

RH approves new inn on 199

By Eileen Keefe
Staff Reporter

Red Hook's scenic eastern gateway will likely remain that way now that the planning board has approved plans to build an equestrian center and inn at the site of the old Fraleigh Farm on Route 199.

At a meeting of the Red Hook Planning Board Monday night, Arleen and Sam Harkins, owners of the Historic Red Hook Diner, received final approval to renovate an existing Victorian home into a four-bedroom inn. The Harkins will also be allowed to construct an equestrian center including stables and riding rings.

When the property first came on the market many residents were concerned that the 140 acres of open rolling fields would be purchased by a developer and subdivided.

"We live right across the street and didn't want to see endless houses on that land," said Arleen Harkins. "We're pleased that the project got final approval and look forward to beginning work."

According to Harkins, they will first concentrate on renovating the inn and hope to open in time for the Dutchess County Fair.

"We're about three months behind
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schedule but are optimistic that we'll get the inn up and running this summer," Harkins said.

The Harkins then plan on renovating the basement area, into a small pub and restaurant.

The final phase will be the construction of the equestrian center.

"In time we'll fence off the pastures and have horses grazing on the hills," Harkins said. "It's go-

ing to be beautiful."

In January, the couple received preliminary site plan approval for the complex and a special permit use to operate the inn. According to Planning Board Chair Marcie Appell, current zoning allows for that use of the land.

The process hit a slight snag two weeks ago when the planning board held a public hearing on the

project. Several neighbors cited concerns about increased traffic. After talking with the Harkins, those concerns were alleviated.

"We live right across from the property and will be affected by the project the same as our neighbors," Harkins said. "Sam and I don't do anything half-way and plan on making this very special."