



# THE FOWWOS NEWS

Newsletter of *FRIENDS OF WEST WINDSOR OPEN SPACE*

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## USING OPEN SPACE TAX REVENUE FOR THE INTENDED PURPOSE

At its August 3 meeting, the FOWWOS Board of Trustees passed a resolution formally stating guidelines for how it believes revenue from the open space tax should be spent by the township. For several years, township budgets have used a portion of this revenue to cover costs that FOWWOS has deemed inconsistent with the intent of the open space tax referendum. The resolution was sent to the township council and mayor with the hope that future budgeting will recognize appropriate limitations on how these funds are spent.

Of particular concern has been the portion of the revenue designated for use to cover development and maintenance of open space. The 1998 tax referendum clearly stated that up to 10 percent of the revenue may be spent for this purpose. However, there have been no clear-cut

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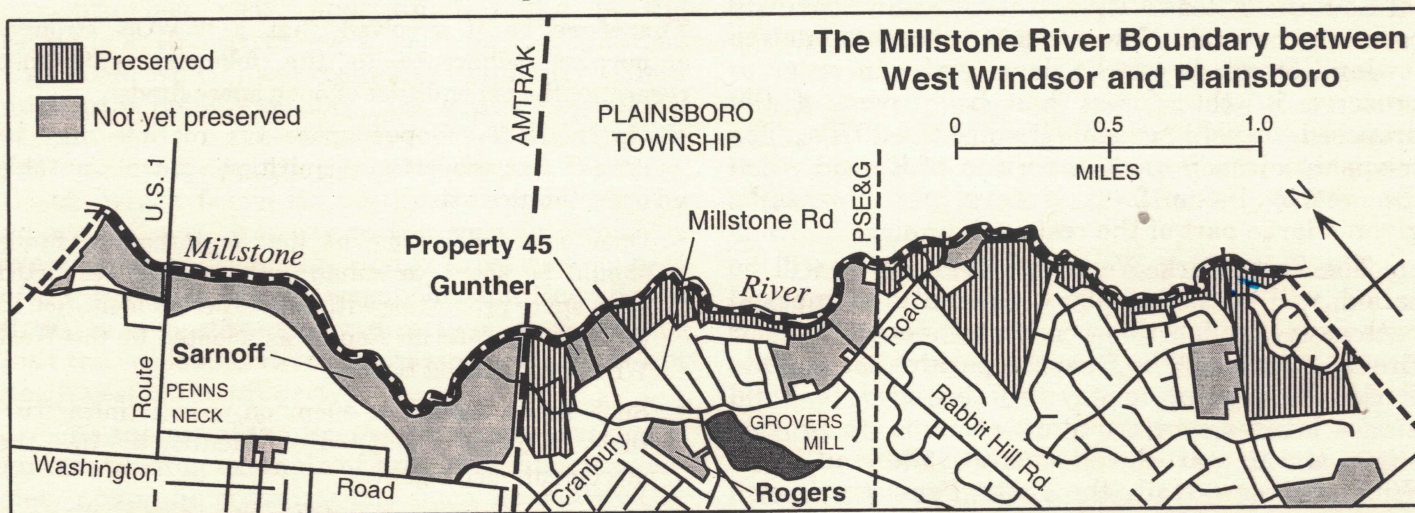
## OPEN SPACE AND THE MILLSTONE RIVER

The entire border between West Windsor and Plainsboro Townships is formed by the Millstone River, one of central New Jersey's principal waterways. This part of the river is known as the Upper Millstone, since the downstream portion and its main watershed lie farther to the north. Ultimately, the Millstone joins the Raritan River near Manville in Somerset County.

In our own area, the river provides a scenic and peaceful divide between the still-rural portions of the neighboring townships. We are fortunate, therefore, that so much of the Millstone's banks in West Windsor have been preserved and will remain undeveloped.

The most recent step toward preservation was taken this fall with the decision to purchase the 8-acre Gunther property on Joanne Street, just west of Millstone Road. The purchase is expected to be completed early next year.

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**ANNUAL MEETING: February 1, 2005 W.W. Township Hall 7:30 PM**

# Friends Of West Windsor Open Space

P.O. Box 73 West Windsor New Jersey, 08550 (609) 799-4868

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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.fowwos.org  
Meetings: First Tuesday at  
Town Hall, 7:30 p.m.

The newsletter *The FOWWOS News* is produced three times a year by Dick Snedeker and Alison Miller, co-editors  
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## Using Open Space Tax, Cont.

guidelines on what constitutes "development," "maintenance," or, for that matter, "open space" itself. As a result, the township has spent portions of the 10 percent for purposes far removed from any connection with the open space preservation program. Examples are labor for mowing the grass at the municipal building and on traffic islands, and the purchase of replacement parts for public works vehicles.

Clearly, the intent of the 10 percent was to provide funds solely for the benefit of the preserved open space properties, such as building playing fields or hiking trails and maintaining or improving these specific amenities—not simply to provide extra money for general public works expenses.

## A Hiking Trail for Zaitz Park

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails Committee, FOWWOS, and West Windsor Township are applying for a \$25,000 Recreational Trails Program grant to develop trails through the scenic upland forest behind the Zaitz Park soccer fields off Southfield Road. Upland forest is increasingly rare in central New Jersey because, unlike lowland forest, it can be developed. In order to preserve it, this forest has been part of the proposed township greenbelt since the 1970s. The township already owns a portion of it, and when the nearby Baker farm is developed, it will be given a large part of the rest.

The Zaitz Park Woodland Trail, as it will be called, will consist of about two miles of marked pathways through the woods and along Big Bear Brook. Access will be from the parking lot at Zaitz Park. The grant money will be used to build access bridges over tributary streams, to provide signs, and to start development of the trail itself. With this new trail, the Zaitz Park woods will provide an excellent opportunity for people to learn about woodland ecology. ☺

The resolution follows:

## Friends of West Windsor Open Space Policy Regarding the Expenditure of Open Space Development and Maintenance Funds

**Whereas** West Windsor Township's 1998 Open Space Initiative specified that a maximum of 10% of open space tax receipts may be spent on development and maintenance of properties acquired by the proceeds of the open space tax levy, and

**Whereas** Friends of West Windsor Open Space (FOWWOS) believes that open space development and maintenance funds have been used for inappropriate purposes in previous years by West Windsor Township, and

**Whereas** FOWWOS believes that open space development and maintenance funds should be used to enhance the community's access to and use of the Township's open space lands, and

**Whereas** the Mayor's Open Space Utilization Task Force (OSUTF) Interim Report, dated May 2003, has recommended and prioritized the implementation of specific open space development and maintenance projects that reflect the community's wishes:

**Therefore** be it resolved that FOWWOS strongly encourages adherence to the following guidelines regarding the expenditure of open space funds:

- Up to 100% of open space tax receipts may be spent on property acquisition when suitable opportunities exist.
- Open space development and maintenance funds should be spent to enhance those deed restricted open space properties with public access identified in the OSUTF Interim Report as adopted by the West Windsor Planning Board.
- Such funds should be spent on specific infrastructure projects that are identified in the aforementioned report.

Resolved by the Trustees of Friends of West Windsor Open Space on August 3, 2004. ☺

**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:  
THE ROGERS TREE FARM IS SAVED**

I am pleased to announce the preservation of the Rogers tree farm on Clarksville Road in Grovers Mill. Closing on the property will occur before the end of December. The property was owned by the family of the late Ron Rogers, a founding member of FOWWOS who passed away in 1999.

The preservation would not have been possible without the generosity of the friends and neighbors of the farm. A substantial portion of the cost was borne by these individuals. They have our sincere thanks. We also thank the Delaware & Raritan Greenway, the Mercer County Open Space Board, and the state Green Acres program for their help. Also, the tireless effort of West Windsor Land Use Manager Sam Surtees was essential. Finally, I thank all FOWWOS members for their continuing support of the effort to preserve important properties such as this.

The property will be used for passive recreation, such as hiking, and will be owned jointly by the township and county. American chestnut trees, once plentiful in the area, will be reintroduced on the property.

Tucked behind the west side of Clarksville Road, the Rogers property looks out with an unobstructed scenic view of Grovers Mill Pond. Access is gained through the driveway approximately 500 feet south of the Clarksville-Cranbury Road intersection (see map on p. 1). The ecologically and historically significant hamlet of Grovers Mill and its pond predate the American Revolution. A century ago, the pond was a favorite place of President Grover Cleveland, and was frequently visited by Woodrow Wilson, as both U.S. presidents and Princeton residents were personal friends of the mill's owner Walter Grover.

Until last year, approximately 9.5 of the property's 12.5 acres were used as a Christmas tree farm, which local residents frequently visited during the holiday season. The gentle slope of the remaining 3.2 acres—heavily wooded mainly with red maple—drains the property toward Big Bear Brook, which forms its northern boundary. The adjacent 3-acre property to the west is owned by West Windsor Township, and is preserved as part of the Big Bear Brook Greenbelt. Big Bear Brook flows in a northwesterly direction, and empties into the Millstone River approximately 3,500 feet northwest of the property.

The success of the Rogers Farm preservation is an outstanding example of how government agencies, nonprofit organizations such as FOWWOS, and community citizens can work together to accomplish a goal that is beneficial to all. ☺

*Open Space and the Millstone, Cont.*

The acquisition is being made possible by the combined efforts of FOWWOS, Mercer County, and West Windsor Township, with the aid of funds from the state Green Acres program. As a nonprofit organization, FOWWOS is eligible to receive grants from Green Acres on a matching basis. In this case the matching funds will come from the county. Half of the township's share will also be reimbursed by Green Acres. Thus it will not be necessary for FOWWOS to expend any of its own money. Green Acres will end up putting up 50 percent of the \$600,000 cost, the county 30 percent, and the township 20 percent. The state and township will share the "soft costs" (surveys, legal fees, etc) equally. This deal is an excellent example of one way a nonprofit such as FOWWOS can benefit the land preservation effort.

The abandoned house on the property will be removed, and the 8 acres of open space will join what amounts to over half the township's river border that has already been preserved through either purchase, or deed and home-owner organization restrictions.

Preservation of this parcel increases the potential for expansion of the Millstone River Trail, now limited to the east side of Millstone Road. It is hoped that eventually this trail will extend along the entire river boundary of the township. ☺

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**ANOTHER SITE ON THE MILLSTONE**

Another candidate for preservation on the West Windsor side of the Millstone River is the Castoro property—number 45 on the map of open space candidates (see map on p. 1). This 18-acre parcel lies just east of the Gunther property. If its status as a possibly "contaminated" site can be resolved, there is a good chance that it, too, will be acquired and preserved.

For many years, and until about the time of World War II, much of the land on the nearby banks of the Millstone was actively cultivated. During this period, the woods that now adorn part of the area did not exist, and what is now Property 45 was farmland.

Until the 1960s, it was not unusual for some farmers to excavate less productive portions of their land and sell their sand and gravel to road builders and others needing "clean fill." Such mining operations took place on Property 45 as well as on areas east of Millstone Road where Yeger and Melville Roads now lie. Much of the present contour of the property is a result of such excavation, including the two-acre pond just south of the river.

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*Another Site on the Millstone, cont.*

After the mining ceased, the owner—who was in the road construction business—began to use the site for temporary storage of road-building materials and debris, such as chunks of old concrete and asphalt from projects in progress. Some of the material was reused; some remains on the site to this day.

In 1981, the state Department of Environmental Protection received a letter from a man who said that five years before—in 1976—as he was driving by, he had observed what he took to be the burial of steel drums on the site. There was no explanation of why he had waited five years to notify DEP or what his motivation was. As a result, DEP made an on-site inspection several months later, and *four years* after that conducted a formal inspection—nine years after the alleged drum burial. The only things they found were the surface contaminants one would

expect to find where Diesel-powered vehicles frequently operate—oily surface water and soot. The only drum found was a very old, empty one that sat rusting apart near the river bank.

As a result of the unsubstantiated report of an alleged incident 28 years ago, the site remains on the DEP list of suspected contaminated sites. Several meetings have been held with DEP over the years to resolve this case, but they insist that its priority is so low, they will let it remain unresolved until the owner can prove the site to be clean. In this case, the owner cannot afford the procedures required to provide that proof. Nor can he sell it because of its suspect status.

The recent interest in land preservation has brought forth new ideas on how to resolve the problem, and it is hoped that some solution may be reached in the near future. In the meantime, this potentially very desirable site remains both undeveloped and unreserved. ☺

*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 " "

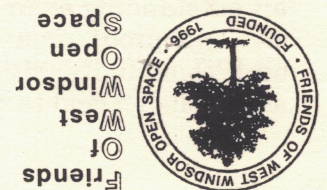
Membership dues and contributions are fully tax deductible.

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