

Journey to the center of Shoreham

Developer, Civic Org. eye 'village center' for DeLalio Sod Farm site

By GREGORY ZELLER

SHOREHAM—There's plenty of bargaining yet to come, but Shoreham may soon have a bona fide village center.

When developer Bruce Barnet submits a development plan to Brookhaven Town for about 175 acres at the current DeLalio Sod Farm, it will include provisions set forth years ago in the Shoreham Hamlet Study — a wish list that includes retail space, open space and areas for what Shoreham Civic Organization president Mary

Daum termed "passive recreation."

But Mr. Barnet's plan also includes residential development — the acres, located south of Route 25A and north of Cooper Street, are currently designated for one-house-per-acre construction — and it is here the developer and the Civic Organization diverge.

But only a little.

"It's a very, very attractive plan," Ms. Daum said Tuesday, referring to preliminary proposals Mr. Barnet has circulated as Barnet Tallgrass LLC. "They have clearly read the Hamlet Study and learned what the community wants."

If there's a problem with Mr. Barnet's plan — which was discussed Sept. 14 during a special workshop at the Tallgrass Country Club, then encapsulated at the Sept. 15 Civic Organization meeting — it's the number of houses, according to Ms. Daum.

"Their initial plans have come in at a far greater

density than we ever envisioned for that property," she said, adding "talks are continuing" between the developer, the Civic Organization, Brookhaven officials and the Shoreham-Wading River School District.

'It's a very, very attractive plan.'

Mary Daum
Shoreham Civic
Organization
president

Mr. Barnet said Tuesday he plans to submit a construction application to Brookhaven "within the next two weeks," but referred all other questions to his attorney, Melville-based Larry Feldman. Mr. Feldman noted the developer was going "above and beyond the call of duty" in regards to incorporating the Hamlet Study's suggestions in his plan, but said a "critical mass" of new homes must be reached in order to make the development work.

The idea, according to the attorney, is to create a "center" for Shoreham — and "unless residents

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want a strip mall," a considerable residential component will be required.

"The density is a balancing act," Mr. Feldman said. "We will do something for the community and create the center of Shoreham as a major community benefit ... but we have to find some density that works for everybody."

As Mr. Feldman explained it, Mr. Barnet's portion of the sod farm property, about 325 acres, is actually split into two parcels — the 150-acre Tallgrass golf course and 175 acres currently dedicated to sod farming. Subdivision of the entire property could yield as many as 281 new homes, the attorney noted.

"Even though we're going to apply for a subdivision ... what the community has asked for in the Hamlet Study, and what we're trying to achieve, is to preserve the golf course as open space and build homes around the course, clustered on the

sod farm," he said. "What needs to be developed here is the center of Shoreham, something to give Shoreham its identity, other than the Shoreham Nuclear Power Plant."

To create that "village center," Mr. Barnet's proposal includes not only homes, but retail and open space components. There is no escaping the residential components, however, and Mr. Feldman noted proposals for a "mixture of housing types" that would offer "a product for everyone: The college graduate who wants to stay in the area, the empty-nester who wants to live on a golf course, and everybody in between."

Even Ms. Daum — who noted a Planned Development District for the farm recommended in the Hamlet Study — does not dispute the need for residential development, so long as the number of new homes is kept in check and

whatever is constructed fits in with surrounding development.

"Originally, the motivation that we had [for the PDD] was that the property ... was owned by four owners of record," Ms. Daum said. "We didn't want the pieces developed piecemeal. We wanted the property looked at as a whole."

She noted current construction by Emmy Development of Smithtown, which is constructing what the Civic Organization president called "McMansions" to the west of Mr. Barnet's property, between Ridge Road and Ran dall Road, and is looking to begin similar construction to the east, adjacent to the William

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Larry Feldman
Attorney for
developer
Bruce Barnet

Floyd Parkway.

Mr. Barnet's development should also include McMansions, according to Ms. Daum, but only where appropriate. "Maybe near the golf course and the Emmy Development homes, because you'd want to have homes that fit with the existing development," she said.

As for the rest, Ms. Daum said she was pleased to see Mr. Barnet embracing ideas included in the

Hamlet Study. Among other things, the study suggested an extension of Miller Avenue south past Route 25A (along a current tractor path) and through the DeLalio farm.

"We wanted that piece of road to be built like a boulevard, with a median with grass and trees and a wide green area on either side of the road," Ms. Daum said, noting the study also championed a "small area of retail at the Route 25A intersection" near the Laidlaw Bus Co. facility, as well as smaller residential lots with affordable housing.

"I hope that the developer, the community and the town are able to achieve some consensus that lets the basic concept be implemented," Ms. Daum said. "The developer has been really responsive to some of our ideas and concerns. But there are still several ways this property can go."

Mr. Feldman said Mr. Barnet wants to be a good neighbor, noting "the developer knew when he went in he could build 281 homes, and it would be more profitable that way."

"It's more expensive to build this way," the attorney added. "But we think we've come to a consensus on the type of plan that would work for the community. Now, it's our goal to come away with a project that everybody will be happy with."