

Present: Kim David, Rob Hayes, Charley Muir, Doug Rotondo, Jeannie Steigerwalt, Dave Cardy, Barb McMonagle, Susan Caughlan

The minutes of the September meeting were approved as written and will be posted on the FOW website, www.friendsofworcester.org

President's Report. Kim reported that he is looking forward to the new meeting format, which is intended to improve the efficiency of our meetings. He emphasized the importance of making open space an important issue to township residents even when the problem is not right in their backyard. The group should focus on our mission, use the newsletter to keep issues in front of residents, develop our outreach, and promote FOW's accomplishments.

We discussed whether FOW should have any visibility at the polls next month. The group considered whether the brochure could and should be prepared in time for distribution on Nov. 2. We decided that this was too short a time horizon for something as important as the brochure. Instead, we will focus on promoting residents' attendance at the township Open Space Committee's public meeting on Nov. 9. Volunteers were solicited to hand out flyers at each polling location. Susan will have the flyers copied and delivered.

Kim distributed a list of committee coordinators and supporters. The standing committees are: Membership (Barb McMonagle); Fundraising/Hospitality (Marie Amato); Township Reports (Rob Hayes); Newsletter (Charley Muir); and Outreach (Wini Hayes). When the coordinator is not present at a meeting, one of the supporting committee members will give the committee report.

Membership. We continue to receive contributions and add new names to the database.

Fundraising/Hospitality. Jeannie suggested that we approach local companies for contributions after the first of the year, when their annual budget for support of local organizations has been set. She will draft a letter to present at the November meeting.

Township Reports.

Supervisors. There was nothing reportably noteworthy that occurred at the supervisors' Sept. 15 meeting.

Planning Commission. The Sept. 23 meeting was cancelled. PC member Beth Sterns has notified the supervisors that she will resign her position at the end of 2004. PC members have been asked by the supervisors to serve on the township's newly created Growing Greener Committee. Additional committee members are supervisor John Harris and township Open Space Coordinator Susan Caughlan. This committee will work with Natural Lands Trust under a grant to revise the township's land development ordinances. The committee will meet on the first Thursday of every month.

Zoning Board. There was no ZHB meeting report

Newsletter. Charley reported that the newsletter should be ready to go to the printer at the end of this week. We will organize a time to do the labels as soon as we know when the copies are expected back.

For this issue, we do not have quite enough ads to pay the complete cost of printing and mailing. We discussed ways to address this. Kim suggested that we solicit ads for the newsletter once a year to cover all of our issues. Charley noted that this is difficult if we do not know the projected dates of publication, since advertisers will want to know this information. It was suggested that we come up with a list of proposed sponsoring businesses for the newsletter. We should then approach them with the brochure and a sample newsletter.

Outreach. We need to focus on encouraging residents to be involved in FOW's proactive issues, not just when the township is faced with an inappropriate development plan. Suggestions for public outreach meetings were: speakers; booths with local organizations. Possible topics: water issues (flooding, wells, overbuilding). Target date is Feb or March.

Dave circulated a draft of the brochure that was very impressive. Additional photos are needed – Susan will work on this. We need to add the “saving land saves money” theme to the text. Under “We can achieve,” we will add “Holding down tax increases.” A rough cost estimate was \$1000 for 500 copies in full color. The group agreed to commit \$1000 to the brochure. Dave will bring another mockup to the November meeting, with better photos and text as revised above.

Website. The photo contest winners are now posted, and Dave will add our revised mission statement.

Current issues.

Greenway. The supervisors have elected not to apply this fall for a grant from DCNR to construct the trail segment from Evansburg State Park to Heebner Park. They are considering designing and building this segment in house, using our township engineer and maintenance crew.

Turnpike Widening. The turnpike widening (Norristown to Lansdale) is in the design phase. It was suggested that we should work on getting noise barriers constructed, since the expanded turnpike will be even noisier than it is now. Several people volunteered to bring up the subject with the supervisors and with John Fichter.

Open Space. Susan reported that the county Farm Board has made offers to four farm owners in the county to buy the development rights to their farms. Two of the farms are in Franconia Township, which enacted a 0.25% earned income tax in 2002 to preserve open space. As a result, Franconia has money to spend on preserving open space, and they did this by contributing approximately 33% (over \$1M) of the purchase price for one farm and 23% for the other farm. This is a substantial increase over the township percentage in past transactions. Worcester was the first township to offer to contribute a portion of the cost of acquiring the development rights under the farm program, but our contribution was considerably smaller. Franconia has changed the landscape by agreeing to contribute a substantial portion of the purchase price.

Dubner. The proposed small commercial village development on this site appears to have been abandoned.

Thompson-Scott. Nothing to report.

New Issues. Doug asked how we can become more aware of land that is under threat of development. Susan mentioned two small parcels – 12 acres FSBO on Skippack Pike in Center Point and a sign on Valley Forge Rd advertising horse stables for rent. Friends of Lower Providence has advised us that the 2.85-acre parcel at the corner of Grange Ave and Germantown Pike, which is in both Worcester and Lower Prov townships, is for sale. It is being marketed as a possible 50-unit senior/retirement complex. The current Lower Prov zoning (highway commercial) would allow this, but the Worcester zoning (agricultural) would not. The historic houses at this intersection are either listed or eligible for listing on the National Register, and this is the gateway to Evansburg Park. FLP is concerned that inappropriate development on these corners would destroy the remaining historic context of this area. Susan will make sure the supervisors are aware of this situation.

FOW meeting dates: November 11 (Thursday), 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. at Bean Road Nursery, Bean & Whitehall Rds.

FOW Holiday Party: December 30 (Thursday), 5 to 9 p.m., home of Wini & Rob Hayes, 3033 Fisher Rd. Potluck; families welcome. RSVP by Dec 26.