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Mt. Hope Farm sale raises questions for Williams

By JILL WALLACH
Union correspondent

WILLIAMSTOWN — The approval of the sale of Mt. Hope Farm estate to Williams College Tuesday in U.S. Bankruptcy Court, raises some interesting questions about the college's interest in the property and the future of the 1,100-acre estate.

Williams College purchased the estate in 1963 from Lenox Hill Hospital in New York City. It did little

with the property, found it expensive to maintain and finally sold it for \$856,000 to August E. Mansker, a health spa magnate in 1978.

Commentary

Mansker put nearly \$600,000 into upgrading the 72-room Elm Tree House and grounds during the five years he owned it, but began having financial difficulties in 1983. In December 1983, he agreed to sell

the estate back to a group of unidentified Williams alumni for \$1.2 million to cover the mortgages owed on the property.

Outgoing Williams President John W. Chandler and William S. Reed, vice president of administration and treasurer at Williams, have stated repeatedly over the past year that the college is interested only in maintaining the "integrity of the estate and insuring that development is minimal and in keeping with the character of the town."

But it would appear that the group of alumni, known only as the Purple Mountain Partnership, will again be involved with development of the estate.

James Kolesar, director of Public Information at Williams, said Tuesday that college officials will be meeting soon with the group of alumni to discuss the partnership's proposal to use the house as a conference center, break up some of the land for home building lots and

possibly turn over the active farmland to the non-profit organization Trustees of Reservations.

The partnership in December 1983 offered Mansker \$1.2 million for the property. They were outbid by the Carley Capital Group of Madison, Wisc., who offered \$2 million for the property and had development plans for the estate similar to those of the partnership.

But Carley Capital withdrew when Williams College challenged the sale purchase agreement and the partnership purchased the \$200,000 deposit on the property made by Carley Capital through the Mt. Hope Realty Trust.

Mansker then tried to sell the property to John R. Campbell for \$2.2 million. Campbell also had plans to develop a conference cen-

ter for Fortune 500 companies at the estate.

But again the college successfully challenged the purchase and Tuesday their offer of \$1.64 million was accepted by Judge Paul W. Glennon. Campbell intends to seek the return of his \$110,000 deposit plus the maintenance costs he spent on the estate during the last few months.

Yet the college has made it clear that they object to development of the property by outside developers. They clearly objected to the fact that Mansker reneged on a verbal agreement last December to sell the estate to the Purple Mountain Partnership. They have also made it clear that the college wants to retain control of any development that occurs at the property.

The question is, why?

Hodgkins seeks end to toll calls

By JOHN HITCHCOCK
Union bureau chief

LEE — State Rep. Christopher J. Hodgkins, D-Lee, thinks there should be no toll calls within Berkshire County.

Currently, the county is roughly divided into three calling areas, North, Central and South, with residents having to pay for calls to towns only a few miles away.

Hodgkins has petitioned the state Department of Public Utilities to designate the entire county as a "primary calling area."

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And he has sent copies of his petition, with cover letters, to selectmen and city officials in the 30 towns and two cities in Berkshire County, asking them to collect signatures and send them to the DPU.

He noted that the DPU set a countywide toll-free precedent in June

by designating all of Franklin County as a primary calling area.

Hodgkins said the existing toll call boundaries are barriers "to the development of Berkshire County" and are an unfair hardship to residents, who must pay long distance charges to make calls required of them by state, county and federal agencies.

He noted that Williamstown residents calling the district Welfare Department office in Adams must pay, with similar situations throughout the county.

He said Boston residents have a 45-mile radius toll-free area, while the Berkshire boundary is closer to 10 miles.

The legislator also said the New England Telephone Co. provides toll-free numbers so customers in North and South Berkshire do not have to pay to call the phone company's Pittsfield office.

Coalition to host meeting

NORTH ADAMS — The Northern Berkshire Labor Coalition is sponsoring a community meeting on Saturday, Dec. 8 at 11 a.m. at the Greylock Community Club on Route 2.

The session is free and residents of the area are welcome to attend.

The meeting has been called to discuss plant closings, wage cuts and union busting by local industries in Northern Berkshire, according to a spokesman for the group. Addressing the group will be Judy

Ruff of Greenfield, former president of United Electrical, Radio & Machine Workers of America, Local 274, and presently co-chairman of the Franklin County Unemployed Council; Jerry Burdick of North Adams, a former employee of Adams Supermarkets; Mike O'Brien, chairman of Local 285 of the Service Employees International Union, at North Adams Regional Hospital and Ray Bass, president of Local 200 of the International Union of Electrical Workers at Sprague Electric.



Photo by Michael Balckburn

Turnip time

Santos Bonos of Holyoke picks turnips at the Park Farm in Hatfield Wednesday.

Ex-Pittsfield man admits to sex assaults on boys

PITTSFIELD — A former city man pleaded guilty Wednesday to seven sexual crimes involving two boys, and will be sentenced in January in Berkshire Superior Court.

Edward Darragh, 57, now of Cambridge, pleaded guilty to five counts of indecent assault and battery on a child under the age of 14, and two counts of rape and abuse of a child without force.

Darragh admitted to the indecent assaults on two boys, age 11 and 12, and to the rape of the 12-year-old, in incidents which occurred in Pittsfield during September, 1983.

Judge Charles Alberti scheduled sentencing for Jan. 28.

Also pleading guilty in Superior Court Wednesday was Horace Costa Jr., 28, of 156 Elizabeth St., Pittsfield, to two counts of using a telephone for gaming purposes and one count of conspiracy to register bets.

Alberti ordered Costa to pay a \$1,250 fine for conspiracy, and placed the telephone charges on file.

Costa is one of 21 people charged in September with various gambling crimes following a series of raids in central Berkshire. Seven others have also pleaded guilty, with the cases against the remaining defendants still pending.

Right-To-Know law seminar set

NORTH ADAMS — Municipal employees will have an opportunity to learn more about their responsibilities under the new Right-To-Know law at a state sponsored seminar Friday at North Adams State College.

The day long series of workshops will begin at 8:30 a.m. in The Theatre in Venable Hall on the NASC campus.

The training session is being presented by the Boston law firm of Foley, Hoag and Eliot and will be based on a compliance manual the firm has published.

Participating in the forum are

Joseph Ambash and Paul Lyons, of the law firm, and Robert J. Olsson, a safety engineer with Spencer Press Inc. in Hingham.

Susan Moorehead, a spokeswoman with the firm, said the training session at NASC is the sixth and last of the seminars held across the state over the last few weeks.

The other sessions have been held at the Statehouse in Boston, Framingham, Worcester and two other communities.

The Right-To-Know Law went into effect earlier this year, but local communities have had difficulty implementing the new law.

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