

*Please see below statement sent on behalf of Legislator Sarah Anker regarding an article that was published in today's Newsday "Suffolk Plans to Buy Historic Coram House".*

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June 26, 2018

Several months ago, I was approached by members of the Davis Town Meeting House Society and the Coram Civic Association regarding preservation of the historic Norton House properties located on NYS Route 25 in Coram. It is my sincere hope that Suffolk County and the Town of Brookhaven can work together to preserve this important piece of Coram's history. While I am happy that Newsday chose to write an article on this important initiative, I wanted to take a moment to clarify the legal process the county must follow to acquire the properties.

Upon being contacted by several community groups, my office researched the property and found out that it is currently in tax arrears. I then contacted the Comptroller's office and was informed that they are in the process of taking the tax deed. This process could take several months to a year during which the property owners at any time can pay the county back. If the county does acquire the property for tax delinquency, Suffolk County code allows the property owners up to three years to redeem their property. Therefore, if the county does take the property for tax arrears, we cannot proceed to acquire the property for preservation or alter the property for several years.

The article also states that the property owners plan on paying their back taxes and fees and selling to the county. While our office has not spoken with the property owners directly, the Comptroller's office was able to contact them and they have expressed their desire to pay back their taxes and redeem their property. We have not yet been able to confirm that they are willing sellers of the property at this time.

If the property owners were to make the county whole by paying all of their back taxes and fees, the county could then pursue an acquisition of the property through purchase if, and only if, the property owners are willing sellers. The Suffolk County Legislature would then have to pass several rounds of legislation to move the acquisition forward- including authorizing an appraisal, authorizing an offer to be made, and, finally, a resolution authorizing the sale of the property. This, of course, only occurs if the property owners choose to accept the offer we make them, which by law can only be fair market value as determined by our appraisals. The process can take over a year and requires a commitment from the Town of Brookhaven that they will work with a non-profit organization to improve and maintain the property.

I fully support this project, which is vital to preserving the rich history of the hamlet of Coram. We are at the very beginning of what can potentially be a very lengthy process and I will continue to work towards this important initiative.

Sincerely,

