Councilman Fiore-Rosenfeld Acquires Stewardship Agreement with Girl Scouts for the historic Merritt Hawkins Homestead (c. 1802)
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**Community use relationship begins between Town and related scouting troops from the abutting Nassakeag elementary school and the Three Villages Town Board also votes to designate site a Town Nature Preserve**

Farmingville, NY - A resolution sponsored by Councilman Steve Fiore-Rosenfeld was unanimously approved by the Town Board that establishes a stewardship agreement with the Girl Scouts of Suffolk County. The agreement allows Girl Scout Troop #141 and others from Nassakeag Elementary School to "adopt" the historic Merritt Hawkins Homestead on Pond Path in East Setauket to be used for environmental and historical educational purposes and to help maintain the property pursuant to the Town's "Adopt-A-Preserve" program. The property, which is an important Town ecological asset, nearly 9 acres in size, serves as an excellent example of a vernal pond, a low lying seasonal wetland.

Councilman Fiore-Rosenfeld said, "This stewardship agreement with the Girl Scouts is the start of a long term vision to provide our youth with the opportunity to use this unique historical and ecological site for an educational and historic learning center. When we launched the Town's effort, based upon citizen and civic support, to purchase the Merritt Hawkins Homestead (c.1802) property from the Selleck family, it was my goal to utilize the natural synergy of having Nassakeag elementary adjoining this historic property. This would provide a golden opportunity for the Girl Scouts and other Three Village students to use a beautiful, historic open space to earn merit badges and expand their understanding of our history, ecology and sense of place. Girl Scouts of Suffolk County is pleased to partner in such a vital open space stewardship project," said Yvonne Grant, President and CEO of Girl Scouts of Suffolk County, "Through Girl Scouting, girls see the earth as their home. Whether they're learning about endangered wildlife, developing creative recycling projects, or working towards earned grade-level awards, girls focus on care, conservation, and responsibility. They are committed to the safety of our planet and protect our natural resources for future generations."

"This is the first step in our new relationship with Councilman Fiore-Rosenfeld and the Town. The Girl Scouts are hoping to be able to come back to the house often to help keep it clean and the trails clear. We would like to help keep track of the wildlife and plants that grow and live here at the house. Some of our girls are interested in using the Merritt House as a way to achieve their Bronze, Silver and Gold Awards," said Marilyn Sloan, troop leader for Troop #141.

Herb Mones of the Three Village Community Trust stated, "Kudos to Councilman Steve Fiore-Rosenfeld for saving this beautiful, unique historic site. By creating this partnership with the Girl Scouts, Councilman Fiore-Rosenfeld is protecting the Merritt-Hawkins Homestead, and at the same time, building the leadership skills of our next generation. This is an exciting community endeavor."

"We are very pleased that the Town is partnering with a young generation of Village residents so that they will feel a responsibility and attachment to this wonderful old house - a house that should continue to be a living, useful part of the community's well-preserved heritage. Involvement by the Girl Scouts as stewards for the Merritt Hawkins Homestead and nature preserve is a fine way to involve and teach our next generation of preservationists," said Robert DeZafra of the Civic Association of the Setaukets and Stony Brook. Under this stewardship agreement the Girl Scouts will volunteer their time and organize historical and environmental learning opportunities and help share their understanding and learned experiences with other children from Nassakeag Elementary and the entire Three Village School District. The Town will remain responsible for maintaining the Merritt Hawkins House and preserving its surrounding grounds (now a nearly 9 acre preserve). The Girl Scouts will have access to the historic house and grounds for earning history scout badges or other work related to the Girl Scout experience, including organizing drives for donations to help furnish the house, as well as other Girl Scout sponsored events. The Girl Scouts may conduct a number of activities related to the ecology, including assisting the Town's Parks Department in minor maintenance of the trails, annual or biannual litter and brush clean ups, and creating an ecological inventory of the flora and fauna and how it changes during the four seasons.
The Merritt Hawkins Homestead is located on the historic Selleck Homestead Preserve in Setauket along the west side of Pond Path, south of Upper Sheep Pasture Road and it abuts the Nassakeag Elementary School. It is part of one of the earliest farms in Setauket and Suffolk County records show that it originally belonged to the Hawkins family with the first house being built there in 1774. In 2007, Councilman Fiore-Rosenfeld's strong advocacy led the Town to acquire the property and preserve it for future generations of Three Village residents to maintain their connection to our agrarian history. This action prevented it from being purchased by developers and allowed the house and land to be preserved.

Councilman Fiore-Rosenfeld stated, "I look forward to working with the Girl Scouts to develop historic and ecological programs that will benefit future generations."

To learn more about the historic sites in the Town of Brookhaven, go to www.brookhaven.org or the Town's tourism website at www.visitbrookhaven.com.