

OFFICE OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 1, 2013

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Successful First Step Towards Preserving Babylon's Last Farm **Gregory working hard to preserve Colonial Springs Farm,** **the last living slice of the town's pastoral history.**

AMITYVILLE, NY— The nation's first (1974) farmland purchase of development rights (PDR) program, the *Suffolk County Farmland Program* has caused 6,000 acres to be preserved for agriculture. But anyone familiar with the program knows too, that since its inception, the lion's share of the millions of dollars used to preserve those acres has been spent on vast tracks far away out on the eastern forks. At the Tuesday July 30th meeting of the County Legislature, Majority Leader and Fifteenth District legislator DuWayne Gregory (D-Amityville) shifted that focus westward when he successfully championed the approval of the first step to preserve Babylon's last farm.

The Gregory sponsored resolution unanimously adopted by the Legislature, comes after an undisputed endorsement by the Farmland Committee. It authorizes the County to conduct an appraisal of 15 acres of the Colonial Springs Farm, located on Main Avenue in Wheatley Heights. Gregory's efforts come at a critical time, because like many other farms that have pulled up stakes and gone out of business, the Wade Family has been facing increasing pressure to sell all their land for development purposes.

But the Wades, who purchased the farm in 1983, are reluctant to give up their way of life and their family business where they cultivate pumpkins, corn, sunflowers and other nursery stock plants.

— MORE, MORE, MORE —

Under Suffolk’s newly revamped “Triple A” open space and farmland preservation program (which refers to the *appraisal*, *acquisition* and *approval* steps of the process) parcels must now effectively compete with each other for the limited financial resources the program runs on. After the appraisal of the farm is completed, it will be considered again by the Legislature’s Environment, Planning and Agriculture Committee, which will deliberate the relative worthiness of acquiring the development rights for Colonial Springs against other open space and farmland development proposals. If the Legislature votes to make an offer to the Wade’s to acquire the development rights to their land and the family accepts, the proposal must come back again for this body to authorize the final, agreed upon purchase price and terms.

Gregory, who supported the creation of the Triple A program as the best way to ensure sparse County resources are spent wisely, plans to be involved every step of the way to ensure that lawmakers are fully educated on the necessity and benefit of preserving this farm and everything it brings to the surrounding community and economy.

“I’ve supported the preservation for East End farms because it staves off irresponsible development while boosting the County’s tourism and agribusiness economies. Since the program’s inception, residents in our western towns – myself included – have funded the purchase of farmland development rights for years with a portion of the county sales tax we pay,” says Gregory.

“But Suffolk’s agricultural heritage doesn’t solely emanate from, or belong exclusively to, the farms on the forks. Now I’m going to fight hard to make sure some of those monies are used to preserve this last, lone ‘green gem’ right here in Babylon.”

If the Legislature does ultimately approve purchasing the development rights, it would allow the Wade family to still own the land but restrict the activities to only farming and other narrowly defined agricultural related pursuits.

Says Gregory, “that will ensure that Colonial Springs, and the vanishing way of life it represents, will exist for people to appreciate in perpetuity. That’s important.”