

THE NATHAN HALE NATURE PRESERVE

A PROPOSAL TO THE TOWN OF HUNTINGTON ENVIRONMENTAL OPEN SPACE & PARK FUND ADVISORY COMMITTEE (EOSPA)

The property recommended for acquisition is a part of a ten-acre parcel of land in Halesite, eight acres of which are within the Town of Huntington (two acres are within the Village of Huntington Bay).

The area is typical of the northern part of Huntington where the bays, harbors, streams and hilly, forested lands were left following the retreat of the glaciers thousands of years ago. Early settlers were followed in the late 1800's with beach clubs, hotels, small estates and planned residential communities such as Bay Crest. The subject parcel is the only remaining large undeveloped and heavily forested property in Halesite and is surrounded by residential homes.

This property was originally purchased from The Halesite Company by the Parker family in 1924-1926, who sold it to the Schlijker family in 1952. In 2020 it was acquired by a developer, Vineyard Bay Estates, LLC, which is in the process of obtaining approval from the Town to subdivide it and construct eight houses.

Upon learning of the planned subdivision a number of nearby residents attended a meeting of the Planning Board on August 2nd and expressed their concerns about the proposed development. While some objections were focused on the many construction problems shown on the plans such as the steep slopes, ravines, substantial excavation and retaining walls, as well as the removal of hundreds of trees, access for emergency vehicles, etc., the overwhelming objection was the potential destruction of the heavily forested area that has always been a peaceful sanctuary for birds and wildlife as well as a home for specimen trees and rare plantings. As a result, the **Nathan Hale Nature Preserve Committee** was formed.

A tour of the land reveals that it is impressively hilly and drops from its highest elevation along Bay Avenue some 90 feet to the lowest, along Vineyard Road. The forest is marked by statuesque trees and lush flora and fauna in picturesque glades. Additionally, the property is home to hundreds of wildlife and bird varieties, as documented in the 1967 Huntington Audubon Society report to the Town of Huntington. Current neighbors living adjacent to this land report the long-time presence of two signs on the property, which appeared to be Suffolk County-generated, highlighting the land as a "Bird Sanctuary." (Those signs have disappeared.) The immediate neighborhood is also marked by several homes of historic significance, including the Bay Avenue residence of Fanny Brice, the subject of "Funny Girl."

In the 1900s, a portion of the land welcomed the plantings of world-class specimen rhododendron and azalea, preserved here after being safeguarded by local garden clubs and experts when war between the US and Japan broke out in World War II. These plantings were so well known and treasured in garden circles that they were visited frequently by gardening clubs from New York City and beyond who traveled out by train to see them and to award medals to Dorothy Schlaikjer, the land owner, for her efforts.

We ask the Town to recognize the unique nature of this piece of undeveloped forest that has managed to survive for centuries as a pristine link to our land history. We propose the Town transform it into a quiet Nature Preserve in order to secure the benefits it offers for study and contemplation, environmental safety and ecology:

We believe that this acquisition meets the criteria outlined for EOSPA consideration as discussed below.

First, there is no similar, comparable or large undeveloped and unique forest land in Halesite and it has long been a peaceful sanctuary for birds and wildlife as well as a home for specimen trees and rare plantings.

Whether this acquisition would be in "Furtherance of the goals contained in the State Open Space Conservation Plan, State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, or other federal, state or county passive or active recreation plans/programs for which matching funding may be availed by the Town", we believe a Nature Preserve meets the description outlined in the 1998 Town of Huntington OASIS study:

“What is Open Space? Open space has intrinsic utility and value. It serves many purposes, whether it is publicly or privately owned. Open space is more than just vacant land which has not been developed for residential, commercial, industrial, institutional or other intensive uses. Lakes, streams, beaches and cliffs qualify as open space. Ballparks, playing fields, urban parks, public gardens, cemeteries, wetlands, forestland and farmland are also open space. What is defined as open space depends, in part, on its surroundings. A vacant lot used for a community garden or a small marsh, are important open spaces in a crowded city. A narrow corridor or a pathway for walking or bicycling is open space, even though it may be adjoined by intensive development. Historic and archeological sites are often associated with significant open spaces and they are part of the heritage of New York State.”

As to whether this acquisition would be in "Adherence to the needs and goals identified by the Huntington Comprehensive Plan", our proposal clearly falls into line with Town policies as outlined in the Town of Huntington Horizons 2020 plan.

We also believe that the acquisition is consistent with "Consideration of prior acquisition preference, nominations, and consistency with other governmental plans, programs and analyses, especially Town Open Space Index, Draft Open Areas Information System (OASIS) Study; State Local Waterfront Revitalization Program or local programs subject to formal approval" - that have previously been approved by the Town of Huntington.

Regarding the question whether the owner would consider selling the property, following the Planning Board hearing on August 2nd, members of the committee spoke briefly to Walter Morris, managing member of Vineyard Bay Estates, LLC. He indicated at that time he would be amenable to selling the property at the "fair market value" but did not give a specific amount.

Finally, we believe that designation as a Nature Preserve, like others in the Town, would serve distinct and often unmet needs of the citizens of Huntington, such as bird watching, walking paths, garden study and native plant research. There is nothing like this in the Halesite area that provides:

- Biodiversity of plants, animals, birds, insects
- A home for numerous species of birds and wildlife like deer and fox
- Beautiful old trees and historical specimen plantings
- Peaceful quiet

THE NATHAN HALE NATURE PRESERVE COMMITTEE
JOHN & ROSE NOLAN, 76 BAY AVENUE
DENISE GOODWIN PACE, 15 HARBORCREST COURT
GEORGE & LYNN PEZOLD, 73 BAY AVENUE
JOHN & STACY PINTO, 77 BAY AVENUE
PAUL & KIM THOMSON, 81 BAY AVENUE
PAUL & KAREN WADKOWSKY, 1 HARBORCREST COURT

AMERICAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

GARDEN TOURS PLANNED FOR THE ANNUAL MEETING, MAY 1965

The following gardens will be open on Friday, May 22nd.

Garden of Mr. & Mrs. Hugo Schlaikjer, Halesite, Long Island, N.Y.

This is one of the four original Dexter hybrid test gardens on Long Island, formerly owned by the late John C. Parker. Once a vacation retreat, this amateur horticulturist's paradise has been, for the past thirteen years, the year round home of the Schlaikjers. Here may be seen many "one of a kind" Dexter hybrids, now thirty or more years old, which had bloomed at Sandwich, Mass., and which Mr. Dexter personally recommended to the Parkers, as especially good plants. Mrs. Schlaikjer is propagating selected forms of these Dexters, and adding approved varieties to the collection. Species and other rare plants enjoy the natural hilly woodland setting. The Schlaikjers manage these nine acres without help, as a spare time hobby. Mr. Schlaikjer commutes to New York City for business, and frequent business trips abroad limit his weekend gardening time. In an area of fast growing housing developments holding onto this tract seems worth the sacrifice.

Reference: Virginia Tech, University Libraries - QBARS - v19n1 Garden Tours Planned For Annual Meeting (American Rhododendron Society)

QBARS - v28n4 1974 Bronze Medal Award, New York Chapter

1974 BRONZE MEDAL AWARD, NEW YORK CHAPTER
Mrs. Frank Arsen, Lindenhurst, New York



FIG.64. Dorothy Schlaikjer, awarded the Bronze medal by the New York Chapter, receives her medal and congratulations from Dennis Stewart, Chapter President.

Dorothy Schlaikjer was the recipient of the bronze medal award at the annual dinner meeting of the New York Chapter in June.

She joined the chapter in 1953, and has served in many capacities, with a spirit of eager willingness, enthusiasm, and a thoroughness, which other members were inspired to emulate.

The first cut truss show of the New York Chapter was held at the Schlaikjer home in 1954. She has given numerous slide programs featuring the beautiful Dexter hybrids in her garden. When the New York Chapter hosted the annual meeting in 1965, Dorothy Schlaikjer's services were invaluable. One of her many responsibilities was tour chairman. She arranged interesting garden tours, which, without doubt, were a highlight of the convention.

She has exhibited in the cut truss shows of the New York Chapter for the past 20 years. She served as a Director Program Chairman, Co-Chairman of Cut Truss Show, and a Vice President. Dorothy Schlaikjer was appointed to the National Awards Committee and since 1972 has been East Coast Awards Chairman, in which capacity she still serves.

