

The Stonington Land Trust is pleased to announce the preservation of 82 acres of Stonington farm and forest land. One SLT board member said that "this acquisition is in concert with the Land Trust's effort to prudently use its resources to acquire large and ecologically significant lands in Stonington."

Article published Oct 2, 2012

## **'Critical property' picked up by Stonington Land Trust**

By Joe Wojtas Day Staff Writer Stonington

The Stonington Land Trust has bought 82 acres of land off Taugwonk Road from Pfizer for \$350,000 thanks to an anonymous donor who funded the purchase price. The closing on the property was held last Thursday, according to land trust vice president Stanton Simm. He said the land trust had worked on acquiring the property for the past two years. The land had originally been placed on the market for \$1.6 million. "We consider this a bargain sale," said Stuart Cole, a member of the land trust's board of directors. "In many ways this is a critical property for the land trust. It is one of the largest undeveloped pieces of property left in the Anguilla Brook watershed corridor," Simm said. "We're just happy we were able to work out an agreement." Preserving the Anguilla Brook corridor has been a priority for the land trust since its inception and it has now been able to preserve several properties in that area. Simm said preservation of the Pfizer property has been a priority for the town's Conservation Commission for many years. Simm said the property, which is located along the east side of Taugwonk Road about a mile north of Interstate 95, contains 25 acres of hay fields along with a wooded area to the rear which is important for wildlife, he said. There is also small barn on the property, which also is part of the Stony Brook watershed. Cole said the land trust will continue to use the field for hay farming while Simm said the Elm Restoration Society has planted disease resistant trees on the property which it then transplants in other areas. Simm said Pfizer once used the property to grow vegetables using various fertilizers in the 1970s. About 30 acres of the property is zoned for light industrial use which means it could have been developed for uses such as warehouses, offices and research and development. The rest of the land is zoned residential and requires a minimum of three acres to build a house. Cole said that while the property won't be generally open to the public because it is a wildlife preserve, groups will be invited to tour the site. Simm said the land will be named the Thomas Miner preserve in honor of one of the town's first residents, whose descendants owned the property in the 1700s. Since its inception in 2007,

the land trust has acquired five parcels and helped preserve two others. Earlier this year it purchased 18 acres in the Anguilla Brook corridor for \$36,000. Simm said the land trust is now looking at acquiring additional properties. [j.wojtas@theday.com](mailto:j.wojtas@theday.com)

The Westerly Sun ran the following article:

**Land trust acquires 82-acre site on Taugwonk Road from Pfizer** By LESLIE ROVETTI Sun Staff Writer [10/4/2012] STONINGTON — The Stonington Land Trust has purchased land on Taugwonk Road that will help it preserve another piece of the Anguilla Brook greenbelt corridor. Protecting the corridor is one of the land trust's primary objectives, said land trust Vice President Stanton Simm. The land trust had been looking at the 82-acre property, owned by Pfizer since 1974, since it went on the market two years ago, said land trust President James S. Smith. But with a \$1.6 million asking price — the appraised value — the property was out of reach. After waiting, and negotiating, the land trust was finally able to buy the property last week for \$350,000, with money provided by a single anonymous donor. "That's a pretty good discount," Smith said. Simm said about 27 acres of the property and will be kept as hayfields. A front portion of the property is a nursery for Dutch elm-resistant elm trees, grown by a research foundation. Behind the hayfields, about 55 acres of woodlands haven't been touched in about 50 years, he said. The land has been reverting to forest and will be maintained as a nature preserve, Simm said. The property is important to preserve as open space because it contributes to the Anguilla Brook watershed on its eastern side and to the Stony Brook watershed to the west, Smith noted. The land will be named after Thomas Miner, one of the four founders of Stonington. It will not be a public park, but the land trust will offer private tours. It will likely be used as the land trust's primary place to hold events, Simm said. The property, flanked by two houses, is on a side of Taugwonk Road that is zoned as light industrial. Most of the properties on the road are residential, and were built before zoning regulations were put in place in 1961. An attempt by the Conservation Commission in 2009 to change the entire road to a residential zone was unsuccessful. This is the fourth property secured by the land trust, which was formed in 2007, and the second property it has purchased. During its five years of existence, the land trust has preserved 311 acres along the Anguilla Brook corridor. "We're getting a pretty good buildup of open space," said Smith. The Pfizer parcel is probably one of the largest untouched properties in the area, said Simm. Buying large parcels is the best way to reach Stonington's eventual goal of preserving 30 percent of the town as open space, he added. "It really fulfills the objective of the land trust," Simm said. Only 30 acres of the 82-acre

property are zoned for light industry. However, it comprises 13 percent of the total light-industrial property in Stonington, and the town will no longer collect taxes on the land. Pfizer's property tax was \$17,875.

The Day had a follow up article:

Article published Oct 4, 2012 **Sale by Pfizer leaves Stonington with less revenue, industrial land** By Joe Wojtas Day Staff Writer Stonington - Pfizer's decision to sell 82 acres of land off Taugwonk Road to the nonprofit Stonington Land Trust means the town will now lose \$17,874 a year in tax revenue based on the current tax rate. It also means the loss of 13 percent of light industrial land in town, land that could be used to not only generate even greater tax revenue but to create jobs, according to the chairman of the town's Economic Development Commission. The town will lose the \$17,874 because the land trust, as a nonprofit organization, is exempt from paying taxes. "The loss of taxes is always difficult," First Selectmen Ed Haberek said. "But it's Pfizer's decision. I hope we can make it up by some of the other businesses like Zachry, which have come into town." Haberek was referring to Zachry Nuclear Engineering, which recently purchased and renovated the former Kellem's property on Lord Hill Road. About 30 acres of the property is zoned for light industrial use, which means it could have been developed for uses such as warehouses, offices, and research and development, which would generate more tax revenue. The rest of the land is zoned residential and requires a minimum of 3 acres to build a house. EDC Chairman Blunt White said Wednesday that getting new land zoned for industrial use is very difficult, "So losing this hurts," he said. He said the 30 acres of light industrial land on the site represents 13 percent of all the LI-130 land in town. In addition to creating tax revenue, he said, the land could have eventually provided well-paying jobs for residents. "While land preservation is a noble goal, at some point we have to look at where it's taking us. The town has financial challenges that it has to meet," he said. White said that according to figures he obtained from Tax Assessor Marsha Standish, 7,274 of the 26,680 acres of land in town, or about 27 percent, is now exempt from taxation. "The town needs to be concerned that it is eroding its tax base," he said. Last week, the land trust purchased the land for \$350,000 thanks to an anonymous donation. The land had been appraised by the town at \$1.6 million in the last revaluation. The land trust has said the site was a critical to acquire preserve because it is one of the largest undeveloped pieces of property left in the Anguilla Brook watershed. [j.wojtas@theday.com](mailto:j.wojtas@theday.com)