Center Square Golf Club

Many Worcester residents are familiar with the Center Square Golf Club which sits on 157 beautiful acres in the heart of our township. It has been the home to many fond golf memories, near par performances and Saturday morning stories for over 50 years. Now, it may become the site for a high-density housing development under the guise of a senior life care community.

The Cutler Group, a large housing development firm headquartered in Plymouth Meeting, has entered into an agreement of sale with the golf course owner to purchase the property with the intent of adding “170 carriage houses, 164 single family villas and a 141 unit independent, assisted living and memory care facility,” for a total of 475 homes and apartments. Skilled nursing, commonly referred to as a nursing home, is not proposed as part of the health care facility. A Conditional Use Application (CUA) has been submitted to the township Board of Supervisors by the Cutler Group as required by the ordinance, which allows a residential life care facility in the AGR zone. “Residential life care facility” is defined in the ordinance as follows:

Township Ordinance #150-9 Definitions - Residential Life Care Facility - A residential development restricted to the elderly that provides a continuum of accommodations and care, from independent living units to personal care and nursing homes. “Independent units” are dwelling units located within a residential life care facility.

Above is a sketch of the proposed project, as per the documentation that was submitted with the CUA. As part of this process, the Board of Supervisors has held a series of hearings over the last few months to understand more about the proposed project and to get community input through impacted neighbors and residents. The Cutler Group, through their attorney, has presented two “expert witnesses” who testified about the anticipated impacts on traffic and the character, which in turn increases property values throughout the township. The builder is still able to build the same number of homes while decreasing construction costs by minimizing the infrastructure, i.e., fewer roads, fewer gas and electric lines.

Under the Growing Green Ordinance, the Worcester Planning Commission, our Montgomery County Planning Commission planner, and the developer start by walking the property together. This begins a four-step process to identify the best views and the most valuable natural resources to be protected.

(continued on page 2)
Their stated intention is to develop a life-care community, but when you look carefully at the specifics of the conditional use application and the information presented by the Cutler Group’s lawyer and expert witnesses, this high-density development project does not appear to meet the definition of a life-care community, nor does it meet the standard required by the Worcester and Montgomery County Open Space Plans. The Montgomery County Planning Commission has already recommended denial of the conditional use application.

There is a considerable amount of undeveloped land in Worcester Township. Construction on available developable land must adhere to the township’s 2006 Growing Greener Ordinance, which applies to all properties 8 acres and larger in the agricultural and land preservation zoning districts, with the exception of subdivisions resulting in three or fewer lots. The ordinance mandates that parcels of eight or more acres adhere to conservation design in order to preserve important natural scenic and historic resources by requiring at least 50 percent of the parcel be set aside as permanent open space during the land development process. The results allow the developer to build the same number of homes as would be built without the ordinance, with lower infrastructure costs, while preserving the most valuable features of the parcel. If the Center Square Golf Club were developed under the Growing Greener, ordinance the developer could build only about 70 homes instead of 475 homes and apartments.

The Worcester Alliance for Responsible Growth (WARG) came about in response to the proposed development on Center Square Golf Club. Fifty-five concerned neighbors living close to the property came together to raise questions concerning the impact that a project of this size, combined with required staffing and auxiliary services, would have on their lives and on the larger Worcester community. The group has met numerous times over the past few months to share information and plan strategies for challenging this project. What has become clear after the applicant’s presentation is that the plan set forth in the Conditional Use Application does not meet the definition of a residential life-care facility as stated in the Township's ordinance.

With urgency in mind, members of WARG decided to hire a lawyer to bring in their own expert witnesses to add information to the official record concerning the necessary elements of residential life-care communities, a continuum of care, and nursing homes. The members of WARG believe that this proposed project is not something our community needs or wants. It is an attempt to build a huge tract of homes — 334 houses plus apartments — on a parcel of land less than 160 acres in size, located in a rural resource area of the township.

WARG believes that the proposed development flies in the face of the current zoning requirements and possibly opens the door for future high density development. On the Worcester Township website, you will find many references to the value of open space, which has been the desire of Worcester residents for decades.

For years, township officials have carefully developed zoning ordinances to guarantee that over-development does not destroy the bucolic character of the township. Organizations such as the Friends of Worcester and the Worcester Alliance for Responsible Growth are committed to the goal of keeping "Worcester green," preserving open space, and conserving Worcester's rural and historic heritage.

Concerned Worcester residents are urged to take action by supporting the Worcester Alliance for Responsible Growth and Friends of Worcester by attending the upcoming CUA hearings and by contacting the Township's Supervisors. Let the Supervisors know of the negative impact this proposed development will have on the Township. This project, if approved, will set a dangerous precedent for what “overdevelopment” could look like, and we could lose our bucolic, rural setting for all time. 🌼

Once it’s gone, it’s gone forever!

Visit www.friendsofworcester.org and click on the Donate link to make your donation via PayPal. Thank you!
**Worcester Historical Society (WHS) To Partner with Heritage Conservancy on Architectural History Project**

Heritage Conservancy, located in Doylestown, is a renowned non-profit organization that helps property owner, businesses, institutions, and communities safeguard their natural and historic landscapes. Part of this work includes helping owners of historically sensitive architecture maintain the integrity of their buildings for both the present and the future, while ensuring that they remain functional.

Several municipalities in Montgomery County, through local historical societies, have been invited by Heritage Conservancy to participate in a survey project of historic buildings in each of these localities. Worcester is one of these. The Worcester Historical Society will be partnering with the Heritage Conservancy to conduct this survey, which will utilize private funding and is not affiliated with the government of Worcester Township. The project will be run by volunteers, mostly from WHS, and is intended to document existing historic architecture in the township from the 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries.

The project, which will be used purely for purposes of historical documentation and education, is concerned with exterior views of structures and scenic views of landscapes as they are seen today. In the event that more historic buildings and properties are lost in the future, WHS will have a record of what once existed. This will enable future generations of Worcester residents to understand how their community once looked. They will likely not be as privileged as those of us living here at the present time, for today, we are able to appreciate the historic and pastoral nature that characterizes expansive portions of the township. By being conscientious caretakers of our irreplaceable local heritage, we will be able to teach our citizens of the future of what still is rather than what once was.

**Election Day**
**May 19, 2015**

**Cast your vote. You can make a difference!**

Polls are open from 7:00 am to 8:00 pm

Worcester Township polling locations:
- Community Hall - Fairview Village
- Bethel United Methodist Church
- Variety Club Camp
- Schwenkfelder Church

**FOW Invites You To Get Involved!**

- **Open Space Committee:** Land preservation, village planning, Open Space Fund
- **Education & Outreach Committee:** Community activities, newsletter, website, community partnerships
- **Organizational Advancement Committee:** Membership recruitment/development, fundraising

Contact FOW at info@friendsofworcester.org or call Wini Hayes at 610-584-0371
North Penn Army Reserve Base To Become Worcester’s Newest Park

Ten years after Congress decided to close the Army Reserve Base on Berks Road, the township supervisors have voted 2 to 1, with Supervisors Bustard and Caughlan voting for and Supervisor Quigley voting against, to accept the property at no cost from the Army to create a public park. The 19-acre property, which was converted from farmland to a Nike missile base by the Army in 1954, became an Army Reserve base when the Nike program was abandoned in the mid-1960s. The Army built several buildings and paved a large parking area for Army Reserve training, but that ended a few years ago when the Reserve units were relocated. Since then, the property has been vacant while the Army followed its military base closure process.

The federal government approved the township’s application to use the property for a park under the Federal Lands to Parks Program. Next, the township hired an environmental law firm to make sure the property was free from contamination. Those reports, which are on the township’s website, confirmed that the property can safely be used as a park. The next step, which the supervisors authorized earlier this year, is to apply for a state grant to help fund a master site plan. This plan will guide the future development of this property as the township’s newest park. The township has budgeted money for several years to fund this work.

Although there are several buildings on the site, the majority of the property consists of an internal road system, a large parking area, and quiet green space. The combination is a good start on a passive park with a ready-made trail system for walkers, runners, and horseback riders. If the Army were to sell the property instead, anyone could buy it and apply for a variance to build denser residential housing, or even an industrial facility.

We commend the supervisors who approved the plan to turn this site into a park, which demonstrates their commitment to preserving Worcester’s rural character. Many residents who responded to our Spring 2014 newsletter survey indicated their desire to have this site become a park. Thanks to all those residents who took the time to respond. We appreciate your feedback! ☺

Don’t miss the
Worcester Historical Society’s
Flea Market and Bake Sale
at the Farmers’ Union Horse Show
Saturday, June 6th, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Heyser Field, Fairview Village

(Growing and Greener... continued from page 1)

The developer then creates a conceptual layout plan for the development which indicates the location of the most important natural features on the property. These areas will make up the required open space. The homes, streets, sewage systems, utilities and other infrastructure are then added. This design process allows the township to preserve the most important resources on each parcel.

Toll Brothers has begun building homes on Worcester’s first Growing Greener development at North Wales Road and Skippack Pike. The original developer of this site, Keystone Lands, Inc., used the Growing Greener ordi-nance’s transferable development rights option to site all of the homes in the middle of the property, leaving several parcels on Whitehall Road as permanently preserved open space which was transferred to the township. When completed, this development will consist of 39 lots with approximately 98 acres preserved as open space.

Unfortunately, the Growing Greener Ordinance doesn’t address the high density threat of the Cutler Group’s proposed “Residential Life Care Facility” at Center Square Golf Club. This is an obvious disconnect between the intent of Growing Greener and the residential life care conditional use. This property should be developed under Growing Greener as one of the conditions of approval. Now is the time for our supervisors to revise our ordinances to prevent this situation from occurring again.

The Keystone Lands/Toll Brothers development shows that developers can and will successfully work with the Growing Greener Ordinance. Using this ordinance, Worcester will be able to maintain our rural heritage and character. As the economy improves and the pressure for development increases, we need to be able to count on these ordinances being in place to preserve what we have for the future. ☺

Worcester Volunteer Fire Department

We are always in need of new volunteers, whether young or old. We have a cadet program for ages 14-16 and a junior program for ages 16-18.

For more information, please visit our website at www.worcesterfd.com

Please check out our website and board for upcoming events and sales to help out Worcester’s Volunteer Fire Department!

The Worcester Volunteer Fire Department thanks you for all of your support!
Daily Horseback Riding Lessons for all levels of riders, ages 7+
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Four sessions available: June 22-August 14, 2015, Monday-Friday, 9:30 am-3 pm
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**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.

☐ Friend - $35  ☐ Family - $60  ☐ Benefactor - $100  ☐ Advocate - $250  ☐ Lifetime - $1,000  ☐ Other

NAME: ____________________________

ADDRESS: ____________________________

PHONE: ____________________________

E-MAIL: ____________________________

All residents, contributing or not, are always welcome at FOW monthly meetings. Check www.friendsofworcester.org for dates.

Please send your tax-deductible contributions to:
FRIENDS OF WORCESTER
P.O. BOX 545
WORCESTER, PA 19490
(or use the PayPal donation button on our website)

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.
Camp Serendipity
summer enrichment programs

July 6-10 Music Adventure Camp
Kids from 6-12 will explore composers, the orchestra, music theory, and more. Campers will enjoy a variety of guest performers and even compose an original camp theme song!

July 13 – 17 Make Your Case Writing Camp
Campers from 7-16 will spend a week honing their persuasive writing skills and engaging in well-reasoned debates. Participants will support their opinions with facts and details.

July 20-24 Explain Yourself Writing Camp
Campers from 7-16 will focus on explanatory and how-to writing. Writers will learn to capture the reader’s attention, create clear instructions, and organize their thoughts.

July 27–31 Make a Scene Writing & Acting Camp
Campers from 7-16 will create characters, compose scenes and perform in a supportive environment. We will teach acting skills and have fun with improvisation.

August 3 – 7 Dive Into Literature Camp
Campers from 7-16 will gain active reading skills and work on group projects that develop strong comprehension of stories & characters. We will enjoy a variety of challenging stories.

Each camp runs Monday - Friday from 9:00 am until 4:00 pm in Lansdale, PA.

To learn more please call 610 551 4666 or visit campserendipity.com
Friends of Worcester Officers

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)
Jim Phelan—Board Member (610-584-9220)
Stuart Land—Board Member (610-584-5749)

Join us for an upcoming meeting
2nd Wednesdays, 7:30 pm, September through May

Check friendsofworcester.org for details.

Worcester Township Public Meetings
Community Hall, 1031 Valley Forge Rd, Fairview Village

Board of Supervisors
1st Monday of the month, 9:00 am
3rd Wednesday of the month, 7:30 pm

Planning Commission
2nd & 4th Thursday, 7:30 pm

Zoning Hearing Board
4th Tuesday, 6:30 pm

Check worcestertwp.com to meeting date changes or cancellations.