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Deserving vets to get Sound Beach homes

Community Village Beacon Record

by Giselle Barkley - July 8, 2015

Landmark Properties set to break ground next week



Two veterans and their families will soon be Sound Beach homeowners. Stock photo

For Iraq and Afghanistan veterans living on Long Island, finding an affordable new home is the difference between remaining on the Island and leaving.

According to Mark Baisch, of Rocky Point-based Landmark Properties, many Long Island veterans cannot afford to purchase a home on the Island and are forced to move.

Baisch, alongside Commander Joseph Cognitore of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Fischer/Hewins Post 6249 of Rocky Point, is helping two veterans and their families live a little easier with the construction of two new homes on Tyler Avenue in Sound Beach.

According to Cognitore the \$250,000 homes are actually worth around \$400,000. Baisch said the properties could not exceed \$250,000 in order for the vets to afford the property and mortgage rates. But, with the help of Suffolk County and the Long Island Housing Partnership, Baisch said the price of the properties could be reduced to \$190,000 each.

“They’re getting a brand new Landmark house for it looks like possibly ... a hundred plus thousand dollars less than market value,” Baisch said.

The reduced price allows veterans to get an affordable mortgage like the VA mortgage, which offers zero down payment.

According to Cognitore, he and his committee of veterans screen each candidate to determine the vet’s need for the home after the mortgage company approves them for a loan. The vets must also be first-time home buyers who make less than \$200,000-\$300,000 annually. The amount of years a vet served, the size of their family and whether they received awards for their service are determining factors. However, for Cognitore and his committee the hardest part is selecting the candidates.

“It’s a good opportunity for a couple of families,” Cognitore said. “Unfortunately, everybody that we interview deserves a home.”

Although this is not the first time Cognitore and Baisch are helping Long Island veterans, this is the first time Baisch is constructing the homes alone. Landmark Properties’ construction workers may start clearing the land this week, according to Baisch.

While a veteran with physical disabilities has not received one of the homes in the past, Baisch said he could tailor the home to the veteran’s needs. Cognitore hopes to select the veterans before Landmark Properties finishes construction.

“What happened in the past, we got all the candidates together and a lot of times they couldn’t wait to build the home,” Cognitore said regarding construction. “They didn’t know who the candidates were right away so they had to start building the home prior to the candidates being picked.”

Cognitore said they would reach out to previous candidates who did not receive a home and bring them up to speed with the process.

Regardless of the veterans who get the homes, both Cognitore and Baisch are happy to make a difference and help vets in need.

Cognitore said the lower cost of the homes “makes it affordable for them and they could just make it. That’s the kind of opportunities that we’re looking for.”

Baisch expressed similar thoughts.

“Every veteran that I’ve sold a house to has told me that if it weren’t for [the homes], they would have left Long Island,” Baisch said.

This version corrects a typo that misidentified a country where American veterans served overseas.