

Owners Say \$6.5 Million or No Deal

By ERICA BOWERS

RIVERHEAD — The owners of the 55-acre River Club parcel are holding strong — \$6.5 million or no deal.

Last week, during a work session discussion on whether the town should move forward with a controversial purchase of an environmentally sensitive piece of property known as the River Club, the town board members learned that the current owners of the property are not willing to negotiate.

According to Sean Walter, deputy town attorney in charge of land preservation, Peter Danowski, attorney for the owners of the property, River Club LLC, said his clients will not budge on the price. Danowski also stated that if a sale is not forthcoming, the parcel will be developed.

The statement that River Club LLC is ready to develop the parcel is not new news — *The Traveler Watchman* exclusively reported in October 2003 that Danowski had warned the town that it had waited too long to finalize the purchase.

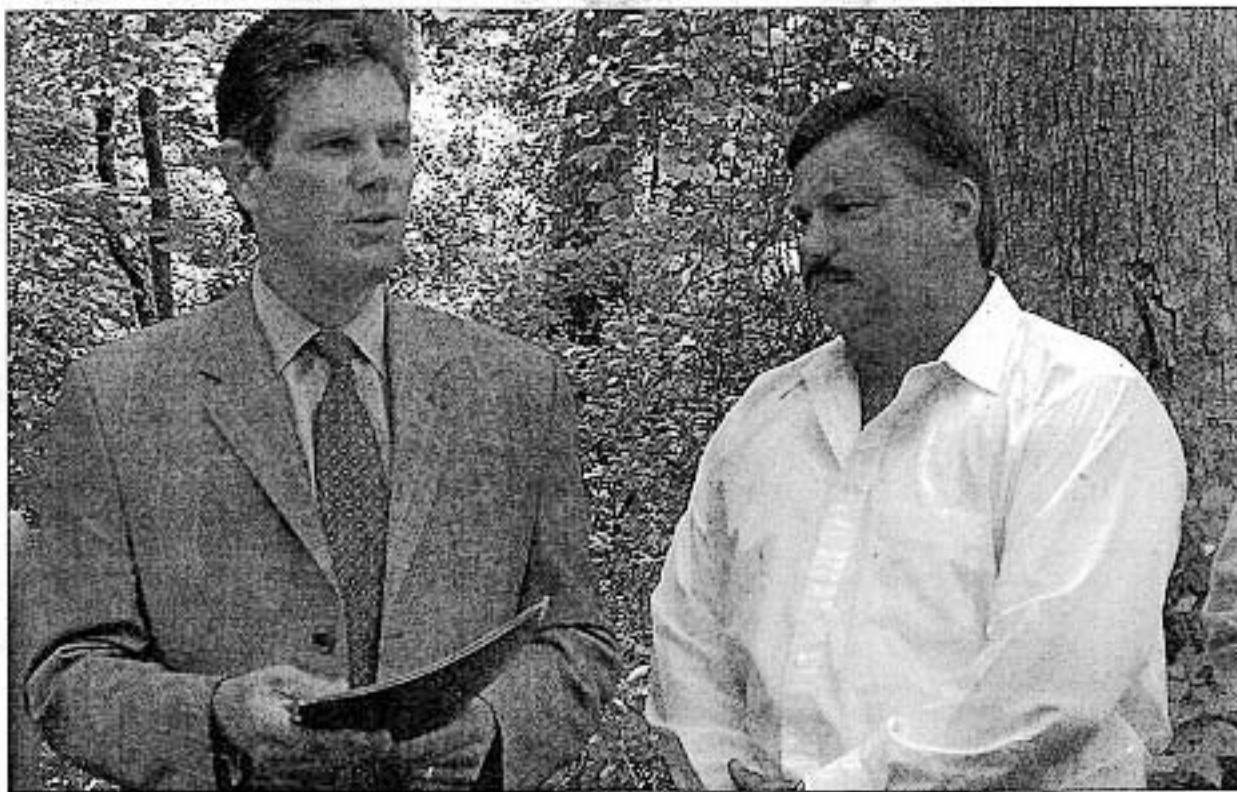
Danowski's statement came just days after his clients had purchased the property from Maryanne Cannilla, Anthony Cosimo and Marc Saglicca.

The town had originally announced its intentions to acquire the parcel in June 2003; however, that plan was halted after town residents expressed concern over the purchase price and Suffolk County District Attorney Thomas Spota initiated a probe into former Supervisor Bob Kozakiewicz' prior relations with Danowski and his clients.

Kozakiewicz has maintained that there was no wrongdoing on his part.

With no word forthcoming on the district attorney's investigation and a new supervisor at the helm, the town board decided it was time to revisit the issue.

Supervisor Phil Cardinale prompted the discussion by asking if the town could attain a new, "fair market" appraisal on the property since the prior



File Photo by Erica Bowers/Traveler Watchman

Former Supervisor Bob Kozakiewicz and Councilman Ed Densieski during the June 2003 announcement that the town planned to move forward with the purchase of the River Club.

\$6.5 million appraisal prompted an outcry — town residents had questioned the asking price compared to a county appraisal on the property that came in at half of the town's appraisal.

Cardinale further stated that since the town's November-approved Comprehensive Master Plan proposes new zoning for the parcel, a new appraisal would be needed.

Currently, the River Club is zoned Residential C, but the master plan suggests changing that zoning to

RB-40, which would allow for the construction of approximately 45 single-family houses on the site.

"If we have another appraisal done and it comes in for more money, we will shoot ourselves in the foot," said Councilman Ed Densieski. "We are going to lose this piece of property."

It is unclear what the town board will opt to do since the owners of the property are not willing to negotiate.

A new appraisal, according to Walter, will run the town approximately \$2,500.