



THE FOWWOS NEWS

Newsletter of *FRIENDS OF WEST WINDSOR OPEN SPACE*

Vol. 2, No. 1 • WINTER 2001

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FIVE OPEN SPACE PURCHASES APPROVED

Five more properties have been added to the Township's growing list of open space land acquisitions. At the Township Council's meeting of January 8, Mayor Carson announced that an agreement had been reached to purchase the new properties with a total area of 276 acres. The Council unanimously approved the introduction of the required bond ordinance, and subsequently, at its meeting of January 22, gave final approval of the purchases following a public hearing. The new acquisitions bring the total of preserved open space in West Windsor since the inception of the acquisition program to 1,355 acres.

The major portion of the purchase comprises two parcels on Meadow Road totaling 213 acres owned by the Maneely Partnership (see map on page 3). The cost was \$4.35M, or less than \$20,500 per acre. This compares favorably with the average of \$22,000 per acre paid for previous acquisitions. Ongoing litigation with the Township over the zoning of these properties was terminated as a result of the sale. The larger of the two parcels at 164 acres gives the Township a prime site for recreational use in the northwest part of the Township. The land includes open fields as well as upland and lowland forest, and some wetlands. It is traversed by Duck Pond Run. This property could have supported over one million square feet of high density development.

The other three properties, totaling 63.49 acres, owned by the Oleniczak family, and located on Windsor Road, were purchased at a cost of \$15,500 per acre. These properties include important wetlands in the watershed of the Assunpink Creek. Their acquisition gives the

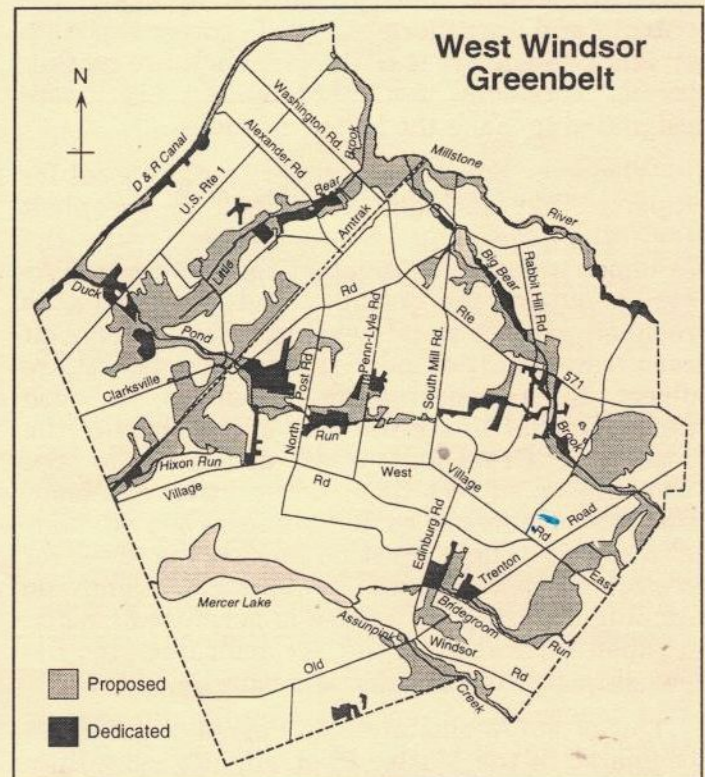
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THE WEST WINDSOR GREENBELT

Every so often, explorers of our parks and open space come across rough stone obelisks, approximately thigh-high, labeled merely with a G on one side and a B on the other. These monuments mark the edges of the West Windsor Greenbelt, the Township's first open space preservation initiative.

Accepted as part of the Master Plan by the Planning Board in 1977, the greenbelt was conceived and planned by the Environmental Commission as one of its first projects when it was

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Friends Of West Windsor Open Space

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In Memoriam

Bernt Midland (1927-1998), Founder
Gil Gilmore (1922-1998)
Ron Rogers (1929-1999)

E-mail: ek61@juno.com or FOWWOS@yahoo.com
Web site: www.princetonol.com/groups/fowwos/
Meetings: First and third Tuesdays at
Town Hall, 7:30 p.m.

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West Windsor Greenbelt, cont.

formed in 1971. The greenbelt is a continuous network of corridors of undisturbed land. Its purpose is to protect and preserve waterways, floodplains, and the few areas of mature upland forest—in what was then primarily a farming community—to improve water quality, to muffle noise, to serve as a buffer between different land uses, and to provide a habitat for wildlife that permits normal home-range movement. This is especially important for species that do not survive in isolated patches of woodland.

There are nine areas of designated greenbelt, all connected: the corridors of the Delaware and Raritan Canal, the Millstone River, Big Bear Brook, Little Bear Brook, Duck Pond Run, Assunpink Creek, and Bridegroom Run, and the central and southern upland forest wildlife corridors. Some areas of the greenbelt are neither stream corridors nor woodlands, but were designated to make the belt continuous.

Whenever a developer presents a proposal for property that includes a designated greenbelt area, the Planning Board works with the developer to locate as much of the disturbance as possible outside the greenbelt and to dedicate the greenbelt area to the Township. Some greenbelt areas remain part of individual backyards, but are subject to a conservation easement, a deed restriction that limits the uses of that part of the property. Greenbelt areas dedicated to the Township or subject to a conservation easement must, by ordinance, be left undisturbed in their natural state; there must be no clearing, even for access; no planting of ornamentals; and no dumping, littering, or fencing is permitted. When an open greenbelt area is dedicated to the Township, it is left to reforest naturally.

Out of approximately 2,400 acres of greenbelt designated in the Master Plan, slightly more than half have been dedicated to the Township or are subject to conservation easements. ☺

FOWWOS DIRECTORS NAMED FOR 2001

Four FOWWOS directors whose terms were due to expire December 31, 2000, were reappointed for three-year terms at the November 28 annual meeting. George Levin, Alison Miller, Harley Pickens, and Dick Snedeker will serve until December 31, 2003. Another director, Bill Benfer, resigned. At the meeting of January 2, John Sabino was chosen to fill the vacancy.

Levin has lived in West Windsor for 31 years. A retired executive with IBM, he was a founding member of FOWWOS. He is active in the community with the Senior Citizens and Retirees Groups as well as the Citizens' Rifle and Revolver Club. He is also a registered baseball and softball umpire who works local games.

Miller is a 13-year resident of the Township and is a founding member of FOWWOS. She is a certified planner and served on the West Windsor Township Council from 1993 until 1999. She is currently a member of the West Windsor Zoning Board and the Site Plan Review Advisory Board.

Pickens, a retired Army general, has lived in West Windsor for 33 years and has been actively involved in many community activities including the Lions Club and numerous appointed committees. A founding member of FOWWOS, he was a member of the Shade Tree Committee and currently serves on the Parking Authority.

Snedeker has lived in West Windsor for 43 years and is also a founding member of FOWWOS. He is a retired research aeronautical engineer. He served on the WW-P Board of Education for 12 years and was its president for five years. He has served on many appointed committees and is currently a member of the Planning Board.

Sabino has lived in West Windsor for 1 year. He is a director of the Merrill Lynch Trust Company in West Windsor. He is the father of six-year-old twins and is an active golfer. ☺

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: A PERFECT FIT FOR FOWWOS

In 2001, FOWWOS and West Windsor Township continue their successful open space odyssey. Helen Rancan, FOWWOS First Vice President and Chair of the Township's Environmental Commission, has played a major role in our preservation efforts. Recently, I asked her about her experience and interest in preserving open space.

Schuit (MS): What brought you to FOWWOS?

Rancan (HR): My parents instilled in me a strong sense of civic duty to be involved in one's community. Plus, having a daughter coupled with my professional interests in environmental protection, FOWWOS was a natural choice. Although my daughter cannot comprehend the loss of open space, she and my husband enjoy the sledding hill in Community Park. And isn't that what preserving open space is all about?

MS: Your education and experience are a perfect fit for FOWWOS.

HR: I have a BS in Chemical Engineering from Rutgers, a Master of Engineering from Stevens Tech, and work for the State Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), most recently with the Division of Watershed Management. We determine the impact of pollution going into streams and their reaction. Locally, I've been Chair of the Township's Environmental Commission since 1999. I joined FOWWOS in 1996 when I met the late Bernt Midland auctioning a car to raise money for the fledgling group. That fall I became the FOWWOS First Vice President.

MS: What FOWWOS accomplishments are you most proud of?

HR: I don't see it that way. The comradery of our diverse group of volunteers has led to our successes. Whether discussing with residents the reasons to join FOWWOS or being so involved in the passage of our 1998 open space referendum, or completing our first bargain sale last year, it's the teamwork of our volunteers that makes me most proud and what I enjoy most.

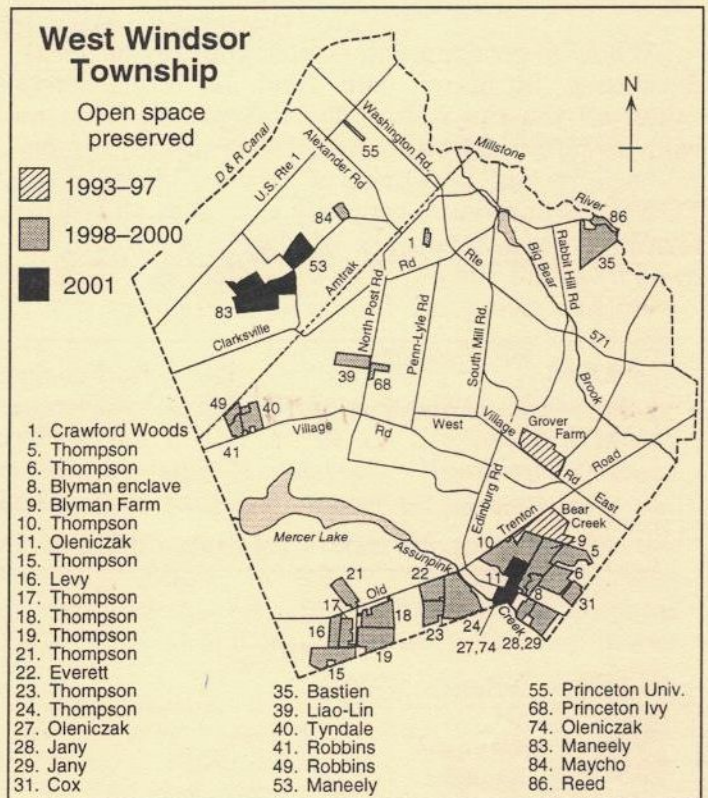
MS: What is FOWWOS' future?

HR: FOWWOS' strength lies in our citizens' appreciation of the need to preserve and enjoy open space. Depending on the preserved property, FOWWOS will encourage passive and active use and will make sure that what is preserved will stay that way. Also, there is much land yet to be preserved. On a personal level, I will try to instill in my daughter, as my parents did for me, the importance of contributing to one's community. ☺

Open Space Purchase, cont.

Township ownership of nearly all the undeveloped land south of Old Trenton Road.

The five-parcel purchase brings to 33 the number purchased since the Grover Farm in 1994. Over half the acreage in the open space inventory has now been acquired. As with all the inventory properties, these are eligible for 65-percent reimbursement by the County and State. ☺



WHAT ARE ROLLBACK TAXES?

We frequently see the term "rollback taxes" used in connection with land that has been farmed and is being purchased to preserve open space. Just what are rollback taxes and how do they work?

To understand the concept of rollback taxes one must first understand the most common means by which the State of New Jersey helps farmers stay in business: farmland assessment. This is the mechanism by which land that is actively farmed is assessed and taxed at its value as farmland, not at its much greater value as potential commercial or residential development.

When land is no longer being farmed, it no longer qualifies for the lower assessment and is taxed at its full value. But the law states that when the tax rate changes from farmland

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Rollback Taxes, cont.

assessment to the higher rate, it must change retroactively as of three years in the past. These three years of higher taxes are called rollback taxes because the new assessment is "rolled back" three years into the past. If the land changes ownership during the three years, the responsibility for the rollback taxes is decided by the buyer and seller as part of the purchase agreement.

When a government (state, county, or local) purchases farmland, the land is immediately taken off the tax rolls. But the governments as well as nonprofit organizations are exempt from rollback taxes. Thus, if West Windsor or FOWWOS purchases property that is qualified for farmland assessment, no rollback taxes will be owed by either the buyer or the seller. ☺

UNDERSTORIES

Membership renewal: We urge all FOWWOS members to renew their memberships for 2001.

Clean Streets Program: Forms to fill out to obtain State reimbursement for time spent picking up trash in the community can be obtained at the FOWWOS web site: www.princetonol.com/groups/fowwos/. Community groups, especially, can take part in this rewarding civic activity.

Pavers for Ron Rogers Arboretum: Application forms for the purchase of engraved pavers to be installed at the arboretum can be obtained from Harley Pickens (799-0060).

FOWWOS Caps and T-shirts: These can be purchased for \$10 each from Harley Pickens. Proceeds support the Ron Rogers Arboretum.

Arbor Day (Friday, April 27): Arbor Day will be celebrated at the Ron Rogers Arboretum. ☺

To join FOWWOS

Send name and address to:

FOWWOS
P.O. Box 73
West Windsor, 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.



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