

Table for two? That'll be five years

Tangled in red tape since 2005, plans for Aquebogue bistro get the OK

BY TIM GANNON | STAFF WRITER

Five years after it was initially proposed, the 28-seat Comtesse Thérèse Bistro in Aquebogue finally received site plan approval from the Riverhead Town Planning Board last Thursday, and its owners — Theresa Dilworth and her husband, Mineo Shimuri — hope for a late spring opening.

“I had no idea it would take this long,” Ms. Dilworth said. “Now we’re finally seeing the light at the end of the tunnel.” She said they almost had given up on the proposal several times.

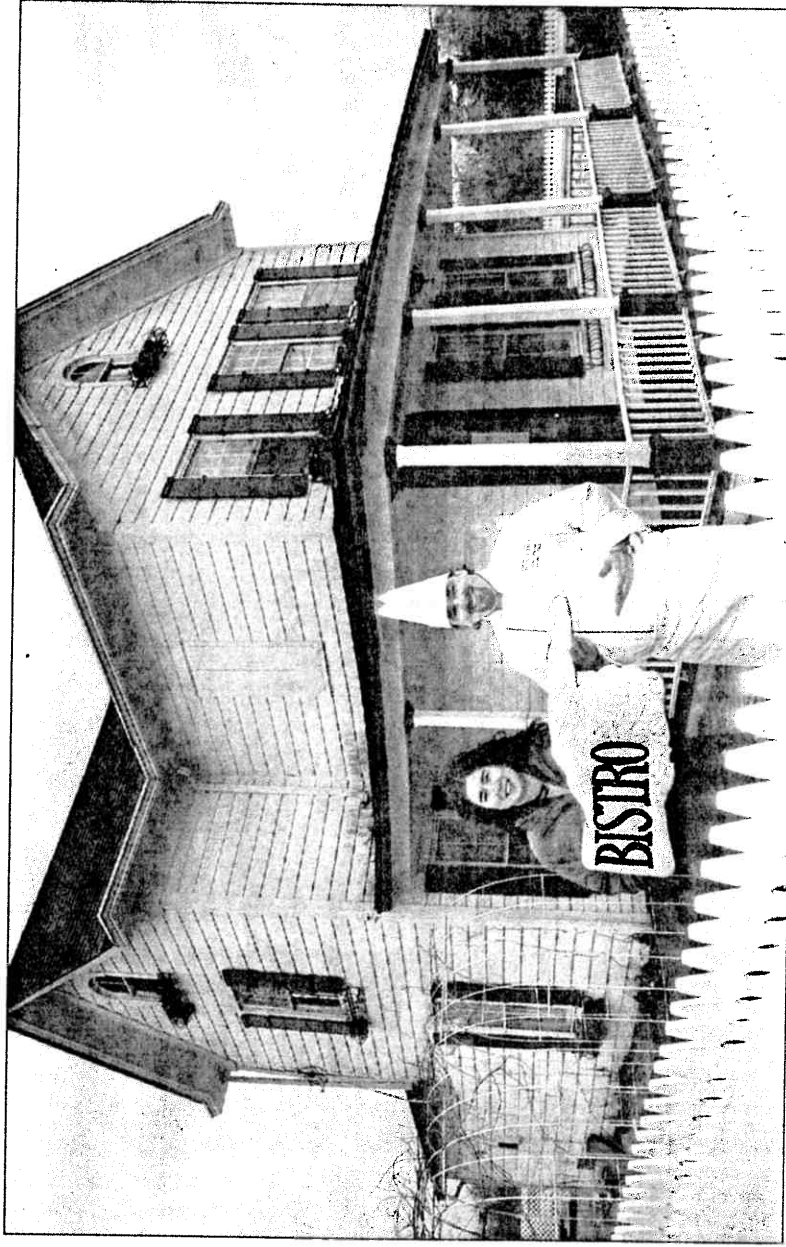
Ms. Dilworth is an owner of a vineyard in Aquebogue and a tasting room in Peconic. She and her husband first proposed the bistro in 2005. It will occupy a 170-year-old, two-story house on the south side of Main Road in Aquebogue, the former Jamesport Saddlery building.

Ms. Dilworth is also an international tax attorney. Mr. Shimuri, who manages the vineyard, is a former steel company executive.

“It will be kind of a classic bistro, with some French influence,” Ms. Dilworth said. They’ve hired a chef, Arie Pavlou, a graduate of the Cordon Bleu in Paris, a former co-owner of Coeur de Vignes restaurant in Southold, and an instructor at the Culinary Institute at Suffolk County Community College in Riverhead.

The wines served at the bistro will be local, Ms. Dilworth said, and so will the food.

A smaller version of the proposal won site plan approval in June but, after starting work on it in



Owner Theresa Dilworth and executive chef Arie Pavlou in front of the historic house in Aquebogue that Ms. Dilworth has long planned to turn into a bistro. She just received approvals from Town Hall to move forward on the project.

July, the couple decided they needed to enlarge the building, making a new site plan review necessary. Ms. Dilworth's expanded plan still calls for 28 seats but also a 426-foot addition for a second public bathroom and an indoor walk-in refrigerator.

The project required a special permit from the Town Board, along with approvals from the state Department of Transportation, the county health department and other agencies. Overflow parking on

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BISTRO...

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a neighboring property also required town approval. All those permits were granted last year and remain in effect for the larger structure.

But variances from the town Zoning Board of Appeals were necessary because the proposed extension pushed the building into required setbacks. The ZBA approval came on Jan. 25, with the Planning Board's nod for the new site plan the next week.

So how does a tax attorney become a winemaker and restaurant owner?

Ms. Dilworth said it actually started when she was in high school. "My brother got into beer-making and we would drink our own beers together," she said. That later led her to making wines.

Ms. Dilworth said she's always felt that what's missing from wine tasting rooms is food.

"I've always wanted to have food and wine together," she said.

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