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Firm hired to renovate art barn as GEMS post

By **Martin B. Cassidy**
Staff Writer

The town has awarded a contract to a Greenwich-based construction firm to begin a long-awaited overhaul of a backcountry barn to provide a base for ambulances serving the northern part of town.

Todd Kennedy, a North Street resident and vice-chairman of the District 11/Northeast delegation of the Representative Town Meeting of Greenwich, said he is looking forward to the return of the ambulances to the Art Barn, which will ensure speedier response to his area.

"It is a good place for it," said Kennedy, 72. "It will be good to have them there to make sure there is good coverage throughout the backcountry."

Wernert Construction of Greenwich got the contract last week after submitting an \$861,000 bid to renovate the barn on Lower Cross Road into the town's fourth ambulance station, Jim Latham, senior buyer for the town's Purchasing Department said.

The five other bids received ranged from \$1.07 million to \$1.13 million, Latham said.

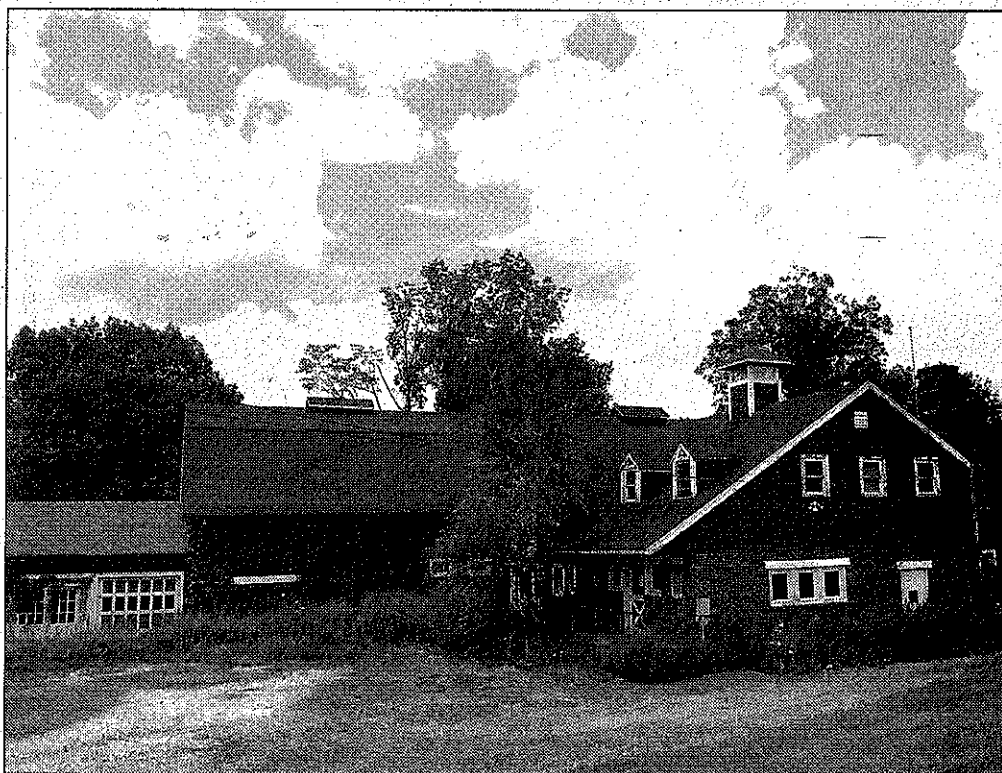
The new station will help maintain quick response times to backcountry medical calls, and indoor garaging will help reduce mechanical wear-and-tear on ambulances from keeping them running on cold nights, according to Greenwich Emergency Service Inc. Executive Director Charlee Tufts.

Since 2006, ambulances serving that area have been stationed outdoors at the Round Hill Volunteer Fire Department, requiring that they be left running in colder weather to avoid mechanical problems, Tufts said.

"We're going to be happy to be back at the Art Barn," Tufts said. "That location was chosen to help improve response times and we hope to be back soon."

The rest of the town's ambulances are based at Greenwich Hospital, GEMS headquarters at 1111 E. Putnam Ave., and on King Street.

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Helen Neafsey/Staff photo

The former Art Barn on Lower Cross Road in backcountry Greenwich, above, will be renovated to serve as a new post for GEMS ambulances to serve the area following the award of a contract to Greenwich-based Wernert Construction.