

SEN. DUFF & REP. CAFERO DETAIL COMPROMISE AGREEMENT TO EXPAND NORWALK INN, PRESERVE HISTORIC LANDMARK

Plan would provide economic opportunity while restoring piece of local history

Norwalk - After several years of lengthy hearings and court actions, an agreement has been reached that will provide for the expansion of the Norwalk Inn and Conference Center and the restoration of the historic Grumman-St. John House on East Avenue in Norwalk.

At a news conference at the inn this morning, state Senator Bob Duff (D-Norwalk) and Representative Lawrence Cafero (R-Norwalk)—the two legislators directly involved in the crafting of the compromise plan—were joined by Attorney General Richard Blumenthal, Norwalk Mayor Richard Moccia and representatives from both the Norwalk Inn and the Norwalk Preservation Trust to detail the noteworthy agreement.

“This was truly a situation where, by getting everyone to sit down together, we were able to work out a plan that is mutually beneficial to everyone involved,” Senator Duff said. “I’m so proud of how everyone stepped up to the plate to end the years of disagreement and come up with a viable, realistic and, ultimately, ideal solution for Norwalk, for the neighborhood, for a local business and community partner and for a city landmark. The links that we have to our past are priceless, and I think this agreement marks a great way to keep that past alive while building toward our future at the same time.”

“All parties involved—the state, city of Norwalk and the Norwalk Inn—worked together for this tremendously positive outcome, said Representative Cafero. “The agreement reached here today represents a road mark linking Norwalk’s rich history to its continuing economic vitality and future. All parties share an equal stake in this common-sense approach to solving a dispute over this historic property that had remained unsettled for far too long.”

Under the compromise plan, the Grumman-St. John House will be renovated and restored and very likely used as additional hotel rooms for long-term stays at the inn. The Norwalk Inn would expand upward, adding a third story above the existing building that would approximately hold 40 additional hotel rooms.

“I am pleased that my office assisted in preserving the Grumman St. John House and also enabling the Norwalk Inn to expand,” Attorney General Blumenthal said. “This historic home is regarded by preservation experts as a storehouse of state history — a vital reminder of our heritage that the law required to be protected. Norwalk Inn and others are to be praised and thanked for reaching an agreement that saves the structure and serves our common goals.”

“This agreement represents the best of our neighborhood spirit of collaboration, and I am particularly happy that all parties have worked things out,” said Mayor Moccia. “I especially wish to commend the work done by Representative Cafero and Senator Duff to bring the fellow citizens together to find a solution that serves all interests so well. The result will be a healthier and more beautiful vicinity.”

“Our plan for the Norwalk Inn expansion and rehabilitation of 93 East Avenue has been the product of a successful, year-long negotiation process—one initiated and coordinated by state Representative Larry Cafero and state Senator Bob Duff,” said Chris Handrinis and George Katsaros, managers of the Norwalk Inn. “Representative Cafero and Senator

Duff helped find a solution to this problem. In dozens of meetings, they worked to clarify the issues, identify areas of common ground, point out possible compromises and set out step-by-step plans. In time, we formulated a plan that can deliver sorely needed economic growth and a landmark renovation project, not to mention a significant neighborhood improvement plan.”

“Senator Duff and Representative Cafero demonstrated that diligence and sincere commitment can yield a solution that works for everyone—the neighbors, the inn, NPT, the preservation community and Norwalk as a whole,” said Tod Bryant of the Norwalk Preservation Trust. “The Norwalk Preservation Trust is also grateful to the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism, Attorney General Richard Blumenthal, the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation for their unwavering support. And, of course, we wouldn’t be here without the support of the people who believed that it was worth it to save this piece of Norwalk’s past. The Grumman-St. John House will not only be saved, it will be returned to useful economic life and contribute to economic growth in the city.”

“The National Trust for Historic Preservation is grateful to the many people who have worked diligently for so long to bring about a successful agreement to restore the Grumman-St. John House. The leadership of Senator Duff and Representative Cafero in facilitating this win-win agreement between the Norwalk Preservation Trust and the Norwalk Inn is remarkable,” said Alicia Leuba, director of programs for the National Trust for Historic Preservation. “This is a powerful example of an alliance between economic development and historic preservation, giving new life to an important historic building while providing economic development opportunities and increased buffering for the residential neighborhood.”

“The Commission on Culture & Tourism is pleased at the resolution of this matter and commends everyone involved for working together to come up with a solution which has resulted in the preservation of 93 East Avenue and also meets the need of the owners of the Norwalk Inn and the neighbors,” said Karen Senich, executive director and state historic preservation officer of the Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism. “The preservation of this important National Register property serves as a model for the future when our invaluable historic resources in Connecticut are threatened.”

The Grumman-St. John House dates back to the Revolutionary War and was built by Samuel Grumman. It was severely damaged in the burning of Norwalk by the British in 1779 and was rebuilt in the 1780s. The house was expanded and its current roof was added in the 1870s. It has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places since 1986 as part of the Norwalk Green Historic District. The Norwalk Inn purchased the historic property in 2001.