



THE FOWWOS NEWS

Newsletter of *FRIENDS OF WEST WINDSOR OPEN SPACE*

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BRIEF HISTORY OF FOWWOS

Friends of West Windsor Open Space (FOWWOS) was incorporated as a fully non-profit 501(3)(c) organization in 1996. But its history goes back several years before that, to the time when West Windsor Township first seriously considered the preservation of open space as a means of controlling residential growth.

In 1993, at the same time West Windsor adopted its new form of government, voters approved a new one-cent open space tax, the purpose of which was to enable the township to purchase land that might otherwise be developed as housing. The state had earlier passed legislation that allowed municipalities to raise dedicated tax money for the purpose of preserving their open space. The proceeds from West Windsor's new tax were used to purchase the Grover Farm, a 93-acre tract that could have accommodated 80 houses.

Following this first step, a Planning Board committee was formed to make an inventory of open space parcels in West Windsor and to recommend how to use it to the township's advantage. Among the prominent citizens joining the committee was Bernt Midland. The committee recommended that a second cent be added to the open space tax. In the referendum of 1995, this tax was approved by a three-to-two margin.

Some on the committee also realized that the township government alone would not be able to do enough to save all the open space that should be saved. It was also realized that there are avenues of support open to private organizations that are not open to governments. As a result, Midland

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WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

About two months ago, FOWWOS embarked on the largest membership drive in its history. Letters were sent to over 5,400 West Windsor residents asking them to join in the effort to preserve our remaining open space. We are happy to report that the drive was successful. To date, nearly 300 have become new members or made contributions. The total number of members and contributors is now over 350. We welcome the new members and thank all those who contributed. We look forward to working together to fulfill the goals and objectives of our organization. Everyone is welcome to attend our meetings, which are held at the Municipal Building the first and third Tuesdays of each month at 7:30 p.m.

The by-laws of FOWWOS state the following objectives: to promote and work for the preservation of open space and conservation of natural resources in and around West Windsor Township; to encourage and assist local governmental bodies in their open space and conservation programs; to raise funds for financing the acquisition of land for park and open space purposes, and generally to effectuate the acquisition of real property and interest therein for such purposes; to foster the knowledge and study of ecological and natural resources conservation in all segments of the Township; to encourage farmland preservation; and to engage in such other charitable and educational enterprises related to the preservation of open space and conservation of natural resources as the membership may elect from time to time.

We have made a good start toward meeting these objectives in the first few years of our existence. With the help of our new membership we look forward to even more success in the future. ☞



Friends Of West Windsor Open Space

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Directors & Officers:

Mike Schuit, President
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Jackie Alberts
Bill Benfer
Bob Bruschi
George Levin
Alison Miller
Bill Neff
Dick Snedeker

In Memoriam

Bernt Midland (1927-1998), Founder
Gil Gilmore (1922-1998)
Ron Rogers (1930-1999)

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FOWWOS is a nonprofit organization incorporated under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code

Brief History, cont.

called for the formation of the private open space advocacy group which met for the first time on October 31, 1995.

In the four years since, Friends of West Windsor Open Space has grown to be far more than that first Halloween treat. Its formal organization and adoption of by-laws was followed shortly by its 1996 incorporation as a nonprofit organization. With this status, all dues and donations are fully tax deductible.

FOWWOS has been influential in many open space issues facing West Windsor in recent years. In 1996 it advocated an alternate site for the new middle school instead of a portion of the newly acquired Grover Farm, which it felt should remain open. A nearby site was ultimately used that could have accommodated 42 houses if it had been developed. FOWWOS also conducted research and provided essential information and support that led to the purchase of both the Blyman Farm and the Crawford Woods. Our board members are now actively involved in township deliberations on new open space purchases.

The most important project in which FOWWOS has played a key roll was the successful initiative and referendum of November 1998. That vote, which passed by a three-to-one margin, resulted in an increase of the open space tax by five cents, to a total of seven cents per hundred. This gave the township the resources to make substantial commitments to saving its remaining open space. Moreover, proceeds of the tax can go even further if, as is often the case, the cost of the land is partially reimbursed by the county and state.

As a nonprofit group FOWWOS also enables property owners to receive tax benefits if they donate land that can then be either kept by FOWWOS or passed on to ownership by the township. ☺

THE RON ROGERS ARBORETUM

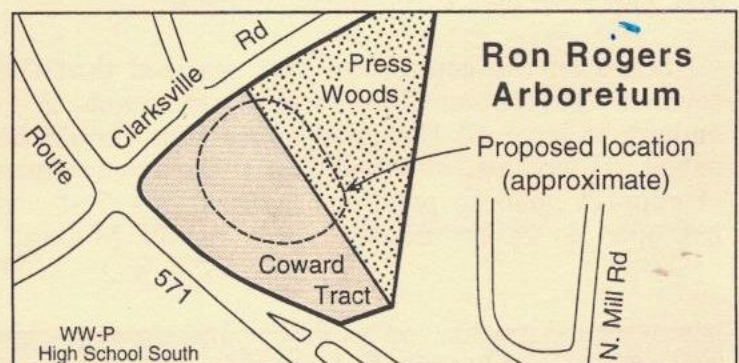
One of the wonderful ways to use open space is to plant an arboretum. An arboretum is a "garden of trees," accessible by pathways, with brochures and plaques to inform and educate its visitors. Its pastoral environment promotes strolling, observing nature, and simply enjoying the trees.

Ron Rogers, one of FOWWOS's founding members, was without a doubt West Windsor's foremost tree man. He was a dedicated and knowledgeable member of the Environmental Commission and the Shade Tree Committee. He also participated in the original design of West Windsor's Greenbelt, a series of existing and proposed woodland corridors spanning the township.

One of Ron's dreams was a township arboretum. When we lost him last year, FOWWOS members and township officials formed a committee to help make that dream come true. The committee is chaired by Harley Pickens. Many residents have contributed funds for the arboretum in memory of Ron and we hope to start planting this spring. (Contributions are still being accepted. Please send them in care of FOWWOS.)

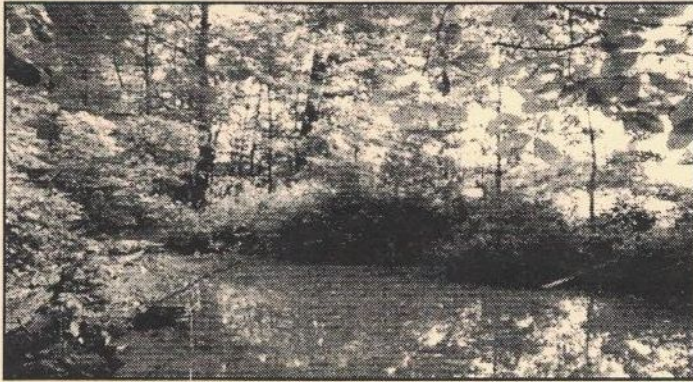
After considering many sites, the committee recommended that the Ron Rogers Arboretum be located on a portion of the township-owned Coward Tract, at the corner of Clarksville Road and Route

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**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:
THE LIAO-LIN PARCEL**

The challenge to preserve open space in a community with high property values is daunting. It takes creativity to make our tax dollars go as far as they can. Plus, it takes the charitable spirit of the property owner to give something back to the community. These ingredients came together in the autumn of 1999 when the Liao family of West Windsor and their partners, the Lins, entered into a contract to sell their



29-acre property to FOWWOS, who in turn will deed ownership of the "Liao-Lin" property to the township. Closing on the property is expected before spring.

Preserving this gem represents several "firsts." The agreement is a landmark in the history of FOWWOS, marking our first "bargain sale" transaction and the first whereby FOWWOS will utilize funds from the first state Green Acres nonprofit grant approved under the November 1998 state open space referendum. In addition, the owners are making a monetary contribution to FOWWOS. A plaque in tribute to their generosity is planned for the site.

What is a "bargain sale?" In a bargain sale, the owner agrees to sell to a government entity or charitable group such as FOWWOS at a price below the fair market value. The owner's reduced proceeds are offset by a reduction in capital gains tax, by the tax benefit of a charitable donation, or both.

The Liao-Lin property has many attributes that make it special—aside from the homes that will not be built on it. Located in the geographic heart of West Windsor and traversed by Duck Pond Run, it is a key link in that stream's greenway. The site is contiguous with other parcels that have either already been preserved or are expected to be as the greenway is expanded. Its combination of easily accessible open and wooded areas along North Post Road make it an attractive site for passive recreation in that part of the township. ☘

UPDATE ON OPEN SPACE ACQUISITIONS

During the past year-and-a-half the proceeds of West Windsor's recently increased open space tax have been applied to the preservation of over 340 acres that will no longer be available for residential development. This includes land that has either been purchased by the township or preserved through the New Jersey Farmland Preservation Program with township help. The construction of at least 80 houses on this land has been averted. In addition, the township had already averted another 80 houses through the 1994 purchase of the Grover Farm. Purchases now pending will preclude another 22. As more and more property is saved in this way, the magnitude of future tax increases due to costly home development will be diminished. The map below shows the location of the properties that have been committed to preservation so far.

The township's effort to preserve these properties is being led by the Mayor's Open Space Preservation Task Force, a group appointed by Mayor Carson with representation from the Township Council, the Township Administration, FOWWOS, and the Recreation and Environmental Commissions. The group is chaired by member-at-large Bill Benfer.

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Help wanted!

FOWWOS needs help with grant proposal writing and opportunities. Also, if you or your group can help with the FOWWOS Clean Streets Program, please let us know. This is another way to raise money to help save open space. For details, please call Mike Schuit at 799-4868. ☘

Update, cont.

Since last May, the Task Force—assisted by other members of the FOWWOS board—has investigated over a dozen properties, chosen from the nearly ninety listed in the township's inventory of undeveloped residentially-zoned parcels. These properties were picked because of attributes such as the potential number of houses that might be avoided, inclusion in the township Greenbelt, or the usefulness of the land for recreation needs. Other properties were offered for sale to the township by their owners. Once the status of all the properties in the current group has been determined, a new group will be considered.

Some properties may qualify for partial reimbursement by Mercer County and the State of New Jersey, especially those with regional significance. Thus by careful selection, the local open space tax money can be made to go even further. ☺

Ron Rogers Arboretum, cont.

571. Its rolling terrain will best display the trees that Ron loved. Its paths will meander through formal plantings and adjacent natural woods as well.

Ron's favorite tree was the oak, and the arboretum is planned to feature all the species of oak that grow naturally in West Windsor. He deplored the proliferation of non-native species, both decorative and wild, and so the arboretum will feature native species. Each tree in the arboretum will be planted and cultivated so it can attain its natural size and shape without competition from wild trees and undergrowth.

Ron himself will be commemorated with a stone monument capped by a bronze replica of his forester's hat, without which he never planted a tree. ☺

To join FOWWOS

Send name and address to:

FOWWOS
P.O. Box 73
Princeton Junction, NJ 08550

Enclose dues check made out to FOWWOS for one of the following memberships:

| | |
|------------------|------------------|
| Regular (family) | \$25.00 per year |
| Silver | \$50.00 " " |
| Gold | \$75.00 " " |

Membership dues and contributions are fully tax deductible.



Friends
Of
West
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Space

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