. Petitioners repeat and re-allege each and every of the foregoing paragraphs with the same force and effect as if more fully set forth herein.

22. Section 114-1 of the Carmel Town Code (Code) is the "Property Maintenance Code of the Town of Carmel."

23. The law is designed to "[p]revent the physical deterioration or progressive downgrading of the quality of buildings in the Town." Code §114-2(F).

24. Section 114-4 "Compliance required" states "[e]very residential and nonresidential building or structure and the premises or part of the premises on which it is situated, including vacant lots, shall be in compliance with the provisions of this chapter."

25. In that regard, Section 114-12(A), "Maintenance of exterior" requires that "[t]he exterior of all premises shall be kept free of the following matter, materials or conditions...

Structurally unsound, loose, dangerous, crumbling, missing, broken, rotted or unsafe exterior portion of buildings or structures, including but not limited to porches, landings, balconies, stairways, handrails, steps, walls, overhangs, roofs, fences, retaining walls, supporting members, timbers, abutments, fire escapes and signs and loose, crumbling or falling bricks, stones, mortar or plaster... [§114-12(A)(4)]... [and]

Without limitation by the foregoing, it shall also be the duty and responsibility of owners, occupants or operators to keep the exterior of all premises structurally sound, in good general repair and sufficiently maintained, to an extent so as to prevent and avoid conditions that violate the purposes of this chapter. [§114-12(B)].

26. Respondent is in violation of these requirements as demonstrated by the Affidavit of Ann Fanizzi and exhibits thereto showing recent photographs of Belden House.

27. Thus, petitioners seek an order requiring DEP to comply with the Carmel Town Code and repair and maintain the exterior of Belden House.

As and for the Second Cause of Action

State Law Requires DEP to Renovate and Preserve Belden House

28. Petitioners repeat and re-allege each and every of the foregoing paragraphs with the same force and effect as if more fully set forth herein.

29. The New York State Historic Preservation Act of 1980 prohibits DEP from demolishing Belden House without approval from the New York State Commissioner of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, in consultation with the State Board for Historic Preservation as Belden House is eligible for listing on the state and national historic registers. Exhibit A.

30. Specifically, respondent is required to:

[C]onsult with the commissioner if it appears that any project which is being planned may or will cause any change, beneficial or adverse, in the quality of any historic, architectural, archeological or cultural property that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places or property listed on the State Register of Historic Places or that is determined by the commissioner to be eligible for listing on the State Register of Historic Places. It requires State agencies, to the fullest extent practicable, consistent with other provisions of the law, to avoid or mitigate adverse impacts to such properties, to fully explore all feasible and prudent alternatives and to give due consideration to feasible and prudent plans which would avoid or mitigate adverse impacts to such property.

NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation regulations §426.1(e).

31. Thus, petitioners seek an order requiring DEP to comply with the New York State Historic Preservation Act of 1980 by restoring and maintaining Belden House.

As and for the Third Cause of Action

DEP's failure to maintain Belden House violates its agreement with Putnam County and the Friends of Belden House

32. Petitioners repeat and re-allege each and every of the foregoing paragraphs with the same force and effect as if more fully set forth herein.

33. In 2003, the New York City Water Board approved a plan whereby Putnam County would transfer watershed property to DEP in exchange for Belden House. Exhibit C.

34. In 2005, Putnam County honored that agreement by transferring Putnam County lands to DEP. Exhibit D.

35. However, upon the Putnam County's legislature's shortsighted decision not to accept title to Belden House, DEP promised not to demolish Belden House and allocated 2.9 million dollars for the renovation of Belden House. Exhibit E.

36. However, DEP never commenced the renovations.

37. Therefore, petitioners seek an order requiring DEP to spend the allocated funds to renovate and maintain Belden House.

As and for the Fourth Cause of Action

The Belden House is Subject to NYC's Landmark Preservation Law

38. Petitioners repeat and re-allege each and every of the foregoing paragraphs with the same force and effect as if more fully set forth herein.

39. New York City's "Landmarks Preservation and Historic Districts" was enacted to prevent the destruction of historic structures in New York City as well as structures owned by New York City. See Chapter 3, NYC Administrative Code 25-301(b).

40. Belden House is precisely the type of historic structure that the Landmarks Preservation Law is designed to protect.

41. Thus, petitioners seek an order requiring DEP to comply with the Landmarks Preservation Law in all respects, refrain from demolishing Belden House and instead renovate the structure.

RELIEF SOUGHT

WHEREFORE, as no further or consequential relief is, or could be claimed, and no other claim for similar relief has been sought or granted by any court, petitioner respectfully requests judgment pursuant to Articles 78 and 30 of the CPLR:

1. Ordering respondent to refrain from demolishing Belden House and instead comply with the Carmel Town Code, the New York State Historic Preservation Act of 1980, its agreement with Putnam County, the New York City Landmarks Preservation Law and proceed without further delay spend the allocated 2.9 million dollars (adjusted for inflation) to renovate and maintain Belden House;
2. Granting petitioners such other and further relief as the Court may deem just and proper including reasonable attorney's fees.

Respectfully submitted this 7th day of September, 2023.


James Bacon

Attorney for petitioners
P.O. Box 575
New Paltz, New York 12561
Telephone: (845) 419-2338
baconesq@yahoo.com

Lawsuit Filed against NYC DEP Over Belden House

By ERIC GROSS

Charging that the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has failed to rehabilitate the historic Belden House over the years, permitting the building to fall into disrepair, Friends of the Belden House and local resident Ann Fanizzi last week filed a lawsuit against the Big Apple. The case was assigned Friday to State Supreme Court Justice Victor Grossman.

The suit calls on the city to "refrain from demolishing the Belden House and instead complying with the Carmel Town Code, the New York State Historic Preservation Act of 1980, its agreement with Putnam County, the New York City Landmarks Preservation Law and proceeding without further delay to spend the allocated \$2.9 million to renovate and maintain the Belden House."

The historic Putnam landmark, dating back to the 18th century, located on New York City watershed property in Carmel, has been designated for demolition in a Department of Environmental Protection Self-Assessment report of Water Supply Operations.

Friends of the Belden House have initiated a campaign to save the building by placing signs throughout eastern Put-

nam, purchasing advertisements in local newspapers, and generally leading the charge, resulting in the Carmel Town Board's passing a resolution urging the city to reconsider.

During an interview last Friday, Fanizzi explained Carmel Town Code requires that "residences be kept in good condition. The DEP's lack of maintenance is against the agency's own land acquisition regulations."

Fanizzi reported matters have gone from bad to worse for the Belden House since a portion of the roof, which had been covered for years by a tarpaulin, has been removed resulting in the building becoming "more vulnerable to additional deterioration."

Fanizzi charged: "By not keeping the Belden House property in good order the city is not protecting water quality. They are allowing this historic landmark to deteriorate because in the words of DEP official James Milgrew: 'The DEP has no use for it.' The DEP has the responsibility to repair this landmark."

Fanizzi has also called on the Putnam Legislature to become involved:

"Do something. Urge County Executive Byrne to reopen negotiations with the DEP, which has reneged on its commitment to expend \$2.9 million (now

\$4.5 million) to restore the iconic architectural and cultural symbol. We must hold the DEP accountable to save the Belden House."

On June 21, the Carmel Town Board passed a resolution calling for the preservation and restoration of the Belden House. Upon receiving the resolution, Assemblyman Matt Slater was able to successfully advocate for the preservation, as confirmed by Mayor Eric Adams' intergovernmental staff.

Slater called the Belden House a "historic piece of Carmel's community that must be protected and restored. I appreciate our partners on the local level in Carmel alerting us of their concern and working collectively to protect this important piece of our history. Now, New York City must invest the allocated funds to restore the house as originally intended in 2006."

Efforts to restore the Belden House have been initiated and halted multiple times. In 2006, \$2.9 million was assigned for the rehabilitation. The DEP expressed confidence that the rehabilitation project would secure the future of the Belden House, however, no progress has been made since.

The New York City DEP bought the property in 1896 when it constructed a dam behind the house. For nearly

a century, the DEP used the house as an office and residence for a site custodian, until it was abandoned in the late 20th century. Rainwater leaking through the roof has threatened the structure, which retains marble fireplaces, elaborate wood trim, and plaster finishing.

Preservation efforts were stymied in 2005 when the Putnam Legislature voted against funding the building's restoration. In 2006, nearly \$3 million was allocated for the rehabilitation of the Belden House, with the intention of turning it into an office for the DEP's Land Management Group. The DEP commissioner at the time stated that the rehabilitation project would "guarantee the future of Belden House and help preserve an important part of the region's heritage and the restoration of the Belden House will help our staff be exemplary land managers and continue to provide excellent recreation opportunities and water quality benefits." The project was subsequently halted, although some exterior restoration work did occur in the late 2000s.

Fanizzi called on leaders and local residents to "merit our efforts to save it from the maws of demolition that apparently wait should proposed DEP plans result. This heritage and legacy should not be erased."

JAMES BRYAN BACON, ESQ., P.C.

Attorney and Counselor at Law

P.O. Box 575

New Paltz, New York 12561

(845) 419-2338

Via electronic mail

November 2, 2023

Michael Carnazza
Director of Codes Enforcement/Building Inspector
Town of Carmel
60 McAlpin Avenue
Mahopac, NY 10541

Re: Belden House

Dear Mr. Carnazza,

I represent Friends of Belden House (FBH) and Ann Fanizzi who is President of FBH. These parties have commenced an action against the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to force it to make good on its promise to rehabilitate the historic Belden House situated in Carmel, NY. Herewith is a copy of the Petition.

The parties have agreed that DEP will provide FBH at least 30 days notice in the event DEP plans to demolish Belden House but that in no event would that occur until July 2024 at the earliest. See herewith stipulation.

In the meantime, recent photographs by Ms. Fanizzi show that Belden House is not being maintained by DEP. See herewith Affidavit of Ann Fanizzi and attached photographs.

Indeed, the photographs clearly show that the Belden House exterior is deteriorating in violation of Section 114-1 of the Carmel Town Code (Code) - the "Property Maintenance Code of the Town of Carmel."

As you may know, the law is designed to "[p]revent the physical deterioration or progressive downgrading of the quality of buildings in the Town." Code §114-2(F).

* Section 114-4 "Compliance required" states "[e]very residential and nonresidential building or structure and the premises or part of the premises on which it is situated, including vacant lots, shall be in compliance with the provisions of this chapter."

In that regard, Section 114-12(A), "Maintenance of exterior" requires that "[t]he exterior of all premises shall be kept free of the following matter, materials or conditions...

X Structurally unsound, loose, dangerous, crumbling, missing, broken, rotted or unsafe exterior portion of buildings or structures, including but not limited to porches, landings, balconies, stairways, handrails, steps, walls, overhangs, roofs, fences, retaining walls,

supporting members, timbers, abutments, fire escapes and signs and loose, crumbling or falling bricks, stones, mortar or plaster... [§114-12(A)(4)]... [and]

Without limitation by the foregoing, it shall also be the duty and responsibility of owners, occupants or operators to keep the exterior of all premises structurally sound, in good general repair and sufficiently maintained, to an extent so as to prevent and avoid conditions that violate the purposes of this chapter. [§114-12(B)].

DEP appears to be in violation of these requirements as demonstrated by the herewith Ms. Fanizzi's Affidavit and exhibits thereto.

Thus, FBH respectfully requests your office conduct an inspection to determine precisely how the lack of maintenance has deteriorated the Belden House exterior and, if Ms. Fanizzi's photographs are corroborated by your inspection, please issue the proper notices to DEP to require DEP to repair and maintain the exterior of Belden House pursuant to the Carmel Town Code.

Also, please keep us informed of the results of your inspection and we look forward to the day when Belden House can be fully restored and reclaim its title as the "Grand Lady of Putnam County." Thank you.

Respectfully,



James Bacon

Cc: Ann Fanizzi

*This has gone on long enough!
on 10/10 I'll send a Court
Appearance Ticket if a Landmark
Permit with schedule
has not been
submitted*

NOTICE OF VIOLATION / ORDER TO REMEDY

February 10, 2003

Steven J. Kirson, et al
c/o Harvest Property Group
72 Main Street
Brewster, NY 10509

Re: Tax Map No. 56-1-14 located at 2366 Route 6, Brewster, NY 10509

Dear Sir,

According to the records of the Town of Southeast Assessor, you are the owner of the subject property. Recently, I observed an apparent violation of the Town of Southeast Codes & Zoning Ordinances: specifically: a vandalized unoccupied house and accessory building that are a danger to life safety. I am enclosing photographs of the conditions so that you can get a sense of the situation.

The condition noted above is in violation of Town Codes Chapter 55, Unsafe Buildings, a copy of which is enclosed.

It is hereby requested that you make the buildings inaccessible to eliminate the violation or notify us with other corrective plans within 2 weeks of the date of this letter.

If you believe that you are not in violation of the Town Codes or Zoning Ordinances, please contact this office to review the situation. If you intend to bring your property into compliance with the law, but you cannot meet the stated deadline, please contact this office and we will attempt to work with you on a short extension.

If you do not take the requested action or make other arrangements with this office by 2/24/03 we may begin formal enforcement action against you. You will not receive another notification or warning before we begin formal enforcement action.

If you wish to discuss any aspect of your case you call me at 845-279-8873. Thank you for your time in addressing this matter.

Sincerely,

Ron Harper
Zoning Enforcement Officer

Ron
10/3/03

MUNICIPAL SEARCH

AX MAP NUMBER: 56-1-14 APPLICATION #: 10018965 TITLE #: CAT21-46

Address: 2360-2366 Rt 6 The Road is a State road

Occupancy Class: Commercial Number Unit(s): 1 Date of Original Construction: 1935

Owners Name: Town of Southeast

Below are the results of the municipal records search for the listed property. This report is based on the existing records of the Building Department of the Town of Southeast. A current survey was not used for comparison in this search.

PERMITS AND CERTIFICATES:

Hudson Search - See attached Pre-date Letter dated 12/2/2021.
This parcel contains two residential structures in Zone GC.

OTHER FACTS AND VIOLATIONS:

There are no violations in the file.

Search returned on: 12/2/2021 Search completed by: KSPRENGER



HUDSON VALLEY // REAL ESTATE

Putnam County preservationists take on NYC to save historic Belden House

The city's Department of Environmental Protection wants to raze the circa 1760 Gothic house to save money on upkeep



Friends of the Belden House, from left to right: Peter Gebhardt, Carl Albano, Ann Fanizzi, Robert Schanil and Fred Swanson.

Marc Ferris / Special to the Times Union

CARMEL — Unless the [Friends of Belden House](#) can find a few million dollars in the next six months or a private developer swoops in, the circa 1760 Gothic house in Putnam County has a date with the wrecking ball.

New York City, which took possession of the home in 1896 and built a dam and reservoir in the backyard, wants to tear down the historic house, citing the unjustifiable cost burden of maintaining it. In a last-ditch effort to save the structure, the advocacy group filed a lawsuit in September.

“Ever since they came here, we’ve been treated like fleas on their lapel,” said Ann Fanizzi, who spearheads the Friends’ efforts. “First they took our land, then they took our water, now they’re taking our history.”

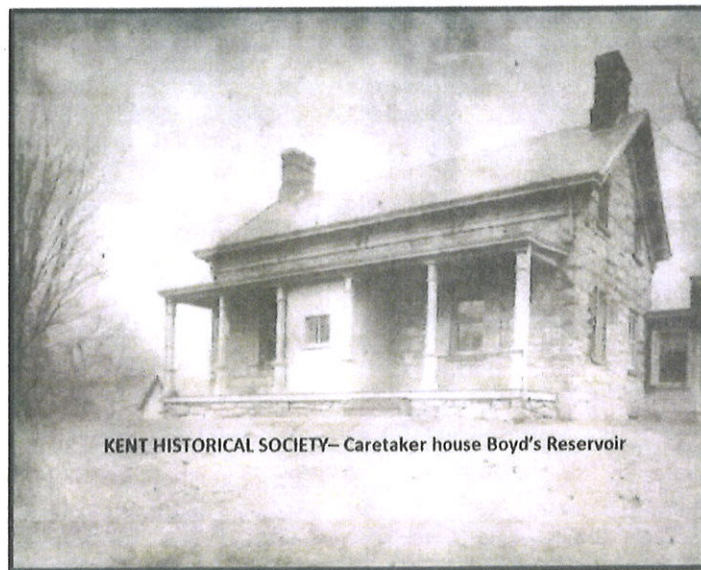
New York City’s Department of Environmental Protection, which delivers drinking water to parts of the lower Hudson Valley and most of the five boroughs, owns nearly 2,000 square miles in eight upstate counties, where it holds reservoirs and the watersheds that feed into them. That includes 5.6 percent of Putnam County. In 1997, the DEP began implementing a comprehensive watershed protection program and called for the removal of unwanted structures. The agency has taken down five historic homes on its property east of the Hudson River. Belden House is the last one standing.

In an affidavit responding to the Friends’ lawsuit, David Warne, assistant commissioner for the DEP’s Bureau of Water Supply, affirmed that tearing down Belden House would “reduce associated operational costs, save on maintenance (and) reduce real estate taxes.”

While the house is not currently listed on the state or national historic registers, it is eligible, according to the Preservation League of New York State.

In November — without notice, according to several local officials — the DEP razed the caretaker house at Boyd Corners Reservoir in the town of Kent, located 3 miles from Belden House.

“The work on the exterior of that house represented the finest old-world craftsmanship,” said Richard Othmer, the town’s highway superintendent and a stonemason by trade.



KENT HISTORICAL SOCIETY— Caretaker house Boyd's Reservoir

The old caretaker house at Boyd Corners Reservoir in the town of Kent, which the DEP demolished in November.

Provided by Kent town historian

The DEP used to have crews that maintained the historic homes on its property. "But now look," said Fred Swanson, a retired 39-year DEP veteran and Belden friend, as he surveyed the fresh destruction site recently.

*ROR
is
exempt* The DEP is exempt from local building codes and exerts regulatory power over proposed construction that might impact the watershed and erosion control zones. That stifles development and creates a tax burden for residents and businesses, said Greg Ellner, who represents the town of Carmel in the Putnam County Legislature.

"Carmel residents have paid the DEP about \$26 million for water from spring-fed Lake Gleneida since 1997," Ellner said. "They're pumping 1.7 billion gallons per day. How many public agencies have a guaranteed income like that? If they raised rates by one one-thousandth of a cent, they could pay for Belden House."

Regarding the demolished historic structures, DEP spokesman John Milgrim said that "New York City is in the midst of extraordinary financial pressures and saddling water ratepayers throughout the Hudson Valley and the city with a multimillion-dollar expense for assets that serve no purpose for the water supply system is an unjustifiable burden."

David v. Goliath

The relationship between puny Putnam County (population 97,936) and New York City became contentious during the construction of a dam to create Boyd Corners Reservoir, which began in 1866.

As the city's population exploded, so did its upstate water infrastructure. The DEP gobbled up territory to create the reservoirs. Beneath them lie the remains of farms, villages and buildings. Residents removed bodies from cemeteries as the city's quest for a reliable water source upended lives.

To this day, some locals liken the DEP to an occupying colonial power. In the 2022 book "Nineteen Reservoirs," Lucy Sante wrote that the city "condemned properties for seizure without asking residents' permission, found all sorts of legal subterfuges denying the value of the fields and homesteads as established by expert witnesses, lowballed every estimate, treated them with distant contempt."

The county, along with the towns of Kent, Southeast, Carmel and Patterson, demanded that New York City pay local property taxes. The parties continue wrangling over rates and payments.

For decades, the DEP used the Belden property as office space and a caretaker lived on-site. Workers now occupy a makeshift barn across the street and a cluster of rusty trailers a couple of miles away.

After the DEP implemented its robust watershed protection policy in the late 1990s, the Belden homestead withered. Then, in 2006, the agency announced in a press release that it had earmarked \$2.9 million to “restore the exterior of the building to almost its original condition.” It also pledged to provide space for its Land Management division and the Friends of Belden House, which would “also have the opportunity to decorate public areas of the building, including its main foyer.”

Citing the 2008 recession, however, the DEP diverted the money elsewhere and the building is now falling in on itself.

“We just want them to do what they pledged to do,” Fanizzi said.



Retired DEP veteran Fred Swanson, left, talks with Robert Schanil at the Belden House property.
Marc Ferris / Special to the Times Union

Ways to save

Last October, Victor G. Grossman, the judge presiding over the Friends' lawsuit, issued a stay of execution until at least July. The DEP is "still open to transferring the structure if anyone will take it," according to court filings.

The statement references a 2003 agreement between DEP and the county to swap Belden House for two plots of land. That year, the county paid \$11.35 million for three large pieces of property, including the public Putnam County Golf Course and the circa 1741 Hill-Agor House. Despite promises to renovate the home, it sits untouched.

In 2005, the Putnam County Legislature voted against accepting Belden House, citing its poor condition, but still handed over the parcels it promised to DEP.

Now, neither the town of Carmel nor Putnam County have the means to renovate or maintain dilapidated historic houses, said County Executive Kevin Byrne. The Friends' lawyer, James Bacon, admitted that lawsuits of this type are rarely successful.

Several county legislators reached out to U.S. Rep. Mike Lawler, who represents the area, for federal aid. State Sen. Peter Harckham and Assemblyman Matt Slater contacted the state Department of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation to help save the house. As of press time, they had yet to hear anything in response.

A private developer could also come to the rescue, as happened with Kemble Cottage, which was built circa 1826 in Cold Spring. Two retired pediatricians bought the home from Scenic Hudson. In 2022, they restored it into a bed and breakfast after the village let them build a swimming pool, a three-car garage with a second-floor apartment and an adjoining five-bedroom house with interior doors that open into the historic structure.

Four miles from Belden House on Route 6 in Southeast, Manhattan-based developer Praq Rado is turning another long-neglected home from the 1800s into a bed and breakfast. The town of Southeast had owned the 7,000-square-foot house across from the Middle Branch Reservoir for 20 years and planned to tear it down, according to Rado. But after he began renovations, the DEP issued a ticket for "disturbing too much land" and made him move his well and septic tank.

"I'm trying to save this house," Rado said. "But there are a lot of hurdles I never anticipated."



Praq Rado is a developer who bought a neglected 19th-century home that was scheduled to be torn down. Rado is currently attempting to renovate the house and turn it into a bed and breakfast.

Marc Ferris / Special to the Times Union

HOW YOU CAN HELP SAVE

BELDEN HOUSE!

WRITE LETTERS: To the editor of your local paper freeman@hastonmedia.com
Putnam Courier: putnam144@gmail.com
PutnamPresstimes: EDITORIAL@putnampresstimes.com

SIGN THE PETITION: *online* <https://www.ipetitions.com/petition/beldenhouse> or
here on the table.

SPREAD THE WORD: talk to neighbors, call friends, post to Facebook friends, and share material.

CONTACT OFFICIALS: Town, County, & State

Town of Carmel Town Supervisor: Michael Cazzari, 845-628-1500x138

Putnam County Executive: Kevin Byrne, 845-808-1001

NYS Assembly Representative: Matt Slater, 845-278-2923

NYS Senate Representative: Peter Harckham, 914-241-4600

