

## CORAM

# Old house needs a 'miracle'

BY CARL MACGOWAN  
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Brookhaven and Suffolk County officials are debating the fate of an aging Coram building that some civic leaders believe is the community's former post office.

Community leaders want to rebuild the Norton House on Middle Country Road, if Suffolk officials agree to seize the structure for unpaid back taxes. But town officials have authorized its demolition, saying it is unsafe and likely beyond repair.

Town officials have given the property's owners three months to repair or demolish the house, unless the county agrees to seize it.

Civic leaders, backed by county Legis. Sarah Anker (D-Mount Sinai), hope to add the structure — believed to be



GORDON M. GRANT

**The Norton House in Coram is believed to be about 200 years old, and some say it functioned as the hamlet's first post office.**

about 200 years old — to the hamlet's historical district. Seizing the property requires approval by county agencies and the legislature — before the building is demolished.

"We need to work fast," Anker said in an interview.

The Norton House, named for original owner Nathaniel Norton, a veteran of the French and Indian Wars who died in

1837, became Coram's post office in 1886 and was used for that purpose for about 30 years, civic leaders said.

It was a store until it was vacated about 12 years ago, said Maryanne Douglas, president of the Davis Town Meeting House Society in Coram, one of several civic groups trying to save the Norton House.

"We're hoping that we can work a miracle on this house, because it would be a shame to lose it," said Gail Lynch-Bailey, president of the Middle Island Civic Association.

Property records show the building and an adjoining property are owned by Cefalu Properties in Manhattan. Company officials could not be reached for comment.

County officials said Cefalu has racked up a total of \$71,438.70 in back taxes on the two properties since 2014.

Some town officials are skeptical that the house has any historical value and believe it should be razed for safety reasons. An engineer hired by the town found it was in "a state of advanced decay."

"It's not on any historical register," Supervisor Edward P. Romaine said in an interview. "If the county takes it, the county may be able to work with [residents] to rehab this to see if it's salvageable."

Anker said county officials are exploring whether the house can be seized for unpaid taxes. She said the county could work with nonprofit groups to restore the house.

"Once you lose a historic structure . . . a valuable part of history is gone forever," Anker said. "We need to do everything we can to preserve these historical homes. They are the legacy of Long Island."

## NEW CASSEL

## Seeking \$30G grant for better playground

BY KHRISTOPHER J. BROOKS  
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The Town of North Hempstead has applied for a \$30,000 grant in hopes of using the money to replace playground equipment at Martin "Bunky" Reid Park in New Cassel.

"The Martin Reid playground is safe, but the equipment isn't very current," said town spokeswoman Carole Trottere. "The playground gets a lot of use and would benefit from some new features."

The grant would come from the National Recreation and Park Association, a Virginia-based nonprofit that advocates for public parks and recreational activities. The association's Play Spaces grant, now in its second year, will be awarded to 25 communities.

Last year, the association awarded grants to Baltimore, Detroit, Louisville, Nashville, Tampa and 20 other cities. This is North Hempstead's first application to the park association.

Marla Collum, the association's programs senior manager, said the grant is about cre-



JEFF BACHNER

**The playground at Martin "Bunky" Reid Park on Broadway Avenue in New Cassel.**

ating opportunities for play and physical activities.

"Everyone deserves a great park, and this is one way that we can help communities im-

prove their parks and also provide fun, engaging spaces where kids and families can get outdoors," Collum said.

The association will an-

nounce this year's winners on June 1, Collum said.

Town officials said there is limited playground and climbing equipment in the New Cas-

sel area, even though the hamlet has a high percentage of children between ages 3 and 11. Children need the new playground equipment so they can exercise and improve their socialization skills, town officials said in their application to the parks association.

Along with new equipment, officials said they would also add a trail system throughout the park. Flyers will be distributed around New Cassel inviting residents to the nearby Yes We Can Community Center, where they can provide input on which equipment should be purchased for the park.

Supervisor Judi Bosworth said the town will ask residents about playground equipment because "who knows better than the residents of a community what this neighborhood park should offer?"

"The fact that this project would actively engage residents of New Cassel in the design and improvements to the park makes it all the more exciting," she said. "This grant would provide the town with the funds to make Martin 'Bunky' Reid Park a true magnet."