

New inn and equestrian center planned

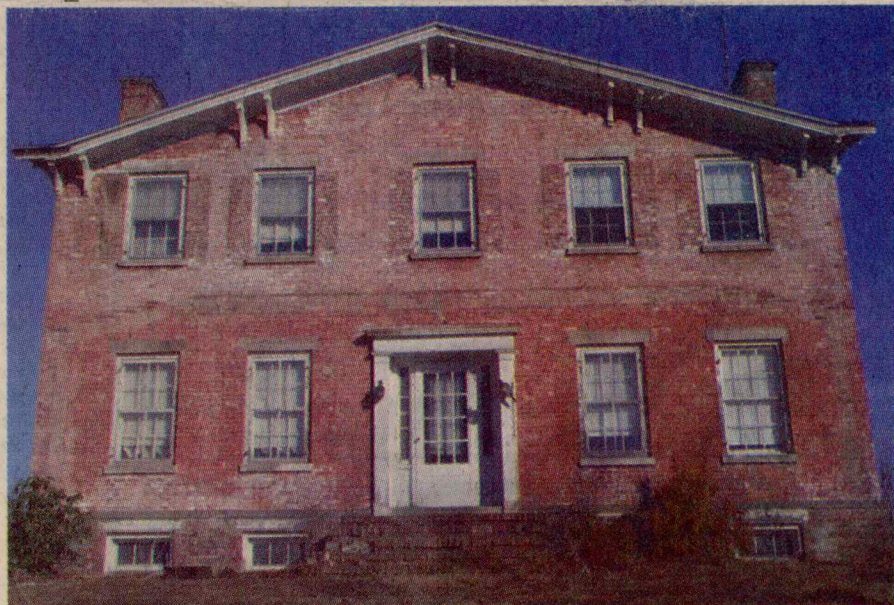
By Eileen Keefe
Staff Reporter

When the old Fraleigh Farm on Route 199 just east of the village first went on the market, many Red Hook residents feared that the beautiful open space would fall victim to another major subdivision. But Sam and Arleen Harkins had a better plan.

The Harkins, who own the Historic Red Hook Diner, purchased 139 of the available acres and plan on turning the existing brick Victorian home and barns into the Sunset Crest Manor and Equestrian Center.

"We live right across the street from the farm and couldn't bear to see 30 houses instead of open fields," Sam Harkins said. "We were lucky to get the jump on developers."

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THE INN-TO-BE: This brick building on Route 199 outside of Red Hook will soon get a complete face-lift. (Photo by Noah Fleisher)

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At the Jan. 28 meeting of the Red Hook Planning Board, Harkins submitted plans to subdivide the acreage into three lots: 80 acres for the inn and equestrian center, 44 acres to be sold intact as an estate parcel, and 14 acres which may be subdivided into four lots in the future.

Harkins was granted sketch plan approval and preliminary site plan approval for the complex, and received a special use permit to operate the inn.

"Current zoning allows for that use of the land," said Planning Board chair Marcie Appell. "We're very pleased that local people purchased the property

and are going to do something nice with it."

According to Harkins, the first step is to get the inn up and running.

"The house was built in 1825 and has beautiful workmanship," Harkins said. "We plan on having four rooms with private baths upstairs and two large sitting rooms and a kitchen downstairs."

The home has a weathered brick façade and numerous fireplaces and sits on a rise above Rte 199 at the eastern gateway to the village.

A barn complex is situated behind the house. Harkins plans on

tearing down the old barns and constructing stables and an indoor riding ring. "We're saving the wood and the weather vanes to see what we can salvage and reuse," Harkins said.

The couple plans on hiring a riding instructor to offer lessons and will also board horses for weekenders and local residents.

In time, the Harkins would like to add a dining facility. "The foundation of the house is constructed with piled stone, and the basement would make a beautiful spot for a small pub and restaurant," Harkins said.

If all goes smoothly, the Harkins hope to open the doors of the inn in June.