

# THE FRIENDS OF WORCESTER

P.O. Box 545, Worcester, PA 19490  
www.friendsofworcester.org  
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Spring 2003



## Don't Build a Bigger Intersection!

Last year the supervisors appointed a Traffic Impact Fee Advisory Committee to develop recommendations for a traffic impact fee ordinance. This ordinance would impose a fee on new developments in our township in order to pay for future needed traffic improvements caused by these new developments. The committee looked at traffic studies for existing traffic and estimates of future traffic needs caused by expected growth over the next 10 years.

The committee has come up with a recommended impact fee based on these future needs. The idea is that by making improvements to the township's major roads, Valley Forge Road, Germantown Pike, and Skippack Pike, traffic will be deterred from using our back roads. The impact fee is tied to the specific improvements that are detailed in the plan.

Included in the recommendations are improvements to the intersection at Skippack Pike and Valley Forge Road which would increase the size of the intersection to five – yes, *five* – lanes in each direction. The proposal is based on *projected* traffic volumes in 10 years and includes two left-turn lanes, two through lanes, and one right-turn lane in all four directions, even though once cars get beyond the intersection, traffic will again be traveling in a single lane. Is it premature to commit to such a drastic widening of the central intersection of our township today? We think it is!

IF WE BUILD IT, THEY WILL COME! This is a well-understood phenomenon called "induced traffic." Building bigger roads *does* lead to greater traffic congestion and sprawl.

A copy of the Committee's report and recommendations should be available for residents to review at the township office by May 7. Changes to this plan can still be made *prior* to its adoption by the Supervisors. **This plan will be presented to the public at a meeting at 6:30 on Wednesday evening, May 21, 2003.** The plan will be presented to the supervisors for approval at their monthly meeting *the same night*. It is imperative that interested residents come to the public meeting to voice their concerns. Tell our Supervisors we don't need this huge intersection in our township.

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**ELECTION DAY is MAY 20. Support the future of Worcester.**

## Interview With John Harris, Worcester Township Open Space Coordinator

**FOW:** Last fall, the Supervisors put the open space program on hold. What's the current status?

**John Harris:** I'm happy to say that the open space program is now back in full swing, and I am working with our advisor and the Board of Supervisors to prioritize properties and pursue new funding sources.

**FOW:** What does the Open Space Coordinator do?

**John Harris:** This is a volunteer position, appointed by the township Supervisors. Since 1999, when I was appointed as Worcester's first Open Space Coordinator, I have been helping the township preserve open space, mainly by arranging for the purchase of the development rights to acreage that otherwise might fall prey to developers. In the past three years, Worcester has been successful in preserving about 220 acres, including the Markel property on Green Hill Road, the Gerstemeier property on Shearer Road, the Markley property on Mertrybrook Road, and my own property on Kriebel Mill Road.

**FOW:** Where does the money to buy these development rights come from?

**John Harris:** In each case so far, the purchase of development rights was funded primarily with state and county funds, with a smaller contribution coming from the township. The township has a fund earmarked for open space acquisitions. I've been successful in raising approxi-

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mately \$100,000 from private sources for this fund, which will help pay the township's share of future open space purchases.

**FOW:** *In 2001 you sold the development rights to 54 of your 60 acres. Why?*

**John Harris:** I have been promoting to other farmers and landowners the benefits of selling their development rights, and I believe it is a win-win situation. An appraisal is made of the property before and after the development rights are sold. The difference is paid to the landowner. The landowners keep 100 percent of their land, they don't lose any value, and they have the opportunity to make their "development rights" money work for them instead of being tied up in their property. The property can still appreciate in value or be sold by the landowner at a later time, **but it can never be sold for development.**

**FOW:** *What other methods can be used to control development in our township?*

**John Harris:** We are experiencing a lot of growth within our township, and our zoning codes are the means of controlling it. The Supervisors have the authority to modify these ordinances, and from time to time they do so in order to improve the results we get. Ordinances such as LPD/RPD (Land Preservation District and Rural Preservation District), for example, allow for a greater amount of open space than traditional zoning. Also, the work of the Planning Commission is of great value to the Supervisors. We need to use all of our resources.

**FOW:** *Where do you see the future of Worcester?*

**John Harris:** In 1971, I said to my wife Melanie, "We'll be very lucky if in 10 years this area looks as rural as it looks now." Thirty years later, much of the township does substantially look the way it did then. I feel obligated and committed to keeping Worcester as rural as possible, for as long as possible. We have been very fortunate to have supervisors who have been so vigilant in protecting our rural character.

**FOW:** *Tell us about yourself.*

**John Harris:** My wife Melanie and I have been married for 34 years. We have two daughters, Debbie, 23, and Caren, 21. We have lived in Worcester since

1971 on our 60-acre farm. Since 1979 we have operated a summer camp in Blue Bell for children ages 8 to 14. The camp was started by my parents in 1946. I enjoy skiing, tennis, squash and golfing, especially with the kids.

**FOW:** *You are running for township Supervisor now. Why?*

**John Harris:** I am very interested in what happens in Worcester, and I would like to make a contribution to the community. The next five to ten years will be critical for Worcester. Farmland is disappearing quickly. Builders are busy and will eventually develop everything that is not preserved unless we do something to protect it. My pet project has been preserving open space. We need to step up the pace a little bit on preserving open space. The window of opportunity is now. Remember, we spend only a small percentage of township money when we partner a purchase with the county and state. It's a fact that saving land saves the taxpayers money.

**FOW:** *What do you want to accomplish if you are elected?*

**John Harris:** There are many good things we can be doing. We need to improve communication between the supervisors and Worcester residents. As a businessman I've learned that interaction is very important. Residents do not always understand why decisions have been made. It is important to make sure that all residents have accurate information.

**FOW:** *Will you remain Open Space Coordinator if elected?*

**John Harris:** That is something that the Board of Supervisors would have to decide. 🤖

**Worcester Township Meetings  
Worcester Township Community Hall  
(1031 Valley Forge Rd, Fairview Village)**

Board of Supervisors – 7:30 p.m. Wednesdays, May 21, June 18, July 16, August 20

Zoning Hearing Board – 6:30 p.m. Tuesdays, May 27, June 24, July 22, August 26

Planning Commission – 7:30 p.m. Thursdays, May 22, June 5, June 26, July 3, July 24, August 7, August 28

(Intersection, continued from page 1)

The Worcester Planning Commission recently reviewed this proposal and decided that this mega-intersection is completely contrary to the Comprehensive Plan’s goal of preserving the rural character of the township. The Planning Commission felt that since this intersection is the center of the township, it is especially important to maintain its rural character as much as possible. The Commission felt that only minor improvements should be proposed, sufficient to address the current traffic needs. 🌳

## Worcester Republican Committee Endorses John Harris for Supervisor

by Arthur C. Bustard, Chairman - Worcester Republican Committee

The Worcester Township Republican Committee has endorsed John Harris for the position of Township Supervisor. The Committee members have recently reviewed the qualifications and comments of the various candidates interested in filling the position of our late supervisor John Graham. Mr. Graham was up for re-election to a six-year term this year.

John Harris has been a resident of Worcester for over 32 years and has worked hard at preserving the rural atmosphere of the Township as much as possible. The committee feels that John's record of community involvement is very impressive and his knowledge of the Township is encyclopedic. John was a member of the Planning Commission when the Township's Land Use plan was developed. The plan has been extremely useful to the township in planning and limiting future growth.

Currently working in a volunteer position as Open Space Coordinator for the Supervisors, John has been active in updating that land use plan and is intimately familiar with the pressure on the Township from developers. His insight into these problems, combined with his calm and reasoned manner, make him the clear choice for Supervisor. 🌳

*Editor’s Note: John Harris will be opposed on the Republican ticket in the May 20 primary election by Harris Gramm. No Democratic candidates have filed to be included on the ballot.*

## Saving Land Saves Money

In 2002 the Montgomery County Lands Trust published an excellent booklet on the financial impact of development and, more importantly, the protection of land from develop-

ment. It is called “Saving Land Saves Money.” The main point of the booklet might seem, at first, hard to believe. But once you read it, the point is obvious and clear -- it costs taxpayers less to buy the development rights to a tract of land than not to buy them and let the tract be developed.

No “creative” accounting is needed to understand this math. Every taxpayer knows that the biggest bite goes to school taxes, not to the township or the county. The average Worcester homeowner living on a 2-acre lot pays about \$4,000 each year to the school district. If that home has one child in public school, it costs the district about \$11,000 to educate him or her. The other \$7,000 is paid by the neighbors. If the market value of a 2-acre parcel in a larger tract is \$60,000 and the development rights can be bought for \$34,000, this means that a one-time investment of \$34,000 to prevent this lot from being developed would save the taxpayers \$7,000 per year, every year. **That’s \$34,000 once to save at least \$7,000 annually.** That’s better than a 20-percent return on the investment. And that family could have two (or three) kids in school, but the homeowner would still be paying the same \$4,000 in taxes, leaving \$18,000 (or even \$29,000) for their neighbors to pay every year.

Some would argue that once these children have graduated, the school would not need to pay for any students. But with today’s mobile society, the turnover rate in housing is, on average, about 7 years, so this home could have a new family with more school-age children every 7 years! So overall, residential development is responsible for a net loss in tax revenue. Everyone in the community pays for the increased costs of new residential development.


All this is before we consider the quality-of-life value to the community of preserving the open space, or the fact that funding is available from the state and county to pay most of the one-time cost of purchasing development rights. There are other factors, but you get the picture. Saving land really does save taxpayers money. 🌳

*Copies of “Saving Land Saves Money,” by Montgomery County Lands Trust, are available at the Worcester Township office.*

## Jack Graham Remembered

John (Jack) Graham, a township supervisor since 1987, passed away on February 12, 2003. Born in Lansdale, he moved to his wife's family farm on Valley Forge Road in 1961. He was known to many who traveled the road as the Pumpkin Man for his neat rows of pumpkins lined up for sale each fall. Many a strawberry was enjoyed in spring after being picked in his field.

As a township Supervisor from 1987 to 2003, he stood strong on preserving open space. Graham saw the future that development would bring – traffic, higher taxes, and the end of the agricultural nature of our township. During his tenure as Supervisor, the Worcester Township Comprehensive Plan was drafted by the township and consultants from Montgomery County. In an interview with FOW in 2000, Graham explained that the Plan determined legally where the township stood on future development. The Plan has stood up in municipal and state courts and has discouraged many developers. Graham said that his reward for this was personal. His family lived here, and it was a good place to live. He wanted to feel that he had done something to keep Worcester as the “green township.”

Jack Graham will be remembered and missed by everyone as a “class act,” always a gentleman, even-tempered and fair with all who crossed his path. Our condolences go to his family. 

## CVS -- They're Back Again

CVS and Summit Realty have submitted their third set of plans to the township in their quest to build a 14,800-square-foot pharmacy at the corner of Germantown Pike and Trooper Road. They have addressed some of the technical deficiencies pointed out by our township engineer in their earlier submissions, but their basic plan has not changed. They still want a variance from the Zoning Hearing Board for a building more than twice the permitted size for the lot. In addition, they are proposing two huge building signs (only one is permitted), nine traffic control signs, and 32 parking lot light fixtures. What's more, CVS wants to be open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week!

CVS's artist drew a picture of what the intersection might look like with their huge building across the street from the historic Norriton Presbyterian Church and the old tavern (now converted into office suites). The drawings they submitted are quite pretty – because their artist forgot to include the two huge, red-letter “CVS Pharmacy” signs that will be on the building, all the traffic control signs (STOP, DRIVE-THRU PHARMACY, DO NOT ENTER, PARKING), and 32 light poles – 12 feet tall -- in the parking lot and around the building's exterior. You can see these drawings,

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## **S U P P O R T** FRIENDS OF WORCESTER

FRIENDS OF WORCESTER is a non-profit organization made up of new and long time residents of the township. All involved residents share an appreciation for the rural quality of Worcester and share a common concern for its future. FOW seeks to influence that future. All funds received are used to support our efforts to preserve open space, maintain the rural lifestyle of the community and keep our neighbors informed through our minutes and newsletters. All Friends are involved on a strictly volunteer basis. Friends receive our monthly agenda and minutes as well as phone chain notification of important township events.

Supporter - \$20

Contributor - \$35

Benefactor - \$50 or more

**All residents, contributing or not, are always welcome at FOW monthly meetings.**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

You may include my name as a contributor in your newsletter.

**Please send your tax deductible contributions to:**

**FRIENDS OF WORCESTER  
P.O. BOX 545  
WORCESTER, PA 19490**

(CVS, continued from page 4)

with the addition of signs and lighting, on FOW's website ([www.friendsofworcester.org](http://www.friendsofworcester.org)). This will give you an idea of what that intersection might look like with all the additional clutter that CVS conveniently left out.

The increased traffic generated by such a huge store with two drive-through pharmacy lanes is also an issue. This intersection is already gridlocked during rush hours. A typical drug store of this size can generate over 1000 additional trips per day!

**Worcester residents have the right to demand adherence to the zoning requirements in our ordinances.** Contact your Supervisors and the Zoning Hearing Board (ZHB) and let them know that you expect them to protect our community from this kind of inappropriate development! To contact township officials, send a letter to the township office at 1721 Valley Forge Rd, Worcester PA 19490 or e-mail them at [worcester@worcestertwp.com](mailto:worcester@worcestertwp.com). Be ready to come out and oppose CVS at the ZHB meeting when CVS requests their zoning variances. ZHB meetings are held on the fourth Tuesday of each month. FOW will activate our phone chain and e-mail notification to advise FOW members and everyone who has signed the FOW petition when the CVS proposal is on the agenda. Coming to this meeting *in person* is the only real way to stop the CVS proposal at this location.

To secure long-term protection for this sensitive historic and scenic corner, we need our township supervisors to change the zoning for this intersection from Commercial to Village Commercial, which can have much tighter visual, scenic, cultural, and historic controls. Upgrading the zoning code now may be the only real way to ensure future *compatible* commercial development at this location.

Click on the CVS button on FOW's web site, ([www.friendsofworcester.org](http://www.friendsofworcester.org)) to see how many Worcester residents and neighbors have already signed our on-line petition against CVS. If you haven't signed it yet, join us! Here are some recent comments from people who signed the petition:

- There seem to be no good reasons to al-

low variances for the construction of such a large building.

- We don't need it! We don't want it!
- It would be a crime to build a modern retail structure in an area that is both historic and charming!
- We need to preserve the historic value of this landscape. NO MORE NEON!
- Build it, and I will NEVER use it. 🤖

### FRIENDS OF WORCESTER OFFICERS

Kim David - President (610/584-1805)  
 Michael Simeone - Vice President (610/584-2075)  
 Wini Hayes - Treasurer (610/584-0371)  
 Barbara McMonagle - Secretary (215/699-8225)  
 Mary Leister - Recording Secretary (610/584-5129)

### Join us at these upcoming meetings and events WE WELCOME YOUR SUPPORT

May 19	7:30PM	Jenna & Steve Alpher 3026 Stump Hall Road 610-584-3337
June 7	8:00AM	<b>Farmers Union Horse Show &amp; FOW Flea Market</b> Heyser Field (behind Worcester Township Community Hall) Call 610-489-7904 for info
June 17	7:30PM	Jeannie & George Steigerwalt 1028 Grange Avenue 610-489-7904
Sept. 6	3:00PM	<b>Annual FOW Family Picnic</b> Rob & Wini Hayes 3033 Fisher Rd 610-584-0371

**RANDY JASKOWIAK** — We extend our condolences to the family of “Randy” Jaskowiak, who passed away suddenly on March 20, 2003. Randy and her husband Mike have been long-time active members of Friends of Worcester. She will be truly missed.

### REMEMBER: Election Day is May 20.

Worcester will elect a new supervisor. Come out and vote for the future of Worcester Township.

Attention Methacton High School Students!



**Friends of Worcester  
PHOTO CONTEST**

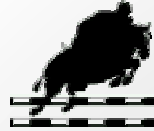
**Theme: Worcester Township's  
Historic and Rural Roots**

*All Entries will be on display at the  
**FARMERS UNION HORSE SHOW and  
FOW FLEA MARKET***

*at  
Worcester Community Hall  
Valley Forge Road, Fairview Village  
**Saturday, June 7, 2003***

**Winners will be announced at noon  
CASH AND GIFT PRIZES**

*See Mr. Bosler at MHS for details or go to  
[www.friendsofworcester.org](http://www.friendsofworcester.org)*



**FLEA MARKET & RAFFLE  
Friends of Worcester &  
63rd Farmers Union  
Horse Show**

**June 7, 2003 — 8 am to 4 pm**

COME JOIN US!

*Over Twenty Different Raffles  
Each Item or Service Donated by Local Businesses*

AT HEYSER FIELD (BEHIND WORCESTER  
TOWNSHIP COMMUNITY HALL, VALLEY  
FORGE RD, FAIRVIEW VILLAGE)

**SPACE AVAILABLE: \$15.00 — CONTACT  
MARIE AMATO 610-630-0254**

**HORSE SHOW PRIZE LIST & INFO -- CONTACT  
JULIE MILLER 610-584-1448**

**\* \* \* VOLUNTEERS NEEDED \* \* \***

FOW will be running the food booth at the Farmers' Union Horse Show on June 7. Volunteers are needed. If you can bake or give us a hand, contact Marie Amato at 610-630-0254 for more information. Join us in making this year a success.

FRIENDS OF WORCESTER  
P.O. BOX 545  
WORCESTER, PA 19490

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