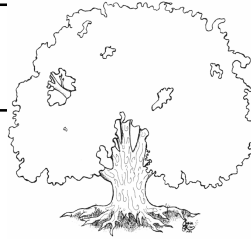


THE FRIENDS OF WORCESTER

P.O. Box 545, Worcester, PA 19490
www.friendsforworcester.org
email: info@friendsforworcester.org

Spring 2009



Message from the President

Worcester Township is fortunate to have residents who value open space and who are committed to maintaining the scenic beauty and rural agricultural heritage of our community. A long line of supervisors have served our township by keeping Worcester green. They have been joined by certain residents who appreciate the uniqueness of our community and have stepped up to express their values through actions.

These property owners chose to preserve their land using a variety of strategies. Since 2000, seven farm owners in Worcester have been able to preserve over 275 acres of working farmland through the state/county Farmland Preservation Program. These farms are as diverse as feed crops, cattle, horses, and Montgomery County's first certified organic produce farm.

Two other landowners partnered with local land trusts to sell their development rights through the county's Open Space Program, preserving over 100 acres. In other cases, residents have chosen to donate a conservation easement and take advantage of tax deductions. One resident donated a conservation easement to a land trust through his will, preserving 103 acres forever.

These land preservation projects were actively supported by Worcester Township, which often worked to bring various organizations together, and in some cases contributed the funding necessary to match state and county grant money. The township currently provides funds to help with transaction costs for residents who wish to donate a conservation easement to preserve their land.

These land preservation activities have benefited all residents of Worcester Township, as well as the individual families who have preserved their land. An additional 300+ acres are in the process of being preserved using the strategies described here.

Each of these landowners has given the Worcester community a gift that benefits us now, and for generations to come. We thank each of them for helping to keep our community green, and we encourage other landowners to explore the opportunity to preserve their land as a legacy for the future. 🌳

Once it's gone, it's gone forever!

Saving Land Saves Money -- The Next Level

Open Space Preservation Is Where It Starts

Frank D'Lauro gave an enormous gift to Worcester in 2008 by making a bequest in his will which preserves his Long Lane Farm on Valley Forge Road as open space forever. Sixty acres of fields, meadows, and woodland are owned and managed as a preserve by the Natural Lands Trust. This land will be for all of the public to enjoy, including trails through the meadows. The remaining 43 acres are privately owned and are permanently preserved with a conservation easement held by Montgomery County Lands Trust.

Mr. D'Lauro was the longtime chairman of Worcester's Planning Commission and a constant advocate for the preservation of open space. Thanks to his generosity, Worcester's residents are assured that the spectacular view looking west from Valley Forge Road over his farm will be ours forever.

A bequest in a will is one more way that landowners can make sure that the land they love will be kept as they intend, forever. In the case of Frank D'Lauro's land, the preservation cost Worcester Township nothing, and the property will be maintained by the land trust and the private property owners. The Frank D'Lauro Preserve will be open to the public for recreational use, providing residents with an opportunity to enjoy meadows and woods, as well as offering future trail connections to other points in the township. Although this project cost the township nothing, every resident will realize a tax savings, every year, because of the homes that will never be built on Mr. D'Lauro's property.

In the past several years, over 300 acres have been permanently preserved in Worcester -- almost 190 acres through the state/county farmland preservation program, and almost 120 acres by private donation. Another 81 acres

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have been approved for preservation by the township and are awaiting matching funds from the Montgomery County Open Space program.

Although some have criticized our Board of Supervisors for spending any money at all to preserve open space, this is an issue that is as important to many Worcester residents as more mundane township matters such as maintaining our roads and mowing our recreational fields. In 2003, Worcester voters supported the 2003 Montgomery County Open Space referendum by one of the highest percentages in the county (over 80%). In 2008, even amid the financial downturn, six municipalities in southeastern Pennsylvania passed referenda authorizing the expenditure of \$108 million for open space preservation. Clearly, open space is important in Pennsylvania.

Why such overwhelming support for open space? Why should we pay private landowners not to sell their land to developers? The benefits of maintaining productive farmland and beautiful scenic views might be enough, but the real payback comes from the municipal services that will never need to be paid by Worcester Township's taxpayers for this land.

What do we mean? When farm fields are bulldozed into housing developments, those new homes require more services from the township -- more road maintenance, more ballfields, more township staff to manage the increased number of households, and most significant of all, more classrooms to educate the children who live in those homes. According to data collected by Pennsylvania Department of Education and the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, every new 4-bedroom house built in Worcester adds an average of 1.5 students to our school system, and every new 5-bedroom house adds an average of 2 new students.

Every time 16 new 4-bedroom houses are built in Worcester, another classroom is needed to handle the 24 new school students! Existing facilities can become squeezed until music and art are relegated to the hallways. Regardless of whether these new homes pay enough in annual property taxes to offset the cost of educating the additional students, a continued increase in the number of students in our schools means that we will continue to need to build more schools. A new school costs the district's taxpayers tens of millions of dollars for the construction phase alone. Once a new school is open, it costs taxpayers additional millions of dollars every year in salaries, benefits, facilities maintenance, and utilities.

Communities that have looked at the cost of community services have found that residential development always costs more than it pays in taxes -- about \$1.17 in services for every \$1.00 paid in taxes. For a new 4-bedroom home in Worcester paying \$7000 in property taxes, the cost of services for that home comes to \$8190. For a new 4-bedroom home in Worcester paying \$12,000 in taxes,

the cost of services for that home is \$14,040, every year. This shortfall of \$1000 to \$2000 on each new home translates to higher tax bills for every resident.

Avoiding the increases in school taxes which come with new home construction is the best economic argument for preserving land. In addition, the absence of endless streets of suburban development and strip malls distinguishes Worcester from surrounding communities that have succumbed to the myth that more development will improve their tax base. Today those communities have school taxes as high or higher than Worcester's. Their roads are lined with strip malls and housing developments, rather than farms and open fields. Their pursuit of a better tax base has brought no improvement in property taxes or in quality of life.

It's just a fact of development that new homes cost taxpayers more than they pay in taxes. However, we cannot prevent new homes from being built -- it's a landowners choice whether or not to sell to developers. There is not enough money to preserve all the land that's available. So what's the answer?

We can do two things -- we can make it as desirable for landowners to sell development credits as to sell their land to developers, and we can encourage a reasonable amount of commercial and office development to complement our residential tax base.

Development Credits Are the Next Step

When large landowners decide what to do with their property, they may feel that their options are limited if they are not financially able to donate a conservation easement on their land. They can sell to a developer, or they can try to find a program that will purchase the development rights to their land.

The state and county programs to preserve farmland and open space are excellent choices for those whose land meets the qualifications for these programs. But what about the remaining landowners? If they prefer not to sell their land to a developer, how can they arrange to sell their development rights?

Municipalities around the country have grappled with this issue and have developed a solution -- allow someone else to buy the development rights and build those homes somewhere else. If a land trust or municipality can buy the development rights on a tract of land and ensure its preservation, why can't a builder buy the development rights and do the same thing? The only difference is that the builder takes those development rights and adds them to another tract of land that is more suitable for development. The original piece of land is still permanently preserved, and the homes that would have been built there are built on a different piece of land.

This "transfer of development rights" does not address the issue of residential development affecting school

taxes, but it does give landowners another option to preserve their land and prevent suburban sprawl from overtaking our farmland and woods.

Why does it make sense to concentrate more homes on one piece of land? If that land is in a village, where homes are expected to be on smaller lots, with their value increased by their proximity to a village green, local park, and attractive shopping and dining options, more homes make good economic sense.

Under current zoning, perhaps 4 or 5 homes could be built on an 8-acre lot in a village. Allowing a larger number of gracious homes to be built on the same amount of land is a better result for the community if the builder purchases the “development credits” to build the additional homes from a landowner whose property is then permanently preserved. The landowner receives money in exchange for the development credits, the builder increases its profits by building more homes on the same amount of land, and the community preserves additional land at zero cost to the taxpayers.

Grow Our Villages, Grow Our Future

Transferring development credits from our farmland to our villages helps preserve our working farms and scenic views, but there is still the issue of the tax base -- every new home that is built will cost Worcester taxpayers more than it pays in taxes, every year. What’s the best way to address this problem?

More residential development is not the answer. Instead, many municipalities have looked to commercial development to relieve the tax burden caused by too many homes. Commercial development can cost significantly less in services for every dollar it pays in taxes. However, be careful what you wish for -- too many municipalities have opened the door to commercial development and ended up with big box blight and strip malls lining their roads.



Growth in our villages must be managed carefully, with ordinances that allow the development of buildings that are the right scale for a village, and which include sidewalks, street trees, convenient parking, and other amenities that encourage visitors and residents to spend time — and money. Successful businesses can help build our tax

base to offset the cost of residential development and slow the rise of school taxes.

Businesses want to know that there is a sufficient local customer base -- this is why transferring development credits to our villages makes sense. Residents want to live in villages with attractive shops and restaurants -- this is why village-scale business development makes sense. A concentration of residential and business development in Fairview Village, Center Point, and Cedars will make these villages attractive places to visit, live, work, and shop. With careful planning, our villages can once again be centers of work and social life in our community. 🌍

Meet a Land Trust — The Conservancy of Montgomery County

By Mary Lou McFarland, Director, CMC

The Conservancy of Montgomery County considers Worcester Township a gem in the middle of Montgomery County. Filled with fabulous open spaces and historic resources, you stand out in the crowd amidst so many municipalities in our region which have become generic clones characterized by chain stores, strip shopping centers, and housing developments. Keeping Worcester’s unique, timeless, and viable character intact will continue to be a challenge, but it is not insurmountable.

The Conservancy was formed in 1990 as a 501(c)(3) non-profit membership organization to promote the preservation of both open space *and* historic resources throughout the county. Our Board of Directors is a working board, meeting six times per year. Each member contributes expertise in various fields, including land and historic preservation, marketing, accounting, land use and environmental law, computers, and website design. They are a dedicated group that operates with the utmost integrity in all aspects of our work.

At CMC, we work in various ways to help plan for and make preservation happen. At the municipal level, we encourage communities to undertake historic resource



Historic pioneer house preserved on Cold Spring Farm in Worcester.

surveys to inventory and document their resources. They can then consider various tools that can be implemented to protect these resources, such as enacting a preservation ordinance and creating incentives in their zoning codes.

For the private sector, our priority is to hold conservation and façade easements to preserve not only open space but also historic resources. We presently hold 11 easements totaling over 128 acres in East Norriton, Salford, Upper Dublin, Upper Hanover, Whitemarsh, and Worcester. Since many open spaces also include historic resources, we feel that this is an extremely important aspect in the significance of a property. Most of our easements specify, either through a façade easement or within the conservation easement document, that the historic resources on the property must be preserved in perpetuity.

We work with each property owner to design the easement to meet their desires. We evaluate each prospective property to insure that it qualifies under IRS rules if a tax deduction is sought. We also require that a donation be made to our Easement Stewardship Fund to help with annual monitoring and legal defense in the event of a violation.

If you care about the preservation of your open space and historic resources, it is important to think about the future and what you can do now to plan for and insure that your property is preserved for future generations to enjoy. Don't assume that the next owner will care about your property as much as you do, even if they tell you that they will. We have witnessed many cases in which owners or former owners are shocked to learn that someone would subdivide their meadow or woodlands or demolish the wonderful historic house and barn that they cared for over the years. This can happen all too often, unless there are provisions put in place to prevent these actions from occurring.

Please contact CMC if you have any questions about how we can help you preserve your land and historic resources. You can call us at 215-283-0383 or email us at cmcpreserve@hotmail.com. You can find more detailed information about conservation easements and preserving historic resources on our website at www.conservemontco.org.

Reclaiming Worcester's Forgotten Open Spaces

Worcester has enjoyed great success over the past dozen years in preserving open space, including farmland. Yet the total acreage of open land in our township has been steadily declining.

Open land in a development is typically relegated to drainage basins or artificial street buffers, or is merely kept as mowed grass, as if it were a giant front lawn. These often overlooked pockets of ground hold promising potential to restore some of the lost open spaces in our township.

There are several uses for the areas of open space that are found in newer developments. These areas are usually owned by homeowners' associations (HOAs), which pay to have them maintained. Imagine, instead of the HOA paying to have several acres of grass cut weekly from April to November, if this land were planted in native trees and shrubs, or even fruit trees.



A 50-acre apple orchard is planted in the common open space in this residential development in Kennett Township, Chester County. In spring, the residents look out their windows to a sea of apple blossoms.

If the area is large enough, it could also be leased to a local farmer. Growing crops on this land would enhance the aesthetic surroundings and eliminate the need for the HOA to pay to maintain this area. In a time when threats to our food supplies are all too commonplace, what better way to have safe, fresh, locally grown food (in addition to buying direct from our area farm markets)? Some of the land could also be used for community gardens, allowing residents to grow their own food.

The National Wildlife Federation's Certified Wildlife Habitat program is a place to start for more information on creating a naturalized habitat in community-owned areas. Naturalized plantings reduce stormwater runoff and lessen the potential for flooding. Naturalized stormwater basins allow rainwater to infiltrate back into the ground, recharging the aquifers that supply our drinking water. Reclaiming these forgotten open spaces provides neighborhood residents with another option to enhance the beauty and utility of their community-owned land.

New!

**Friends of Worcester's website
now includes a
Community Events column**

**Please visit often to see what's
going on in your community.**

**We will list events of community interest which
are open to the public. Please send your
listing to info@friendsofworcester.org**

Eyes on the Issues



FOW continues to keep an eye on the issues in the township which can affect open space and our rural heritage. Many of these issues are updated regularly on our website, friendsofworcester.org. Proposals for most subdivisions and land development activities (both commercial and residential) are shown on the “Township Maps” page of our website.

Pennsylvania Turnpike Expansion

Proposal: Widen the 10.5-mile section of the Northeast Extension between Lansdale and the Mid-County Interchange from four to six lanes, plus a 26-foot median strip.

Last September the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission released a revised design plan for the project which reflected additional sound barriers and fewer property takings. The new design also noted that the project has been divided into two sections. The southern section includes a large number of the affected properties in Worcester, from North Wales Road to Berks Road. This section will be addressed first.

A noise study commissioned by the turnpike last year recommended noise barriers in Worcester from North Wales Road as far north as the last house on Crestline Drive in Sunnybrook. Barriers were not recommended for the remainder of the homes in Worcester along the turnpike. Friends of Worcester continues to work with affected residents and local, state, and turnpike officials to extend the noise barriers further along the turnpike in Worcester. This spring the turnpike began working with the residents who will be affected by noise barriers on their properties on more specific details.

Worcester residents in the Bethel Road area have also been working with the turnpike’s engineering firm to decrease the size and number of stormwater basins proposed for this section of the turnpike. A site walk produced some alternative configurations that are now under discussion with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, which must issue the final approval for the design.

PECO Generating Substation

Proposal: Build an electricity routing substation, including two “ring buses” (a rectangular cluster of poles 20 to 30 feet high), three transformers (three-sided enclosures with approximately 30-foot-high concrete walls), clusters of circuit breakers (approximately 20 feet high), a control building, and four to six lightning masts (approximately 60 feet high), on a 9-acre parcel owned by PECO south of Fisher Road. A security fence will surround this equipment.

PECO started site work, including construction of an access road, last fall. Earlier this spring, PECO’s application to build this substation was approved by the Pennsylvania Public Utilities Commission. PECO has worked with its Residents Advisory Committee to design the entrance to the access road and address issues concerning screening and stormwater basins. The project is targeted for completion by next summer.

Heyser Field

Proposal: The township will purchase approximately 7 acres of the field and woods immediately behind Community Hall in Fairview Village for use as public parkland.

The majority of the funding (80%) will come from Worcester’s allocation under the Montgomery County Green Fields/Green Towns open space program, with the required 20% match coming from township funds.

The township’s Parks and Recreation Task Force has begun to consider recommendations on the amenities that could be provided at the site. The next step could be to prepare a Master Plan for the park.

3206 Skippack Pike Zoning Request

Proposal: The new owners of the gracious stone home on the corner of Hollow Road and Skippack Pike had requested a variance to use this 3-acre former Schweiker property as a Counseling Center for Loss and Bereavement. The applicants maintained that the property’s location on Skippack Pike made it no longer viable for residential use. Residents along Hollow Road countered that this property, along with the other homes along this section of Skippack Pike, has always been residential. In November 2008, the Zoning Hearing Board denied the applicant’s request for a zoning variance.

Cedars Country Store Zoning Request

Proposal: Expand the Cedars Country Store by over 1000 square feet. The proposed expansion is more than what is allowed under the zoning ordinance without a variance.

The hearing for this matter began in March. At the April 28 meeting, the applicant provided additional details, as requested by the board, on the proposed project. According to the applicant, between 1307 and 1595 square feet are proposed to be added to the building to accommodate a new steak house restaurant with a bar area.

Several residents of Cedars village expressed their concerns about increased noise, traffic, lights, and odors. They also pointed out that the use of the property proposed by the applicant is allowed only in Worcester’s Shopping Center district.

The Zoning Board’s decision will be announced at their May 26 meeting.

May 19th Primary Election

Get ready to cast your vote! This is where you CAN make a difference!!!

Important issues in this election —

- Managing growth in Worcester
- Keeping Worcester rural
- Preserving our open space

What is each candidate's position on these issues?

What experience will each candidate bring to the office?

Cast your vote for Worcester's future on May 19th

Polls are open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

- Community Hall - Fairview Village
- Bethel United Methodist Church
- Variety Club Camp
- Central Schwenkfelder Church

69th Annual Farmers' Union Horse Show Saturday, June 6th



**All Day ~ Heyser Field
Valley Forge Road, Fairview Village
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Featuring—

- Drill Team performance at noon
- Raffle and Flea Market
- Pedal Train
- FOW's fabulous Food Tent!

Info for Horse Show/Flea Market
610-222-0171

Mark your calendar!

Schooling Show — Saturday, May 16, 8 am
Fall Fun Show — Saturday, October 17, 9 am

Held at Heyser Field, Valley Forge and
Griffith Roads in Fairview Village

Visit us at farmersunionhorsecompany.org
for more information

SUPPORT 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 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 contributors receive our monthly agenda and minutes as well as notification of important township events.

Friend - \$30

Partner - \$50

Benefactor - \$100

Other

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

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E-MAIL: _____

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

Please send your tax-deductible contributions to:

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

The official registration and financial information of The Friends of Worcester may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll-free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

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Kim David - President (610-584-1805)
Rob Hayes - Vice President (610-584-0371)
Wini Hayes - Treasurer (610-584-0371)
Barbara McMonagle - Secretary (215-257-1436)

Join us at these upcoming meetings and events

Meetings: Wednesday, May 13
7:30 p.m., Worcester Golf Club
1600 Green Hill Road

Horse Show: Saturday, June 6
8:00 a.m., Heyser Field, behind Worcester
Township Community Hall, Fairview Village

Worcester Township Public Meetings

Community Hall, 1031 Valley Forge Rd, Fairview Village

Board of Supervisors

Monday, 8 am: June 1, July 6, August 3
Wednesday, 7:30 pm: May 20, June 17, July 15, Aug. 19

Planning Commission

Thursday, 7:30 pm: May 14, May 28, June 11, June 25

Zoning Hearing Board

Tuesday, 6:30 pm: May 26, June 23, July 28, August 25

Supervisors/Planning Commission Joint Meeting

Monday, 9:30 am: June 1, September 1 (Tuesday)