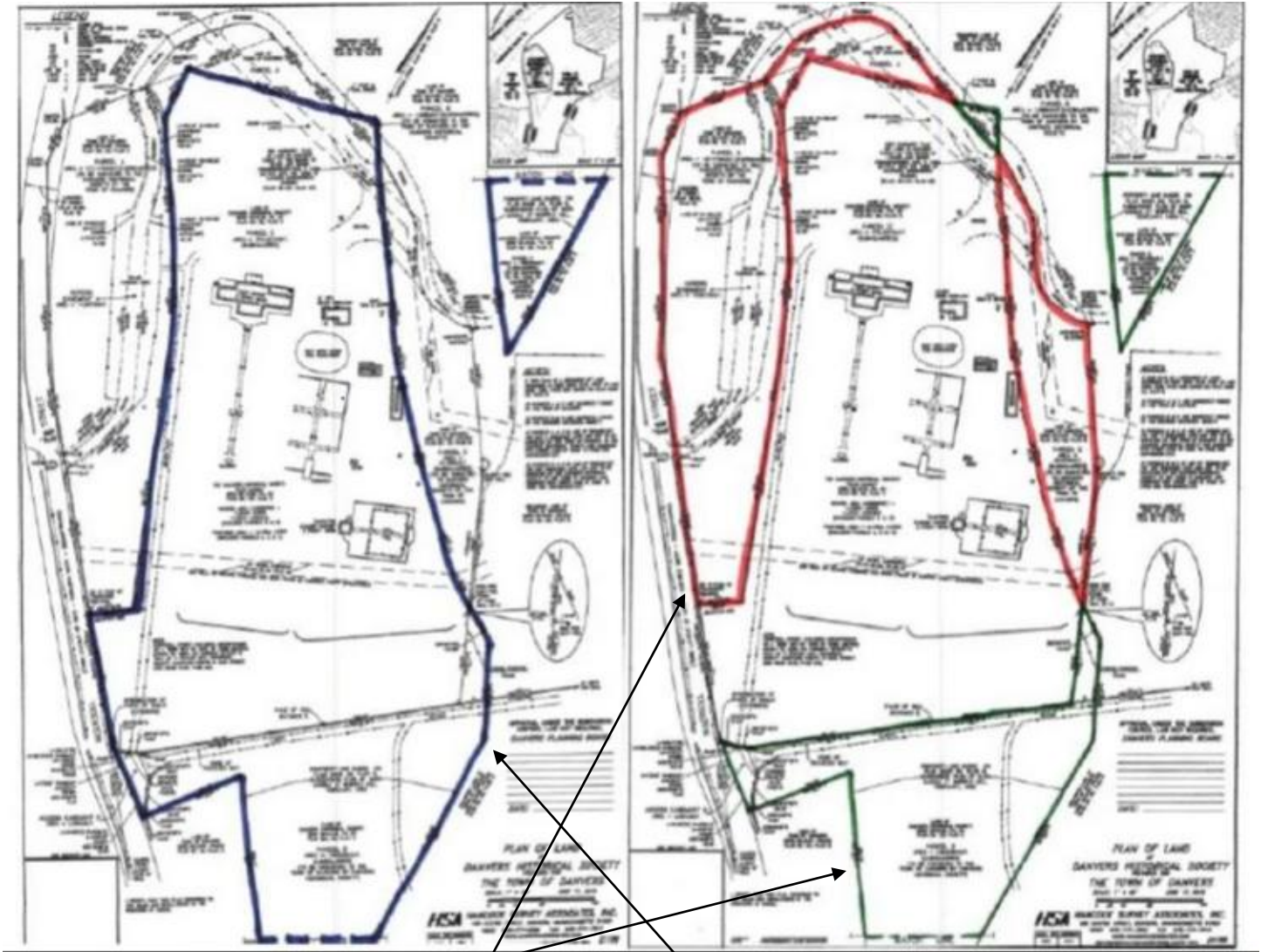


## Land exchange at Glen Magna underway after 40-year delay

By Caroline Enos | Staff Writer



A map of Glen Magna Farms and part of Endicott Park in Danvers. The **BLUE** outline on the image shows the land originally purchased by the Danvers Historical Society, the **RED** outline is land the town is giving to the historic society in exchange for the land outlined in **GREEN** that the society is transferring to the town.

DANVERS — Two parcels of land at Glen Magna Farms and Endicott Park are finally switching ownership between the town and the Danvers Historical Society — 40 years after the effort started.

The Select Board voted 4-0 on Sept. 5, with member Matthew Duggan absent, in favor of switching ownership of two similarly sized parcels and some smaller ones on the property in accordance with who mainly uses them.

The town will receive ownership of the activity field land by the community garden that often hosts town-organized events, while the Society will get ownership of the parking lot used for events at its property, Glen Magna, Historical Society President Dave McKenna said.

The formal exchange is scheduled to take place in the coming weeks at no cost to taxpayers to officially close the deal. The Select Board's vote was the last major piece of red tape this effort had to face, McKenna said.

“(Our attorney) **Tom Guidi** really has spent a tremendous amount of work gratis chasing this stuff down for us... Everybody was trying to work together and just trying to make things work, and it just took time,” he said.

The strange configuration of the parcels came from plans to build a sprawling development at Glen Magna and the land now used by Endicott Park with more than 280 residential lots in the 1960s.

The Endicott family had lived in the mansion at Glen Magna for generations until the last family member there, Louise, died in the 1950s. The historic property was sold to these developers following her death, but the town and Historical Society stopped development plans by preserving the Glen Magna property and creating Endicott Park.

Had the plan gone through, Glen Magna's mansion and central gardens would have been used as a corporate headquarters for the development. As such, the parcels being exchanged today are so oddly shaped, McKenna said.

Town Meeting approved the land swap in the 1980s, but for reasons lost to time, files around the change were stored away and never acted upon. **It wasn't until about four years ago that the Society's former president, Tom Page**, and now-retired town planner, Susan Fletcher, found the files and reignited the drive behind them.

New laws required the exchange to be approved again by Town Meeting and now the state Legislature and the Massachusetts Historical Commission, in addition to undergoing more thorough review.

A Special Town Meeting green-lighted the swap in February 2020, and the exchange has now gotten approval from the major state players it needed it from.

The reason for all this trouble? Mainly, to stop liability issues before they happen, McKenna said.

“If, God forbid, somebody gets injured (on the activity field), the town is exempt from liability because they are a municipality, but we could have been sued,” he said. “It just makes more sense to have the land owned by the people that are using it.”

The parcel exchange was just one item checked off the Historical Society's to-do list for this year. The Page House on Page Street and Mrs. Day's original Baby Shoe Shop have undergone restoration work, and reproductions of the Reaper and Milkmaid statues have been added to the newly restored roof of the Derby Tea House at Glen Magna.

“In partnership with the town, it remains our goal to maintain these properties and historic buildings for the enjoyment of future generations,” McKenna said.

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