

## **Friends of Worcester Meeting Minutes**

### **Wednesday, November 11, 2009, Meadowood Board Room**

**Review of Minutes.** The minutes of the October meeting were discussed and approved as written. They will be posted to the website.

#### **Roundtable Discussion with Jake Lea of Montgomery County Lands Trust**

President Kim David welcomed Jake Lea, Director of Land Preservation with Montgomery County Lands Trust. Jake began by reviewing the history of MCLT, which was formed in 1993, at the same time that the first county-wide open space funding initiative was begun by the Commissioners. The county saw the need for a private organization that could work well with landowners and government agencies to coordinate land preservation in Montgomery County. From a small organization, MCLT has grown into a well-respected land trust that not only puts together land preservation projects and holds easements, but also educates municipal officials and county residents on the value of open space preservation and the wide range of techniques available to accomplish that goal.

Jake was asked about the status of the county's current open space spending relative to the bond issue that was approved in 2003. He discussed the Commissioners' recent decision to approve another \$35M bond. Over half of this money will go to repay other county accounts from which open space funds were borrowed. The remainder will be used to fund projects that are now in the pipeline, as well as municipal grant projects, county trails, agricultural preservation, and re-greening projects. The message from the Commissioners was that in the current challenging economic times, land preservation initiatives may need to proceed at a slower pace.

Jake noted that although county, state, and municipal funding has slowed down, donations of conservation easements and conservation properties are always accepted. Landowners who donate property or an easement will also incur expenses for the survey, title work, legal fees, and stewardship contribution to the organization holding the easement. In some cases, grants are available to help defray these costs. Treasurer Wini Hayes suggested that FOW could raise money for a grant to fund stewardship contributions. She asked whether a check-off box on our county and local tax forms could be used to generate funds to be held and administered by the county and Worcester Township, respectively, to be used for open space preservation.

Other techniques to preserve open space were also discussed, in particular TDRs (transferable development rights). Jake explained the concept of severing the development rights from land in a designated "sending district" and transferring these rights, at market value, to property approved for increased development in a designated "receiving district" in the same or another municipality. A municipality can use TDRs by creating an ordinance that provides a process for certifying the number of TDRs on a sending property and permitting the number of TDRs allowed to be added to a receiving property. Municipalities in Lancaster and Berks Counties use TDRs, but Worcester is the only municipality in Montgomery County to have even a limited TDR program. Worcester's ordinance allows transfers only among properties owned by the same entity. MCLT recently produced a video and a report on TDRs which can be viewed on their website, [mclt.org](http://mclt.org).

A discussion of federal support for land preservation revealed that the income tax deduction that is scheduled to expire at the end of 2009 is likely to be renewed and made permanent, with much support in both houses of Congress. Federal funds are sometimes available through various programs, and Jake indicated that he is checking into these to see whether recent revisions to the program guidelines have made more funds available for projects in Montgomery County.

Jake was asked what role EACs (Environmental Advisory Councils) can play in land preservation. He noted that although EACs are numerous in Berks, Bucks, and Chester Counties, relatively few Montgomery County municipalities use them. EACs are formed by the local governing body and are advisory in nature. Their role can be varied, according to the municipality's need. Once again, interested members were encouraged to learn more about EACs by visiting the Pennsylvania Environmental Council's EAC Network website at [eacnetwork.org](http://eacnetwork.org).

Discussion turned to land preservation in Worcester. Jake mentioned the efforts of the late Peter Schlotterer, one of the earliest advocates of preserving open space in Worcester. Peter is notable for having preserved not only his own property but the farm of his next door neighbors.

### **Executive Committee Reports.**

**President's Report.** President Kim David reported that he recently attended MCLT's Green Futures Achievement Awards ceremony, at which Worcester was honored several years ago.

Kim noted that FOW will be looking for another independent contractor to provide administrative services beginning in January 2010. Interested providers are asked to contact Kim at [info@friendsofworchester.org](mailto:info@friendsofworchester.org).

**Treasurer's Report.** Treasurer Wini Hayes reported that income to date has kept pace with expenses, but overall income is down a bit from 2008, as expected. Dave Cardy suggested that we accept contributions via Paypal on our website and volunteered to look into how this can be done. Secretary Barb McMonagle reported that income and expenses for the year are on track relative to our 2009 budget.

### **Current Issues.**

**Environmental Advisory Council.** This topic was covered in the roundtable discussion with Jake Lea of MCLT. It was decided that before FOW sends a letter to the Supervisors recommending that they consider forming an EAC, more discussion should take place regarding the possible role of an EAC in Worcester.

### **Township Reports.**

**Board of Supervisors** Maeve Vogan reported that the Board of Supervisors approved the preliminary plans for land development on the Kibblehouse farm on Berks and Weber Roads. The approval included waivers of some land development ordinance requirements as well as the agreement of the developer and owner to deed-restrict all lots from further subdivision. The Board also approved the Rieger property for acceptance into the Worcester Agricultural Security Area.

**Planning Commission** The Planning Commission is continuing its discussion of village planning. They will present a powerpoint on village planning to the Board at the next Joint Meeting.

**Zoning Hearing Board** No report. At Kim David's request, Maeve Vogan agreed to report on ZHB matters as they are reported at the BOS meetings, until a volunteer can be found to attend ZHB meetings.

**Joint Meeting.** The next Joint Meeting is scheduled for Monday, December 7.

**Open Space Committee.** Kim David reviewed the three subcommittees under Open Space -- the Land Preservation Committee (headed by Barb McMonagle), the Village Plan Committee (which needs someone to lead it), and the Worcester Land Preservation Fund Committee (led by Rob Hayes). Al Cucé volunteered to assist Barb on the Land Preservation Committee. Al is an excellent choice, as his family is currently working to preserve their farm through the state/county Agricultural Land Preservation Program.

**Education & Outreach Committee.** Committee Chair Jen Strouse is resigning as chair but will still lead the Community Activities and Programs Committee. A new Education & Outreach Committee chair is being sought.

**Community Activities & Programs Committee.** The committee has organized a road cleanup event for part of Skippack Pike on Saturday, November 14. The event is advertised on the website and in the recent newsletter. The next committee event, which was scheduled for February, has been tabled.

Ciro Tornambé reported on a project by the Worcester Elementary School's Environmental Club for which he wrote and received a grant to plant 40 trees along the small creek behind the school. Meadowood is partnering with the school to help plant the trees, which are being purchased from Worcester's Cedar Ridge Nurseries. FOW donated funds to purchase two additional trees for the project. We will feature this project in our spring 2010 newsletter.

**Newsletter.** Susan Caughlan will be stepping down as chair of the Newsletter Committee, and another volunteer is needed to fill this position. The committee's responsibilities are to develop a theme for the year's two newsletters, and brainstorm, assign, and edit articles. The chair's main responsibility is to keep the newsletter production on schedule.

**Website.** Dave Cardy volunteered to work with the Education & Outreach Committee on content and postings for the website.

**Organizational Advancement & Growth Committee.** This committee includes subcommittees on recruitment of active members, membership development, and operational fundraising (which includes contributors, newsletter ads and sponsorships, and sale of merchandise). A chair for the committee and each subcommittee is being sought.

**FOW 2009 - 2010 meetings and events:**

- *Wednesday, January 13, location to be announced*
- *Wednesday, February 10, location to be announced*
- *Wednesday, March 10, location to be announced*

Meetings begin at 7:30 p.m.

- Holiday Potluck -- Monday, December 28, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. at the home of Rob and Wini Hayes, RSVP to 610-584-0371 or [info@friendsofworchester.org](mailto:info@friendsofworchester.org)

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Caughlan