

TOH Planning Board revokes approval of Halesite development

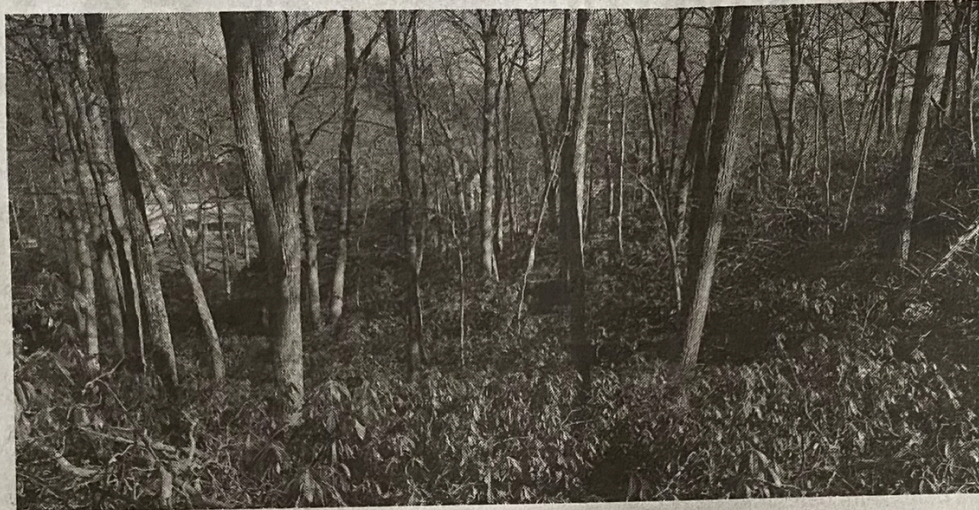
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The Town of Huntington Planning Board rescinded preliminary approval for a development proposal in Halesite located at 78 Bay Ave. and 211 Vineyard Road. The developer, Vineyard Bay Estates LLC, proposed an eight-home subdivision to be built in on a 4-acre plot.

The board approved the application in February and has received ardent community pushback since its passing. The development sits on 10 acres of wooded, hilly land — an area the community says has immense environmental and cultural significance. The developers plan to preserve the remaining land.

Nathan Hale Nature Preserve filed a lawsuit against the Town of Huntington Planning Board and Vineyard Bay Estates in March, claiming that the Planning Board's SEQRA declaration of significance is erroneous and lacking "a rational basis."

Paul Thomson, member of the Nathan Hale Nature Preserve, said that the Planning Board, instead of filing a pre populated environmental assessment form (EAF), the developer printed their own form which gave an "incomplete" analysis of the property and the impacts of development.



Nathan Hale Nature Preserve. Photo courtesy of Paul Thomson

"We want this process restarted in good faith and we want to be able to publicly comment on this process going forward," Thomson said. "And that they take a hard look under SEQRA to see if environmental impact statements are necessary."

The formal EAF states that the area is sensitive for archaeological sites, but the developer's form submitted that it was not a sensitive area.

At a June meeting the developer's lawyer, Michael McCarthy, argued against an environmental review. The community, including

Thomson, presented their concerns to the board, which included the fact that the area could hold significance to Native Americans.

"If I need to supplement the EAF [Part 1], I'll supplement the EAF," McCarthy said at the meeting. "If I need to, you know, correct something that was a box that was checked wrong, we'll will check the box correctly." He went on to note that he does not believe a full environmental impact study is necessary.

In February, the Planning Board accepted

the environmental review and the application simultaneously without allowing time for a public hearing.

Lisa Perillo, attorney for Nathan Hale Nature Preserve, wrote in a letter to the board that the full effects of construction on such a steep slope have not been properly examined.

"We don't understand why the priority is to develop as opposed to protect, and we think the Town of Huntington has made it very clear in its voting process that we want environmental space and these sleeping slopes protected," Thomson said.

He added, "Let the chips fall where they fall, we just want it done according to the law and according to the procedures."

Thomson and the rest of the nonprofit's members are also concerned the endangered northern long-eared bats would be put in danger by development.

Last October, Thomson said he brought the issue to the attention of the town's Environmental Open Space & Park Fund Advisory Committee, which advises the Town Board on buying and preserving open space. The committee reportedly agreed that the property should be preserved.

According to Newsday, McCarthy and Planning Board attorney Ed Gathman have entered into a stipulation agreement to reset the approval process.