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I understand that there are many Harrison residents who are unaware of the Town's potential acquisition of Willow Ridge Country Club. I will spend some time over my next few newsletters to review what has transpired over the last several months, the incredible opportunity at hand and what processes are ahead for the Town.

Willow Ridge is currently a private country club in Harrison located on North Street. The club sits in between Appawamis Country Club and Westchester Country Club. Willow Ridge is comprised of the following:

- Beautiful 18-hole golf course
- Driving range
- Putting green
- 6 Tennis courts (Har-Tru)
- Outdoor pool with cabanas
- Snack bar/luncheonette
- Dining room
- Banquet hall for large events
- Outdoor patio
- Covered veranda

In early October I heard from several sources that the club was up for sale and possibly closing its doors. It became known they were having financial difficulties with their operations and many members had left Willow Ridge for other clubs in the vicinity. At that time, I had reached out to the club President every day over the span of 5 days leaving voice mails and following up with emails to express the Town's interest in having a discussion. Not one of the numerous messages were returned by the club.

My staff and I reached out to members of the club that we knew, and we did in fact ascertain that the club was actively seeking potential buyers, including real estate developers. The Town had 2

meetings with Willow Ridge during October wherein we expressed the Town's strong interest in acquiring ownership of the club. We advised the club that we would need some time to perform some due diligence, which includes an appraisal and engaging consultants, to perform their own assessment of the condition of the golf course and the property, before we would be in any position to extend any offer to purchase the club. Willow Ridge was aware that the Town hired Troon Golf as one of its consultants to assess the club and its operations.

Willow Ridge advised us during those October meetings that they had 3 other interested groups that they were in discussions with. They shared with us that 2 of the interested parties wanted to continue its golf operations and 1 that wanted to residentially develop the property.

Notwithstanding the fact that Willow Ridge was aware that the Town was acting in complete good faith and getting its due diligence started – and that the Town would need a short period of time to accomplish it – the club only a few days after our second meeting on October 29th sent out a letter demanding that all interested parties were required to submit written offers to the club via a detailed Letter of Intent by Saturday, November 7th at 5:00 p.m. – effectively cutting off negotiations with the Town, and in essence, giving us only 1 week to submit a written offer without ANY due diligence.

The Town Board then authorized the retention of eminent domain counsel at a special meeting of the Town Board on October 30th to pursue the acquisition of the club. Town Attorney Frank Allegretti had several phone conversations with the club's attorney between October 30th and November 2nd that he thought were productive. He expressed the Town's hope that we could still sit down with the club and negotiate a transaction at "arms-length." He also inquired as to why the club set a tight deadline for offers of November 7th when they knew the Town needed time to even be in position to put up an offer. The attorney for the club stated that the club is running out of cash and bills are going unpaid. Mr. Allegretti advised the attorney for the club that having a few months of unpaid bills would become irrelevant as they would all be paid at a closing in the near future.

The eminent domain process is a process under New York State law wherein a municipality can acquire real property from a private property owner if the municipality can establish a proposed public use or purpose in acquiring such land.

This does not mean that the Town acquires such properties for free. To the contrary, municipalities are required by law to pay fair value for the property based on an appraisal. If there is a disagreement over the value of the property, the law provides the property owner with a right to contest the value and to try to convince a Judge that their appraisal should be recognized over the Town's appraisal.

In fact, a country club/golf course appraisal for eminent domain purposes must be viewed not as an ongoing concern, but as a residential valuation which is also known as highest and best valuation. Willow Ridge sits on 121 acres and located in a 1-acre residential zone.

Troon Golf was on-site at Willow Ridge on Friday, November 6th. The club was previously advised that Troon wanted to speak with the Superintendent of the golf course while they were

there. The club's attorney responded via email stating that there would be no access to their employees and all request for information was to be submitted directly to her. The club refused to make the Superintendent of the golf course available to answer basic questions on the course maintenance and operations.

The Troon team reported that it was apparent from the moment they arrived at the club for the site visit that the President of Willow Ridge Laurence Mintzer and their lead negotiator Jeff Title did not want Troon there and they wanted them off the property as soon as possible. In addition, the team representing the interests of Willow Ridge, were not forthcoming on many important issues during the visit. Mr. Allegretti submitted to the club's attorney a list of items that Troon Golf needed as a follow-up to the site visit. Willow Ridge supplied some information, yet refused to provide information as to other items, including certain liabilities with employees and their unions.

Then, Willow Ridge advised us that the Town would not be allowed to conduct a Phase I environmental assessment, which was to include a non-invasive site inspection of the property and that our consultant would need to speak with the golf course Superintendent to get an understanding of what chemicals are being used on the property. That simple request was denied.

Subsequently, the club went on a negative campaign in an attempt to force the Town to cease its efforts at acquiring the club through the eminent domain process. The issued self-serving press releases and political-campaign type of glossy flyers sent via mail that were littered with false and inaccurate statements.

It became clear, that the Town had no choice but to start the eminent domain process to acquire the club. The first steps were recently concluded with public hearings before the Town Board that occurred over 3 nights with 2 nights of environmental review. Numerous people commented during those public hearing sessions and sent in letter and emails. The overwhelming majority of our Town residents are fully supportive of the Town acquiring the club, noting the value of this would bring to our Town to have such an incredible recreational asset available for our residents. We are currently exploring various membership options and daily fee access golf options for those that do not want to pay a seasonal membership fee.

The only voices in opposition are for the most part Willow Ridge equity members who are not even residents of Harrison. They are looking only to capitalize on the monetary gain for their own wallets who are merely looking to cash out on their personal investment. They believe they could get a residential home developer to swoop in and provide them with an over-inflated financial gain. Allowing this property to fall into the hands of a residential developer would be tragic. A large subdivision of this land into residential homes would be a huge burden on our municipal services and our schools. There would also be an increase in traffic, construction for numerous years, and elimination of the potential for increase in property values due to a large recreational use – and the forever loss of open space. The environmental impacts of a large subdivision would be quite significant as the property contains ponds, streams, wetlands, steep slopes and a portion of the property in the 100-year flood plain.

We have offered to sit down and open up discussions with Willow Ridge and have an amicable approach to this acquisition now that our initial due diligence is complete. Several Willow Ridge Board members expressed that position back at our first public hearing in December. Willow Ridge has unfortunately rejected that approach now and they want the eminent domain process to play out.

There is a public work session for the Town Board to hear from Troon Golf on Thursday, February 25th at 7:00 p.m. who will give a presentation via Zoom. Troon's detailed written report has been posted on our Town website since early last month. The upcoming work session will be followed by a Town Board meeting for the Board to vote on the sole issue of whether the proposed acquisition will have a public use or purpose. This will allow the eminent domain process to proceed.

Please forward this email newsletter to your friends, family and acquaintances who may be interested in this topic.