

Possible Sale of Township Open Space

Over the summer a motion was added to the July 18th Board of Supervisors meeting agenda to hire an auctioneer to sell three township-owned properties on Meadow Lane (see map) to be developed into residential housing. After noticing this agenda topic FOW researched these properties further and determined that they were listed as open space in the township's planning documents (see Reason #1 below for more details). As an advocate for the preservation of open space FOW issued an alert to residents to make them aware of the proposal to sell and develop these township-owned properties.

Thanks to so many concerned residents who came out for the meeting it was standing room only and was one of the most well attended Township meetings in a long time! So many residents voiced their opposition to this proposal that the discussion lasted more than 2 ½ hours. At the end of the public comment period the Board of Supervisors concluded that they needed more information prior to proceeding and the vote on the motion to hire an auctioneer to sell the three properties was not held.

While it was a small victory, this is NOT over! The motion could be put on the agenda again and voted on at any time. We all need to be aware of what is on the Township meeting agendas and what's going on at these meetings. We will keep you posted so please be sure to sign up for our email alerts on the FOW website.

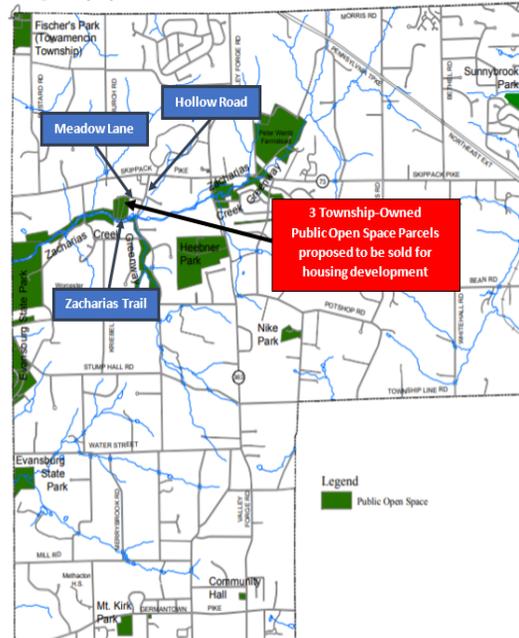
Why is it so important that these properties not be sold for development?

Reason #1 - First and foremost, the three township-owned properties are listed in the Worcester Township Comprehensive Plan and the Township Open Space Plan as “Public Open Space” (see Figure 8-1 above), and on the Township Zoning Map as a “Township Park”. Unfortunately, these three properties and many others that are thought to be open space are not legally protected from development. If the sale is approved the precedent it sets could potentially result in the sale and development of other unprotected open space throughout the township.

Reason #2 - Given their location in the Zacharias Creek Greenway these properties serve a critical ecological function in that they act as a buffer between the developed upstream areas and the heavily eroded Zacharias Creek. As detailed in the Township's planning documents these properties include steep slopes and hydric soils, which may indicate the existence of wetlands, both of which are considered to be ecologically sensitive areas that require special protections. Removing the current natural vegetated buffer zone and building three large houses with all of their impervious surfaces (e.g., roof tops, driveways, walkways, lawns, etc.) will potentially have a negative impact on these ecologically sensitive areas and exacerbate the erosion along the heavily eroded Zacharias Creek.

Reason #3 - These township-owned properties are located in the Zacharias Creek Greenway along the Zacharias Creek Trail and form an impressive and unobstructed natural scenic view across the large meadow and up the wooded hillside from the Zacharias trail. A natural scenic view this expansive is quite uncommon in our developed suburban environment. If the properties were developed into housing the majority of the trees on the emerging wooded hillside would likely be cut down and three large houses along with their accessory structures (e.g., pools, garages, sheds, fences, etc.) would be built diminishing the natural scenic view that we currently enjoy from the Zacharias Trail.

Figure 8-1
Existing Public Open Space



Thanks to ALL who sent letters, signed petitions, posted yard signs and attended the meeting in July!

You ALL most definitely made a difference, even though this is NOT over until our open space is legally protected from development!