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Purdy's Farm in Greenwich sells for \$1M

Lisa Chamoff, Staff Writer Published 10:11p.m., Thursday, January 19, 2012

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Purdy's Farm at 1353 King St. in Greenwich Wednesday, Jan. 18, 2012. The property was sold last week for \$1 million to the Jehovah's Witnesses of Greenwich and Port Chester, N.Y., which is said to have plans to build a church there. Photo: Bob Luckey / Greenwich Time | Buy This Photo



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One of Greenwich's last working farms, and the center of a property dispute dating back several years, has been sold.

The 2-acre Purdy's Farm property at 1353 King St. sold last Thursday for \$1 million to the Jehovah's Witnesses of Greenwich and Port Chester, N.Y., which have plans to build a church on the property. The Jehovah's Witnesses also purchased the adjacent property at 1357 King St. for \$500,000. That property will be used for residences, according to Elsie Pecorin, the broker at Weichert Realtors who has been marketing the property since 2008.

The properties were originally put on the market five years ago for a combined \$4 million.

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The Jehovah's Witnesses, which have locations on Stanwich Road in Greenwich and King Street in Port Chester, could not be reached for comment.

The land has been the subject of a legal dispute between original owner and farmer Del Zanette, and his partners Ronald Pecunies and Arthur Watson Jr., the owners of Mercedes-Benz of Greenwich.

Zanette, who about eight years ago was facing foreclosure, entered into a partnership with Pecunies and Watson, who loaned Zanette money to meet his back mortgage payments and helped secure another mortgage for him. In return, Zanette signed away control of the property, yet maintained a 50 percent membership in the properties, according to Robert Kaelin, the former lawyer for Pecunies and Watson.

Zanette was evicted from the farm in 2008 after losing a battle in the Norwalk Housing Court for allegedly failing to pay rent, and then again in 2010.

Both Zanette and Pecunies died in 2010. Pecunies' widow is currently in a battle with his young German mistress over his multimillion-dollar estate, which includes a rent-controlled Manhattan apartment, according to published reports.

Reached Wednesday, Watson confirmed that the property had been sold, but referred further questions to his attorney, Jonathan Mills, who declined to comment.

Pecorin said the legal dispute surrounding the property was resolved before the sale closed.

"Everybody was covered by an attorney, and it was all worked out through one attorney at the end," Pecorin said. "All in all, it worked for everyone, I think."

Prior to his 2008 eviction, Zanette was one of the last two farmers in Greenwich. The last remaining farmer is John Augustin, who operates a farm on King Street.

A group called the Greenwich Farmland Preservation Coalition had been hoping to buy the property, but Jim Carr, a member of the coalition, said the legal issues surrounding the land, coupled with the economic downturn, made the purchase difficult.

"We didn't know who we were dealing with," Carr said. "That's what really prevented things from moving forward."

Carr said the coalition is still operating, but purchasing open space is difficult because of property values.

"Our big problem is to do an outright purchase of land, and in this economy it's difficult to raise money," Carr said.



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