

LONG ISLAND / SUFFOLK**Deer Park district nears sale of school in \$30M housing project**

A developer is in contract with the Deer Park School District to purchase the George Washington School, a defunct school at 220 Washington Avenue, and build in its place 200 units of senior housing, July 21, 2017. Photo Credit: Daniel Goodrich

By Jesse Coburn

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The Deer Park School District is in contract with a Garden City developer seeking to buy a defunct elementary school on Washington Avenue and build in its place a 200-unit senior housing complex.

The Babylon Town Board will likely vote next month on Engel Burman Group's application to rezone the roughly 10-acre site, a crucial step in a \$30 million project that supporters describe as a potential boon to the area.

The "Seasons at Deer Park" would "turn the blighted property from a tax-exempt property which drains school district resources . . . into a tax- and job-generating property which will enhance the community's aesthetics," Bram D. Weber, an attorney representing Engel Burman, said at a public hearing this month.

The complex would include 14 residential buildings with 200 one-bedroom units renting to residents 55 and older for about \$2,000 per month, Weber said. According to covenants and restrictions set by the



The developer would also construct a 3,000-square-foot office building to be used by the Deer Park School District, Weber said.

The district would receive \$5.5 million from the sale, pending the town’s approval of the application, according to Michael Ganci, a spokesman for the district.

The George Washington School, as it was known, closed 28 years ago. Since then, the two-story brick building has hosted youth and day care programs, although it has had no tenants for two years, Ganci said. The district pays about \$150,000 annually to maintain the site, Ganci said.

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Glennie Metz, 74, has lived and worked across the street since 2004 and said she is not against the proposal. “I just wish they’d hurry up and do something,” she said, staring at the school’s empty driveway and boarded-up windows.

District residents voted in favor of the sale in a 2014 referendum, and Engel Burman submitted its development application to the

town that same year, records show. Since then, the proposal has gone through multiple rounds of review by Babylon’s planning department, and town environmental officers have found it poses no ecological threats, records show.

In March, Babylon’s Planning Board voted 6-0 to recommend the rezoning.

If the rezoning is approved by the town board, the developer will seek a site plan approval and building permits from the town, after which it hopes to begin the estimated 18-month construction before the year’s end, Weber said.

The next Babylon Town Board meeting is Aug. 9.

By Jason Coburn

Jesse Coburn covers the Town of Babylon, including Babylon Village, Copiague, East Farmingdale, Deer Park, North Babylon, Gilgo Beach and Oak Beach. He's worked at Newsday since 2016.