



Nonprofit Chabad buys former Elks Lodge

By Bill Fallon

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Chabad, a Jewish nonprofit, has completed its purchase of the former Elks Lodge at 452 Brookside Drive in Fairfield, reportedly for \$810,000.

The deal is “one of many area real estate transactions” involving Chabad in the last two years, all facilitated by Norwalk-based law firm Goldman, Gruder & Woods, firm officials said.

Founding attorney Kenneth Gruder and other in-house attorneys represented Chabad pro bono.

In January 2013, a separate chapter of Chabad representing Westport, Weston, Wilton and Norwalk purchased the historic Three Bears Restaurant on Newtown Turnpike in Westport. That property is currently a Jewish community and learning center.

Other unspecified Chabad transactions currently are closing in other Fairfield County towns.

Gruder said the 5,000-square-foot Brookside Drive property in Fairfield will be used as a central hub for Jewish life in town and for surrounding towns, with programming that previously took place on Stratfield Road and elsewhere.

“For the past three years, Chabad of Fairfield leased part of the former Hillel Day School (on Stratfield Road) for its year-round programs, and often held activities and events at area synagogues and other locations offsite because of space limitations and other issues,” Gruder said. “Moving forward, Chabad’s new home at Brookside Drive will be a warm, inviting, spacious gathering place for the entire Jewish community of Fairfield County.

“In addition to its current offerings of holiday celebrations, workshops and lectures, Chabad will utilize the increased capacity of its new space to offer special events and a once-a-week onsite Hebrew School,” Gruder said. He and his wife, Allison, have long been supporters of Chabad and were honored at a recent gala.

“I am thrilled to have helped with this endeavor, and proud that my firm has once again been in a position to have done so without a fee,” Gruder said.

The Fairfield branch of Chabad is led by Rabbi Shlame Landa and his wife Miriam.

“The generosity of our supporters has been overwhelming and is indicative of the vibrant Jewish life that will continue to flourish in our community,” said Landa.

Able Construction of Norwalk, which is providing services at no profit for the Westport project, will once again help with planned construction to the property.

Chabad is a movement within mainstream traditional Judaism with more than 3,000 branches worldwide. The name is a Hebrew letter acronym for wisdom, understanding and knowledge.

Goldman, Gruder & Woods also has offices in Trumbull and Greenwich.