



THE FOWWOS NEWS

Newsletter of *FRIENDS OF WEST WINDSOR OPEN SPACE*

Vol. 8, No. 2 • SPRING-SUMMER 2007

In this issue: The Truth about Open Space & Grovers Mill Pond Rehab Delay & Scenes of West Windsor & President's Message: State Open Space Referendum & Preserving the Greenbelt &

ANOTHER DELAY FOR GROVERS MILL POND REHAB

As reported in the last issue of *The FOWWOS News*, the township expected that the dredging of Grovers Mill Pond would be accomplished this summer. According to the plan, the first step, the preparation of the spoil deposition site in Municipal Park, would be completed during June, and the dredging would follow starting in August.

However, at the last minute, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection questioned whether or not the design of the deposition site proposed by the Army Corps of Engineers would adequately filter the water deposited there before it reentered the local waterways. Because of this, the schedule had to be interrupted long enough to find a solution.

In a short time, the question was resolved, and it was believed the project would proceed as scheduled. But the resulting slight delay meant that the contractor could no longer meet the very tight proposed time schedule. Thus the time window during which dredging would have been allowed this summer and fall was missed.

Since the DEP will not allow dredging during times when fish spawn and turtles prepare for hibernation, the contractor would have been unable to complete the work before these constraints went into effect. Although the preparation of the spoil site could still have been accomplished this year, it was decided that it would be more efficient for the contractor to proceed with the full project in the same year as earlier planned. Thus it was put off until 2008.

Stay tuned. &

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS DUE: FOWWOS AND WEST WINDSOR NEED YOU

The trustees of FOWWOS appeal to all members who have supported the organization so faithfully in the past to please renew their memberships as soon as possible. Although membership renewals were due early this past spring, we are still hopeful that a large number of former members will continue to help FOWWOS in its important work of preserving open space. Send your check made out to FOWWOS to FOWWOS, P.O. Box 73, West Windsor, NJ 08550. Please see our new dues schedule on p. 4.

THE TRUTH ABOUT OPEN SPACE AND WHY WE MUST CONTINUE TO PRESERVE IT

Approximately half of the land in West Windsor Township is preserved, either by the state, the county, or the township itself. The preserved land is protected by deed restriction from development except for recreational use. The benefits to the township are many: tax savings from not having to provide municipal services and schooling for numerous new single-family households; preservation of farmland and environmentally sensitive lands; and providing parks, playing fields, and hiking trails to be enjoyed by all. All this is possible because West Windsor Township has an open space preservation policy. FOWWOS exists to help the township reach its open space preservation goals, and through its charter, is obligated to "foster the study of natural resource conservation, encourage farmland preservation, and engage in other charitable and educational activities related to open space preservation that may be appropriate."

Continued on p. 3



Friends Of West Windsor Open Space

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E-mail: akulley@comcast.net or FOWWOS@yahoo.com
Web site: www.fowwos.org
Meetings: First Tuesday at
Town Hall, 7:30 p.m.

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SCENES OF WEST WINDSOR

West Windsor open space is a treasure chest of beautiful scenery, yet few realize it and fewer still take advantage of the pleasure of visiting these places that are only a short distance away. Recently, FOWWOS board member David Siegel took his camera and recorded some of the scenes that demonstrate the value of preserving these spaces.

Shown below are two of the scenes he recorded. Some may recognize them, but it is likely that most will not. See page 4 for a description of what he photographed. ☺



Scene 1



Scene 2

PRESERVING THE GREENBELT: AFTER THIRTY YEARS, HOW ARE WE DOING?

Thirty years ago the West Windsor Environmental Commission proposed a plan to protect waterways, woods and environmentally sensitive lands, and the plants and animals living in them from the pressures of development. They suggested a corridor, or greenbelt, based on studies that showed that preserved lands connected by corridors supported a greater diversity of plant and animal life than the same acreage of preserved lands would if disconnected.

But the resulting township policy based on that plan does not have the force of law. The greenbelt is protected by deed restrictions agreed to by developers as a condition of development approval. Some areas of greenbelt lie on properties that have been purchased for open space by the township; others, which lie on properties subject to development, have been preserved because the planning board has convinced the developers to site their buildings away from the greenbelt. Zoning ordinances that encourage clustering in residential and commercial developments have also contributed to greenbelt preservation over the years. Still, the township has lost a good deal of the greenbelt to development.

The 1977 environmental commission report mentioned twelve specific areas "particularly outstanding for the diversity and interest of their plant and animal life." These were: (1) Floodplain of the Millstone River, (2) Bear swamp, (3) McGetrick Lane woods, (4) Press woods, (5) Rabbit Hill woods, (6) Indian Run woods, (7) Little Bear Brook floodplain, (8) Bridegroom Run woods, (9) Acme, Aversano, and Huebler woods, (10) Grovers Mill woods, (11) Big Bear Brook delta, and (12) Meadowbrook Road woods.

Continued on p. 3

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

On Columbus Day, I visited the Philadelphia Zoo. Besides noticing that the elephants were still there and three tiger cubs were now on display, my attention was drawn to small billboards strategically placed, but of special note, in the PECO Primate House. These placards suggested that visitors ask themselves how their political candidates of choice would vote on conservation issues. The notices did not name specific candidates, but simply asked visitors to pause for a moment and realize how significant each individual vote really is.

On behalf of FOWWOS, I would like to present a similar ad. On November 6 you will be asked to cast a vote on Public Question No. 3, which deals with funding the Green Acres, Farmland, Blue Acres and Historic Preservation Bond Act of 2007. This act authorizes the state to bond \$200 million to keep the funding for our open space, farmland, and historic preservation programs viable for another year and to initiate the Blue Acres program to purchase flood-prone areas. Without Green Acres, West Windsor's open space program would not have been nearly so successful. To help you make an informed decision before you vote, please visit HYPERLINK "<http://www.NJKeepitGreen.org>" www.NJKeepitGreen.org or other trustworthy source. ☺

Preserving the Greenbelt, cont.

Most of these have remained undeveloped, many of them preserved as open space. However, the Little Bear Brook floodplain is only partially preserved, containing the Windsor Haven housing and several nearby office buildings. The upland Rabbit Hill woods, in 1977 containing "a number of American chestnuts of outstanding size" is now almost all absorbed in the Windsor Ridge development off Lanwin Boulevard. Of three upland woods in the Princeton Junction area, the Acme woods are preserved per the planning board approval for the shopping center, and the Aversano woods are owned by the township; the Huebler woods, once at the foot of the Alexander Road Bridge, are gone.

Of course, as well as these crucial areas, other greenbelt corridors have been eaten away by development, but on the whole, West Windsor hasn't done too badly in the last thirty years. We hope that in the next thirty years, stronger and more sophisticated laws protecting the environment will make it easier for communities to keep development away from green areas and green corridors—an endeavor at which West Windsor was a pioneer. ☺

The Truth about Open Space, cont.

As a nonprofit organization, FOWWOS is eligible to receive grants from the state, other private organizations, and individuals. Grants to FOWWOS can be used only to help fund the preservation and improvement of open space properties. Examples of this use are the Rogers Preserve and the hiking trails in the Millstone River Preserve. The 9/11 Memorial at the Ron Rogers Arboretum was financed in part by in-kind contributions, and in part by developers who contributed to FOWWOS and thus qualified for a tax break. In addition, FOWWOS has arranged for the assistance of other nonprofit organizations, such as the Delaware and Raritan Greenway, to support specific West Windsor preservation projects that also benefit the entire central New Jersey region.

In its role of assisting the township, FOWWOS has also, through individual board members, often participated on municipal committees and task forces charged with recommending specific properties to be preserved, and developing plans for utilization of open space once it is purchased. West Windsor has a list of 99 properties approved as suitable for preservation by the state—and therefore eligible to receive state grants to help fund their purchase. Of these, 42 have already been preserved, some by fee-simple purchase and others by purchase of development rights only. Although many of the remaining 57 are of relatively small size, the development potential of their additional thousand acres should not be ignored.

Obviously, a property that is mostly wetlands or has other severe environmental constraints is unlikely to be developed, even if it is not preserved; nevertheless, we have seen cases where landowners have found resourceful ways of removing such constraints and making at least a portion of their land suitable for residential development. It is important to continue to monitor the remaining properties on the acquisition list and to be prepared to act to preserve those that become available.

In some communities that preserve open space, land trusts play an active role. Land trusts are organizations that not only purchase land for preservation, but own and manage the land as well. FOWWOS is not a land trust; we do not own land, but instead, we help the township purchase, develop, and manage land that is thereby preserved from development.

Mercer County's purchase of land in West Windsor for Mercer County Park in the 1970s showed residents the value of preserving open

Continued on p. 4

The Truth about Open Space, cont.

space in the township, but the open space acquisition program really started becoming important in the 1990s after fifteen years of rapid development had more than doubled West Windsor's population. It was enthusiastically supported by citizens in three referenda, not just because of the tremendous tax savings, but because preserving open space preserves natural resources and quality of life. With so many towns "building out" to their capacity, it is nice to know that West Windsor will have forests, open fields, clean waterways and working farms far into the future. ☺

MILLER CHOSEN NEW 2ND VICE PRESIDENT

At its regular October meeting, the FOWWOS board chose Alison Miller to succeed Ken Carlson as 2nd vice president. Carlson stepped down from the position, but will remain on the FOWWOS board. ☺

PHOTOS ON PAGE 2

- Scene 1: More river than you thought we had in West Windsor. The peaceful stream is seen between the trunks of overhanging trees. (Location: The upper Millstone Trail: entrance opposite Joanne Street.
- Scene 2: Wildflowers, bushes, and, farther back, two sizable trees overlook a small stream, all visible from a West Windsor road. (Location: off Rabbit Hill Road, between Bennington Drive and Kinder Court.

**FORMER MEMBERS: PLEASE CONSIDER RENEWING YOUR MEMBERSHIP NOW
FOWWOS NEEDS YOU!**

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:

Individual	\$25	Benefactor	\$75
Family	\$40	Student/Senior	\$15
Sponsor	\$75		

Membership dues and contributions are fully tax deductible.

Printed on recycled paper

To:

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