



LaGrange Inn

Probably constructed before 1750, this historic building in West Islip, NY may be the oldest inn to be continually in service on Long Island ~~~ See link at bottom of page for more history information.



Over the past few months, the West Islip community has become aware of plans to develop the LaGrange Inn property. Several hundred people attended an informational hearing, and voiced strong opposition to the current plan - which includes building a Walgreens Drugstore on the property next to a "restored" LaGrange building.

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[History of LaGrange](#)

Click Image for Aerial View of Site



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MONDAY, MARCH 1, 2010

[LaGrange to re-open April 2010](#)

The West Islip Association, formerly known as the La Grange Task Force, is pleased to announce the re-opening of La Grange Inn. The Task Force was organized, through the efforts of Suffolk County Legislator Tom Barraga, in March of 2008. The Association (WIA) was formed in September of 2009 to address situations of concern to the residents of the West Islip Community. The goal of the Association is to work with the community, community groups and local officials to ensure that West Islip maintains its character and remains a comfortable place in which to live and work. WIA has met with some success in encouraging a pleasant look to West Islip's main streets and public buildings.

Challenging economic circumstances made the preservation of LaGrange a difficult undertaking. WIA has carried on the Task Force's purpose by working with the current owners of La Grange to find a suitable operator who would continue to preserve the Inn's historic significance as the centerpiece of West Islip. After months of negotiations aimed at saving the endangered building, it appears that LaGrange will remain the Hamlet's landmark.

The Association's Board of Directors has met with the new operators who are enthusiastic, energetic, and prepared to make the La Grange a premier catering hall. Dennis Garren, Scott DiDonna and Dave Rousso are planning to begin operation as a catering facility by mid April or early May. After their meeting with the new businessmen, WIA Board members were afforded the opportunity to tour the Inn which is currently under renovation. The original design of the landmark will remain intact and these gentlemen are optimistic that they will provide the type of service which will become the hallmark of West Islip's little corner of history.

WIA wishes the new operators much success and encourages West Islip's local businesses and residents to include the La Grange when planning an event.

Posted by West Islip at [11:39 PM](#) [No comments:](#)

TUESDAY, JULY 22, 2008

[Task Force Press Conference - July 22](#)

(MyLITV.com has posted this [VIDEO](#) of some press conference highlights)

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More than 30 people attended a press conference held on July 22 at the West Islip Library and listened as members of the La Grange Inn Task Force spoke. This 17-member team has met weekly for the last 2 months, gathering information from local politicians, community leaders and local entrepreneurs in an attempt to develop viable suggestions for alternative uses of the La Grange Inn site.

The conference opened with these remarks:

Good Afternoon

I am Joe DeCarlo resident of West Islip and Chairman of the Special Task Force on the LaGrange Inn.

The LaGrange Task Force consists of seventeen members whose single purpose is to recommend proposals for development of the La Grange Inn site that will be in harmony with the needs of the West Islip community and will be in the best interests of the current owners. I would like to thank the Task Force members very much for their tireless energy and dedication on this very special effort for the residents of our hamlet.

The mission of the Special Task Force is very straightforward - to research, develop and recommend alternative plans for the future of the site where the historic La Grange Inn is currently located.

The Task Force held a series of eight weekly meetings over a period of approximately three months. As part of the process the Task Force invited key individuals both in the public and private sectors to attend and participate in the meetings. We are grateful for the input the Task Force received from Islip Town Supervisor Philip Nolan, Town of Islip Department of Planning and Development Commissioner Eugene Murphy, the Director of Economic Development for the Town of Islip William Mannix, and Town Historian Rob Finnegan. In addition the Task Force wishes to thank the former owner of the La Grange Inn Uwe Paulsen and real estate broker Jamie Winkler for their valuable input. We would also like to thank the extraordinary effort of West Islip's own - Suffolk County Legislator Tom Barraga who provided us with insight and access to key individuals noted above.

We here in West Islip view the LaGrange Inn as our village centerpiece and want to preserve and protect its history. Too many times in the past, historical landmarks throughout the region have been destroyed in the name of progress. We do not want to see this happen to the LaGrange Inn which can be found on Islip Town maps as early as 1776. Just look a mile or so east of here on Montauk Highway where a local developer restored another West Islip historical site - The Arnold Mansion - and created a beautiful vista for the hamlet.

The Task Force has come up with some alternatives for the site that would preserve its heritage and hopefully will create synergy with the properties that bound the LaGrange Inn. We are prepared to work with the current owners and Islip Town to assist in any way with the alternatives we have come up with as a group.

- 1) Catering Facility- the highest and best use of the property would be the continuation of the site as a catering facility.*
- 2) Restaurant - a Milleridge Inn type use that utilizes the original La Grange Inn as the center-piece with retail shops along the perimeter of the property.*
- 3) Multi Use Housing Option- multi story units where young people would live above shops with the original La Grange Inn continuing as a*

restaurant and centerpiece.

4) Mini Village - the merging of all four parcels to form a mini village consisting of a variety of restaurants, retail shops and apartments. The four parcels would consist of the La Grange Inn site, the Babylon Ford site, the small real estate building and the property of the former Ukrainian Catholic Church. The four current owners would have to agree to merge the properties and seek permission from the Town of Islip to form a Planned Development District.

5) Culinary Institute - a facility that would have the ability to attract people from all over Long Island.

6) Hospital Building - the original La Grange Inn coupled with an architectural compatible design would be used to facilitate and enhance the expansion of either Good Samaritan or Southside Hospitals.

7) Professional Office Building- original La Grange Inn with appropriate architectural construction would be used for professional office space which is common along that particular segment of Montauk Highway.

8) Planned Landmark Protection District- the Task Force recommends that Regardless of what is developed on the La Grange Inn site the owner should seek Planned Landmark Development status which would give them greater flexibility in construction and may well afford them the opportunity to receive local and even federal tax advantages.

A PDF version of the report is available [here](#)

Posted by West Islip at [2:46 PM](#) [3 comments:](#)

THURSDAY, JULY 10, 2008

Planning department does not support parcel plans

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Story By: JEFFREY BESSEN, Editor

10 July 2008

The proposed plans by Walgreens to construct a pharmacy on the western portion of the landmark LaGrange site at the intersection of Higbie Lane and Montauk Highway is appearing ill.

In addition to at least a few hundred residents opposing the idea, the hard-hitting opposition of County Legislator Tom Barraga (R-West Islip), and the formation of the LaGrange Inn Task Force, the Islip Town Planning Department is now taking its shots at the plans.

Planning department officials informed Walgreens that they do not support this petition and noted such concerns as the plans not meshing with the recommendations of the West Islip Hamlet Study.

This specific parcel is outside the hamlet's center, located at Higbie Lane and Union Boulevard, and new commercial development outside this existing hamlet center contradicts the hamlet study's stated goals.

"It is the hope of the Task Force that this decision by the Islip Town Planning Department, coupled with the overwhelming opposition to the construction of a retail pharmacy on the LaGrange Inn site, will create a much better opportunity for the owner," Task Force Chair Joseph DeCarlo said in a prepared release.

In a letter to West Islip-based attorney, Lisa Pace, who represents Walgreens in this matter, Assistant Town Planning Director Jeanmarie Brennan wrote: "In addition to the fundamental issues of compatibility with the Comprehensive Plan and the existing zoning, there are a number

of site design issues as well.”

“The plan, as currently proposed, does not meet the minimum parking requirements or queuing requirements for the drive-through, indicating that even if the property had the correct zoning for the uses requested, the proposed development is too intense for the site,” Brennan noted.

A call for comment was not returned by Pace by press time. Present zoning for the site is Residence B and Business I and Walgreens seeks a rezone to Business 3.

Plans for a Walgreens pharmacy on the LaGrange Inn property were brought to light by the Islip Bulletin (Oct. 18, 2007) and in March, a meeting in the ballroom of LaGrange was attended by a few hundred community members (IB, March 22) who raked over Walgreens representatives for seeking to build a 13,650-square foot store on the 2.47-acre property.

However, Walgreens is seeking to turn back the clock on LaGrange and help restore the place where George Washington supposedly slept before becoming president.

Plans are to chop off the additions made over the year to the Inn and return LaGrange to the size it was, when it served as a stop for travelers between Jamaica, Queens and Patchogue. It has also served as a summer resort by wealthy New Yorkers.

Having received a letter from Barraga and Assemblyman Phil Boyle (R-Bay Shore), Town Supervisor Phil Nolan met with Task Force members. The Task Force was established to “develop, research and recommend alternative plans” for the Inn.

Nolan told the Task Force that if the change of zone application appears before the town board, he would hold the hearing in West Islip. The supervisor also noted that if the application came before the planning board that he has already discussed with Planning Board Chair Frank Tantone the idea of holding the hearing in the hamlet.

“This is consistent with my neighborhood chats and if we can do it, we should,” Nolan said. “It was something requested by two electeds and it is the most transparent setting possible. The application will rise and fall on its merits.”

Tantone noted that precedent for such an event was set by the planning board previously when applications have come in front of the board that are “significant enough to have a separate night just for that application,” as in the case of Pilgrim State that was also heard at the town annex located at 401 Main Street.

“We have done it before,” Tantone said. “The motivation is to have a public hearing that residents can more easily attend and not inconvenience others who are interested in other [agenda] items.”

Posted by West Islip at [1:40 PM](#) [No comments:](#)

THURSDAY, JULY 3, 2008

[Islip Planning Board says NO to Walgreens....](#)

In a written letter the Islip Town Planning Department has notified the applicant that the Planning Department does not support the application for construction of a Walgreen Pharmacy on the La Grange Inn site in

West Islip.

The Planning Department indicated a number of concerns. The proposal is not in keeping with the recommendations of the West Islip Hamlet Study. This property is well outside West Islip's hamlet center on Higbie Lane and Union Boulevard. It would allow new commercial development outside the existing hamlet center on land that could not be developed commercially otherwise, which contradicts the stated goals of the West Islip Hamlet Study.

In addition to the fundamental issues of compatibility with the Comprehensive Plan and the existing zoning, there are a number of site design issues as well. The plan as currently proposed does not meet the minimum parking requirements or queuing requirements for the drive through, indicating that even if the property had the correct zoning for the uses requested, the proposed development is too intense for the site.

Legislator Barraga applauded the Islip Planning Department decision. "It is my hope that the owners of the La Grange Inn site will join the La Grange Inn Task Force and help develop an alternative for the development of the site that will be in the best interest of the residents of West Islip and the current owner" - said Barraga.

Posted by West Islip at [2:25 PM](#) [4 comments:](#)

FRIDAY, JUNE 20, 2008

Vision of the Future for West Islip

We remember in 1978 that the Town of Islip commissioned a study for the development of the hamlets within the Town. West Islip was part of that study. La Grange Inn was considered an anchor of the community that added historical significance and a shared sense of elegance to the community.

As the La Grange property, the Babylon Ford property and the realtor and Ukrainian Church properties come up for sale, a new and visionary future could emerge wherein the owners of these properties could unite to create a village green with shops, apartments, and gathering places for the community centered around the preservation of one of the oldest Inns on Long Island.

As members of the Task Force to preserve the character and purpose of La Grange and as residents who hope to see a brilliant future for West Islip, we invite other concerned citizens who are opposed to a Walgreen Store at La Grange corner to step forward and offer the owners of these properties better ideas for the development of West Islip.

Perhaps, a Marriott or Hilton hotel or a major restaurant operator could partner with the owners to create West Islip's La Grange Square, a place for multiple uses that would compliment our fine library and attract many new residents who wish to share a beautiful community life style.

Please share your ideas with the La Grange Task Force and contribute to the future of West Islip.

bob and kay

Posted by [bob and kay](#) at [11:32 AM](#) [1 comment:](#)

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4, 2008

Kelly's Lake and the Historic LaGrange Inn

NEWS RELEASE:

By Suffolk County Legislator Tom Barraga

Many years ago, as some of the elders of Bay Shore will tell you, there existed a beautiful small lake on the north side of main street called Kelly's Lake. It was a small lake in which hundreds of residents enjoyed what it had to offer in the summer and the winter. The beauty of the lake in the summer and its use for ice skating and winter sports in the winter. Then one day the residents of Bay Shore were shocked to see that Kelly's Lake was completely filled in. Their beloved lake was gone forever and all they were left with were their memories and a Ford dealership built where the lake once stood. Kelly's Lake was part of the core, the essence of Bay Shore and it was lost. As with most things of beauty when they are destroyed it is because of the greed and narrow mindedness of the selfish few. The historic La Grange Inn is part of the soul of West Islip and must not be lost to greed and an unwanted and unneeded Walgreen Pharmacy at the site.

The historic La Grange Inn is to the residents of West Islip, what Argyle Lake is to the residents of Babylon, or the Concourse is to the residents of Brightwaters, or the Smithtown Bull is to the residents of Smithtown. What would the citizens of those towns do if they were made aware that a portion of Argyle Lake in Babylon would be filled in to make room for a Walgreen Pharmacy; that the Concourse in Brightwaters would be reduced in size to make room for a Walgreen Pharmacy; that right next to the Smithtown Bull there would be constructed a Walgreen Pharmacy, open 24 hours per day, seven days a week. If these examples are just unimaginable then why would there be any credibility to an equally preposterous scenario calling for the construction of a Walgreen Pharmacy right next to the historic La Grange Inn.

Unlike the other communities I have mentioned, West Islip does not have a central downtown main street area. Our community has always been split from a retail perspective, with stores on Higbie Lane, Union Boulevard and Montauk Highway. The one central edifice the entire hamlet of West Islip has is the historic La Grange Inn. It is our unifying identity and the site must not be downgraded to a shell of its former self standing in the gray shadows of a huge unsightly, unnecessary Walgreen Pharmacy built by the selfish and greedy few at the expense of the many.

The 30,000 residents of West Islip overwhelmingly do not want or need a Walgreen Pharmacy on the grounds of the historic La Grange Inn. We will not allow the La Grange Inn to suffer the same fate as Kelly's Lake.

These images illustrate the changes

Posted by West Islip at 4:06 PM [No comments:](#)

SUNDAY, JUNE 1, 2008

Task Force Looks for Alternative Plans

News Release:

TASK FORCE TARGETS LAGRANGE INN

JOSEPH DE CARLO APPOINTED CHAIRPERSON 5/27/08

A special Task Force has been formed to research, develop and recommend alternative plans for the future of the site where historic LaGrange Inn is currently located.

The Task Force whose Chairperson is Joseph De Carlo and two Vice Chairpersons Lynn Luttenberger and Maria Figalora, will consist of seventeen members whose single task will be to recommend proposals for development of the site that will be in harmony with the needs of the West Islip community and will also be in the best interests of the current owners.

The community totally rejects the current proposal to put a Walgreen Pharmacy on the LaGrange Inn site, consequently the Task Force will only deal with the alternative proposals. In the weeks ahead the Task Force will hold weekly meetings, reach out to a host of businesses and professional leaders, discuss multiple possible uses for the property and issue a report to the people of West Islip detailing it's findings and recommendations.

“ The future development of the LaGrange Inn is the symbol of the West Islip community and we, on the Task Force, are absolutely determined to find a use that is appropriate from a historical perspective and is in keeping with the wishes of our 30,000 West Islip residents,” said De Carlo.

“ The Task Force in addition to reaching out to a large number of individuals and groups for input on possible development welcomes all those who would like to address us on any ideas they may have for the LaGrange site,” said Luttenberger.

“ West Islip is our home and the LaGrange Inn site has always been the historical focal point that identifies our community. Our hamlet doesn't have a central downtown like other communities but what we do have that brings us together and gives us a unifying identity is the historical LaGrange Inn, and this Task Force will develop proposals that are in the best interest of the people of West Islip,” said Figalora.

Posted by West Islip at [10:57 AM](#) [3 comments:](#)

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