



40 Gleneida Avenue – Carmel, NY 10512
PutnamCountyNY.com – (845) 808-1000

October 4, 2023

VIA E-MAIL - RAggarwala@dep.nyc.gov & PRIORITY MAIL

Honorable Rohit Aggarwala, Commissioner
NYC Department of Environmental Protection
Office of The Commissioner
59-17 Junction Blvd.
Corona, NY 11368

Re: Preservation of the Historic Belden House, Carmel, New York

Dear Commissioner Aggarwala:

On behalf of the residents of Putnam County, particularly Carmel Hamlet residents – we, the undersigned members of the Putnam County Legislature and the Putnam County Executive, respectfully request that the DEP fulfill its promise to rehabilitate and restore the historic Belden House. This structure is an invaluable piece of both New York City's and Putnam County's history, dating back to the Colonial Era.

The Belden farmhouse was built in 1760 on what is now New York City watershed property adjacent to the West Branch Reservoir. The city purchased the farmhouse, its associated structures, and the surrounding property in 1896, when the City constructed a dam behind the house. For nearly a century, the DEP and its predecessors used the house as an office and residence for a site custodian, until it was abandoned in the late- 20th century.

The DEP promised to begin work on the rehabilitation of Belden House 17 years ago, with work slated to begin 15 years ago. On April 19, 2006, DEP issued a press release stating that it had committed to spend \$2.9 million on a project that 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." The project was also to include additional office space "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." That press release is still available on DEP's website at https://www.nyc.gov/html/dep/html/press_releases/06-17bpr.shtml and a copy of the faxed release to then Deputy County Executive Frank DelCampo is attached.

Hon. Rohit Aggarwala, Commissioner
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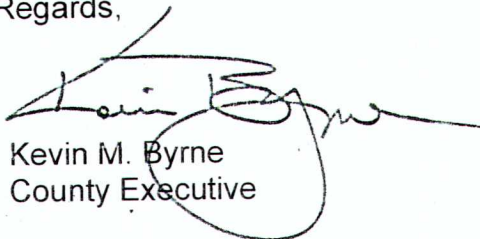
As then DEP Commissioner Emily Lloyd stated in the press release, "The DEP's investment in this project will guarantee the future of Belden House and help preserve an important part of the region's heritage." However, instead of preserving our heritage by restoring the Belden House as promised, through the DEP's neglect, the house and its associated structures have been allowed to fall into serious disrepair. Rainwater leaking through the roof has threatened the structure, which retains marble fireplaces, elaborate wood trim, and plaster finishing.

Inexplicably, a recent DEP Water Supply report indicates that the building is slated for demolition.¹ This has caused concern among many Carmel residents who fear the loss of this historically significant building.


We respectfully request that New York City simply act as a good neighbor in this matter, as Putnam County acts as a good neighbor to the NYC water supply in our backyard. Specifically, Putnam County residents and businesses are expected to have their quality of life negatively impacted by the shutdown of the Delaware Aqueduct for maintenance and repair this year. With reservoir levels being drained to record lows, it is anticipated to cause reduced access, unpleasant odor, and increased DEP police presence.

It is our sincere hope that you carry out your Department's outstanding commitment to renovate Belden House. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter and we look forward to receiving your response in due course.

Regards,



Kevin M. Byrne
County Executive




Greg E. Ellner
Legislator, District #5



William Gouldman
Legislator, District #2



Toni Addonizio,
Legislator, District #3



Erin L. Crowley
Legislator, District #9

Attachment



228-4265

NYC Department of Environmental Protection
Bureau of Public Affairs
59-17 Junction Blvd., 19th Floor
Flushing, NY 11373
fax (718) 595-3477 or 7851

FAX COVER SHEET

Date

5/8/06

To

Frank Del Camp

Fax #

845 225 0294

From

Jan. Michaels

PB #

718 595 1660

of Pages Including Cover Sheet

3

Comments:

MAY 08-2006 15:26

PUTNAM COUNTY

845 225 0294 P.02

EMILY LLOYD
COMMISSIONER

CHARLES G. STURCKEN
DIRECTOR, PUBLIC AND
INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS



(718) 595-6600

FAX (718) 595-3477

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 19, 2006
06-17 B

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 Mortimer 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.

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Contact: Ian Michaels (718) 595-6600

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