

H. Nicholas Muller III
15 Harbor View Way
P. O. Box 244
Essex, New York 12936

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Mr. Ken Hughes
Supervisor
Town of Essex
2313 Lake Shore Road
Essex, New York 12936

Mr. Shaun Gilliland
Supervisor
Town of Willsboro
1 Point Road
Willsboro, New York 12996

Dear Ken and Shaun,

The debate over the demolition of the Cornell Cooperative Extension Building (CCE) at the Essex County fairgrounds in Westport and the widespread popular support for preservation has caught my attention. I write to register my support for a serious professional study of rehabilitation because of the historic nature of the almost century old structure and its importance to the County and to Westport.

A few of my credentials include:

- Nine years as the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) for the State of Wisconsin.
- Nine years as a Trustee of the National Trust for Historic Preservation where I served eight years as chair of the Preservation and Executive Committee.
- Chair, the Vermont Council on Historic Preservation.
- Founder and President of Taliesin Preservation, Inc.
- Founder of a preservation LLC in Milwaukee, WI that used federal and state tax credits and CRA (banks funding community reinvestment requirement) that completed \$81 million in preservation projects in two years before I left Wisconsin.

Some years ago I had breakfast with Tommy Thompson, then Governor of Wisconsin, in an attempt to convince him to support a preservation project. As he ate a grapefruit, I told him that the demolition of a historic structure that continued to have importance to its surroundings and had been in the lives of generations would add to the "social amnesia" that plagued communities and the people who lived and worked in them. Our built past is not only part of our heritage, but also a defining element of individuals sense of their own place and of themselves. The CCE structure contributes to that as part of the built mosaic that makes Westport (and Essex County) distinctive.

I recognize that the CCE building needs serious and expensive work. The choice between demolition and the construction of a new (and likely less distinctive building) merits substantial work. I understand from media accounts and preservationists the expense of presentation is considerably less than the \$2.5 million estimated for demolition and new construction. That suggests that the County Board of Supervisors must engage in a profession, impartial study of the options. If the expense of preserving and re purposing the historic space is significantly or even marginally less than demolition the decision is clear, preserve our heritage.

Sincerely,

H. Nicholas Muller III