



TOWN OF ULYSSES

10 Elm Street, Trumansburg, NY 14886
townofulyssesny.gov

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PRESS RELEASE

August 4, 2023

On June 27, 2023, the Ulysses Town Board unanimously approved the purchase of 30 acres of land on Krums Corners Road for \$210,000, part of a larger parcel at 2141 Kraft Road, pending a legal subdivision approval by the Ulysses Planning Board. The subdivision was granted by the Ulysses Planning Board on August 1, 2023 following a public hearing and previous review on July 18, 2023. The sale is anticipated to be finalized later in August. Funding for the land acquisition was provided through the Town's allocation of the American Recovery Plan Act funds and funds set aside for Trumansburg Community Recreation by the Town over the last several years.

This acquisition was many years in the making.

In the Town's 2009 Comprehensive Plan, a stated objective was to "Maintain and expand unique park and recreation facilities for the continued use and enjoyment of residents and visitors to the Town" ("Town of Ulysses Comprehensive Plan," September 2009, p. 193).

Trumansburg Community Recreation (TCR) was initially formed in 2016 in order to develop facilities & programs for community sports, recreation, and leisure in the Trumansburg area.

For more than six years, the Town of Ulysses has been in conversation with TCR, the Village of Trumansburg, and the Trumansburg Central School District about how to address insufficient recreational space in the community.

In 2019, the Town took over administration of recreation. The Trumansburg/Ulysses Recreation Program provides high-quality recreational opportunities for both youth and adults. After being restricted in its ability to provide programming in 2020 due to the COVID pandemic, participation in programming has steadily increased each year.

In 2021, 376 people participated in programming, growing to 541 people and 1,319 registrations in 2022. As of August 1, 2023, there have been 1351 registrations for 522 unique individuals. The Town continues to receive requests for new and expanded programming for both youth and adults.

"The Trumansburg School District has been an excellent partner in allowing the Town to use their facilities to provide public programming, and we are grateful for their ongoing support," stated Town Supervisor Katelin



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Olson. "The desire, however, for space exceeds existing facility capacity. This has been a known community issue for at least 14 years. Community organizations and public programming have to compete for usage of space throughout the year. We intend for this new recreational space to be a complementary resource that reduces pressure on school facilities and allows us to expand our offerings to meet growing needs."

The Town of Ulysses is one of the few towns in the area without dedicated public recreational space, and rising land values made large-scale acquisitions very challenging for TCR. Most publicly owned recreational spaces in Tompkins County were acquired when land was significantly less expensive, and many municipal parks in the region have been in operation for decades.

On October 25, 2022, TCR came to the Town of Ulysses with an overview of their initiatives and goals for the future, as well as sharing the challenges of finding land to develop for recreational space within the Town of Ulysses.

In January 2023, at the request of the Town Board, Town Supervisor Katelin Olson and Town Board Member Elizabeth Weatherby began directly collaborating with TCR on how to best address the recreational space shortage and identify property that may be suitable for acquisition and development.

Over the years and particularly in 2022 and 2023, TCR approached numerous large-scale property owners and explored a variety of options closer to the Village. With limited land available for sale and acreage near the Village advertised in excess of \$30,000 per acre, developing land in or adjacent to the Village was cost prohibitive.

TCR returned to the Town Board on March 28, 2023 and presented their Community Needs Assessment findings to the Town Board. Community members identified that increasing sports facilities was the top community priority. Additionally, more than 85% of sports organizations responded that their organizations were suffering from insufficient facilities. Further, these groups asserted that the lack of facilities were adversely impacting their programming abilities.

"TCR has been engaged with our community for input on recreational needs since 2017, and the results continue to show that outdoor space is one of our biggest desires. Our Town has historically been underserved for free and accessible outdoor spaces to gather, play sports, and explore nature, compared to surrounding towns in our area. With the Town's property purchase, this is a huge step forward to develop a great new resource for our community", says Todd Edmonds, President of TCR.

Based on the recommendations made by TCR and after public deliberations, the Town submitted a purchase offer for 13 acres along Route 96 and Perry City on March 28, 2023. This offer was ultimately rejected in favor of a higher offer from an out-of-town entity.



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Town officials and TCR Board members continued working and reaching out to large property owners in the Town to see if anyone might be interested in selling land for public recreational use. In the course of this process, the Town connected with Heather and Mark Washburn, owners of 90 acres on Kraft Road.

"The Town of Ulysses was uniquely able to purchase land at this time because of one-time federal funding, the generosity of the sellers, and a highly successful collaboration with the board of Trumansburg Community Recreation," stated Town Supervisor Olson. "The Town Board is grateful and appreciative to have so many local partners working together to invest in our community and fulfill a long-sought after objective of the 2009 Comprehensive Plan."

The parcel of land on Krums Corners is from a subdivision of 2141 Kraft Road, owned by Heather and Mark Washburn.

"Mark and I were starting to make the hard decision to parcel off a large portion of our farm to sell when the Town approached us to inquire about buying land. We took a while to really think about this offer and realized this is exactly the kind of opportunity we would love to see my grandfather's family farm land used for. When my grandfather, Raymond Kraft, passed in 2009 Mark and I didn't know what we were going to do with a 130 acre farm and very old farmhouse that needed a lot of work. Our farm has been in the Kraft family since 1920 and we didn't want to sell it. We decided to renovate the farmhouse, rented out our land so it could continue to be farmed and have been able to raise our family here ever since. All four of our kids participate in the Taughannock Soccer Club, as well as, several other programs the community has offered throughout the years. We are excited to see this project come to life and are happy to know our land will be able to be used by many in the community."

Mark Washburn serves as the Town's Code Enforcement Officer, so the first step was checking with the Town's Attorney to make sure there was no conflict of interest in a potential purchase. It was determined that no conflict of interest existed because Mr. Washburn does not serve on the Town Board, the buyer, and because his salary through the Town would not be impacted as a result of the purchase.

In order to determine an independent, fair market price, the Town hired Landmark Appraisal Co. in Binghamton, NY to assess the land and determine a value based on other comparable sales in the area. The price of \$7,000 per acre was determined, and the Town made a purchase offer for 30 acres at \$7,000 per acre. The offer was accepted.

"The Town is grateful to the Washburns for their civic spirit and their willingness to trust the Town with the precious resource of land. We look forward to working with Trumansburg Community Recreation and members of the public on a community vision for the space and identifying funding sources to pay for the development," noted Town Supervisor Olson.



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The subdivision and sale of the property is only the first step towards the future use of the land for recreational purposes. The Town Board is committed to having significant public engagement in the development of the land for recreational use. The public is encouraged to be involved and share their own thoughts and visions throughout the process. Information about how to participate will be shared via the Town's weekly newsletter and posted on the Town's website as it becomes available.

Additionally, TCR and the Town are in the process of developing a Memorandum of Understanding regarding their relationship, and look forward to continuing to collaborate on developing the land in an environmentally and economically sustainable way that fulfills community needs.

"We look forward to rolling up our sleeves and mapping out a plan for development, and then fundraising and writing grant applications to build this new resource along with the Town's support and partnership," says Edmonds.

The best ways to stay involved and learn of future opportunities to participate is to sign up for the Town's weekly newsletter by emailing Town Clerk Carissa Parlato at ulysses.clerk@gmail.com.

"This is an exciting day for the Town of Ulysses, and we look forward to creating a space that will improve our community for all residents for generations to come," noted Town Supervisor Olson. "We are excited to get the public involved and to design the space together."