Wolcott receives state grant for open space

Town to preserve 5.2 acres by high school

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WOLCOTT — The town has a $350,000 grant to buy 5.2 acres across from Wolcott High School and preserve it as open space.

It was one of 27 municipalities that was awarded funds through the state's Small Town Economic Assistance Program.

Although the grant money requires the town to keep the land as open space, it could be used for recreational purposes — such as high school lacrosse or baseballs fields.

Neighbors approached Superintendent of Schools Joseph Macary about buying the property.

"I think they felt that they wanted to see it go to student or school use, or to the town," Macary said.

He sent them to Mayor Thomas G. Dunn, who worked with state Rep. Rob Sampson, R-80th District, to apply for STEAP funding. In the final days of the legislative session, the grant was approved.

Sampson said he worked with the governor's office and legislative leaders to secure the money.

"Wolcott is definitely due as a recipient," Sampson said. "We send 90 cents to the state for every 10 cents we get back."

The town has used other open space grants to acquire property near schools and parks, including land on Mad River Road that is being developed into a dog park.

The property, which is owned by Mary Bruce, is at 456 Boundline Road. The assessed value is $151,770.

The property has an old house on it that was built in 1924. It's in poor condition and may need to be torn down, Sampson said. The parcel is zoned for residential use.

"They could sell it and get two or three houses on there," Dunn said. "Now it's open space."

Also, the town applied for a $150,000 grant to improve the field at Frisbie Elementary School. Sampson said he's lobbying for that money in the second round of STEAP grants that will be announced in August or September.