

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

As many of you know, we have decided to pursue legal action against the major expansion of the historic Hickory Grove Inn, owned by Joe Galati and Susanne Adsit (operating as Blackbird Hollow). At this point we have no choice, because the Town has refused to enforce its Zoning Laws to protect our residential neighborhood and this iconic building.

Last year, due to strong community opposition, both of Mr. Galati's 2016 proposals to enlarge the Inn were withdrawn. However, Mr. Galati is now relying on a previously abandoned site plan (approved in 2014) to develop the Inn as a hotel with 21 rooms (possibly suites) and a 68-seat restaurant and bar. Although Mr. Galati has failed to obtain area and use variances for his expansion in 2014 (or ever) as required by the Town's Land Use Laws, he is still planning to build a 35' x 125' addition on the north side of the original building.

This huge expansion will not comply with the residential nature of our community, and its proximity to State Highway 80 creates a serious safety hazard. In fact, it violates Town Law, which mandates a 60' setback from the centerline of the highway. Regardless, the Town is ready to allow this building to proceed although the new wing would appear to be less than 25 feet from the roadway. Additionally, the significant increase in occupancy and increased traffic into and out of the parking area near a blind curve would create a danger to motorists, and would endanger adults and children walking or playing on the lawn fronting State Route 80, or trying to cross the road to get to the lake.

We have consistently raised the issue of the destruction of the historic appearance of the building and its negative impact on the community. For example, the 2014 site plan shows the porches on the structure as open. However, Blackbird Hollow has now stated that the historically open porches will be enclosed to make room for a bar. Since Blackbird Hollow used the Heirloom Barn Law to justify this large commercial project, we believe they must comply with the provisions of that law, which include "minimum impact upon neighbors" and "preserving the historic external appearance" of the heirloom building. As it currently stands, neither of those provisions is being met.

Although the community has been fighting this project for years, we are now at a point where we must retain legal counsel. We have made every effort to keep costs as low as possible, spending hours organizing papers, minutes, and correspondence, but we can no longer go it alone and we must reach out to friends and neighbors to help fund our legal fees going forward. We will need support from the entire community to continue this effort.

We sincerely appreciate all your contributions and are grateful for your financial assistance. Checks can be made out to Otsego 2000 and mailed to: PO Box 1130, Cooperstown NY 13326. Please write "Preserve Hickory Grove" in the Memo line. Donations are tax-deductible, and you will receive an acknowledgment.

Thank you!

Kathy and Tom Chase
Ginny and Doug Hastings
Schatzi Hall