Friends of Worcester Celebrates 20 Years!

The history of Friends of Worcester is as much about people as it is about our mission, for it is people who enable our successes.

It all began in the spring of 1996 when Witt Hammond, a Whitpain Township resident, voiced his concern at a supervisors’ meeting regarding a proposed CVS pharmacy at the corner of Township Line and North Wales Road in Worcester Township. Shortly after that, a group of concerned residents met in my kitchen to discuss the issue. The CVS threat galvanized township residents who were interested in working to preserve open space in Worcester. The corner where the CVS was proposed remains undeveloped.

In 1999, Friends of Worcester was incorporated as a nonprofit organization. Not long afterwards, FOW supported Peter Schlotterer’s efforts to preserve the 30.55 acre Gerstemeier farm on Schultz Road. Peter was an inspiration to us all. A leader in the land preservation movement, he put his own money on the table while waiting to find conservation funders for the farm. It paid off – with grant money from Montgomery County and Worcester Township, a conservation easement was purchased to permanently preserve the farm. In addition, in 2004, Peter donated a conservation easement on his own 17 acre property next door.

From 1999 to 2002, FOW was active in opposing the turnpike slip ramps being considered for Schultz Road. This was a long, exhausting effort that ultimately was successful.

Over the next 15 years, FOW spearheaded efforts to promote open space preservation throughout Worcester. We stood up and fought developments that threatened our rural heritage and quality of life. We have been advocates for zoning ordinances and other land preservation techniques to protect Worcester’s rural character. Finally, we have assisted landowners by helping them make the necessary connections in order to preserve their land.

FOW supported the Growing Greener Conservation Subdivision ordinance enacted in 2006. This ordinance provides for at least 50% of a property larger than 8 acres to be preserved as open space.

Center Square Golf Club Update

In May 2015, Worcester’s Supervisors’ denied a Conditional Use application by the Cutler Group to turn the Center Square Golf Club into a senior housing complex, with over 330 age-restricted units and over 140 senior-living units. This action by the Board came after months of hearings and a well-executed effort by neighbors of the golf course to prevent this beautiful tract of land from falling victim to high-density housing under the guise of a senior life-care facility.

In June 2015, the Cutler Group appealed the Supervisors’ denial to the Montgomery County Court of Common Pleas. Oral arguments were presented on March 21 by the attorneys for the Cutler Group, Worcester Township, and the Worcester Alliance for Responsible Growth (WARG, the group formed by concerned neighbors and residents). Judge Gary Silow reviewed the findings presented at the hearings, legal briefs submitted by all involved attorneys, and the Decision and Order by the Supervisors. A decision from the court could be rendered later this spring.

Throughout these proceedings, FOW has heard from many township residents. Your overwhelming input has been to keep Center Square Golf Club as a golf course, or if something else is ultimately brought to this beautiful tract of land, that any project be developed under Worcester’s Conservation Subdivision ordinance. This ordinance will require that at least 50 percent of the developable land be preserved as open space.

As a result of FOW’s call to action concerning this threatened high-density development, many township residents responded and told us how important Worcester’s commitment to open space is to them. Here are some of their comments:

(continued on page 4)
Become a Friends of Worcester Business Partner

Do you care about open space and maintaining Worcester's rural character? Do you care about farms, trails, wildlife and outdoor recreation? Does your business want to connect with thousands of Worcester residents?

If you said yes, then we invite you to be part of various sponsorship and marketing opportunities that Friends of Worcester (FOW) has to offer. We seek business sponsors and supporters who believe in our mission to join us to help preserve Worcester's open spaces and conserve our rural and historic heritage. By supporting FOW, your business will reach hundreds of passionate supporters. It is a tremendous opportunity to attract new customers, spread awareness of your brand or service, and showcase your commitment to supporting Worcester's future.

Friends of Worcester's Values: FOW is committed to enhancing the quality of life in Worcester by protecting and preserving our precious open spaces, conserving our rural agricultural, natural and historic heritage, supporting recreational opportunities, and encouraging growth that reflects Worcester's unique character.

There is no better way to demonstrate your commitment to this shared value than by partnering with FOW. Together we can protect and enjoy Worcester's unique character.

Benefits of becoming an FOW Business Sponsor:

- Exposure to 4000 households in Worcester Township via the Friends of Worcester newsletter and website www.friendsofworcester.org
- Your organization's advertisement, listing, profile and logo in the Friends of Worcester newsletter and website
- Invitation to business partners’ events where you can connect with community members who share your values
- Your logo displayed at FOW community events
- FOW’s logo displayed on your business entrance will show your customers that you share FOW's community-minded mission

Supporting FOW is good business. Join us by becoming an FOW business sponsor and show the Worcester community that you value the quality of life Worcester offers.

Partnership opportunities are available at several levels, if you are interested in partnering with us or have additional questions, please contact Stuart Land at 610-608-1007 or via email at landoaks@gmail.com for more information on becoming a valued FOW business sponsor. 🌱

(FOW Celebrates 20 Years! ... from page 1)

remain as open space during the land development process, while allowing the same number of homes to be built as before.

In 2011, FOW supported another technique for saving some of our precious open space: transferable development rights (TDRs). The TDR ordinance adopted by Worcester Township in 2012 allows development rights to be transferred from rural areas of the township to areas where higher density is acceptable, leaving the original property undeveloped.

Today we are monitoring the proposed zoning changes for Center Point Village. The village, at the center of Montgomery County, is a potential receiving area for TDRs. The goal of the proposed zoning is to preserve Center Point’s historic heritage while allowing village-scale businesses to grow.

FOW continues to spread the word that “Saving Land Saves Money” and to promote the many community benefits of open space preservation. The decision to preserve land is personal, but each property owner who chose land preservation in Worcester shared a common thread — all of them love their land.

Al and Jean Cucé worked for years to protect their farm with an easement through the Montgomery County Agricultural Preservation Program. They purchased adjoining parcels in order to have enough land to qualify for the program.

In 2010, Dee Dee McGrane preserved her 16 acre horse farm on Stump Hall Road. Preserving her land allowed her to stay on her farm. Ever since, Dee Dee has attended FOW meetings and has been an active volunteer.

Frank D’Lauro, former Chairman of the Worcester Planning Commission, was a long-time supporter of FOW. He often commented on the value of the work FOW was doing. He was always willing to consult and advise on strategies to protect open space. In his will, Frank provided that his property would be preserved forever. I am glad to be reminded of Frank’s dedication to Worcester each time I pass the D’Lauro Preserve on Valley Forge Road.

Recently the ongoing battle for sensible development of the Center Square Golf Club brought FOW together with Worcester Alliance for Responsible Growth (WARG). As a result Jim Phelan, Paula Wiley and Stuart Land have joined founding members Wini Hayes, Rob Hayes, Barb McMonagle and I on the Board.

FOW’s history is defined by the people who care enough about open space and the preservation of this township to take action, and in doing so we have become friends. Please join us in celebrating Friends of Worcester’s 20th Anniversary. There is much more we can do together to insure Worcester remains the beautiful township it is. 🌱

Kim David
President, Friends of Worcester
How to Preserve Your Land and Reduce Taxes

If you own property and you’re thinking about preserving it, did you know that the federal government can help? Last December, Congress approved a permanent income tax incentive that gives landowners a break on their federal income taxes if they donate a conservation easement on their land. Even selling a conservation easement at a discount can qualify for the deduction. In addition, preserved land qualifies for lower state and federal inheritance taxes. So, how do these tax incentives work?

Income Tax Deduction. If a landowner donates a conservation easement, or sells an easement at less than fair market value (called a bargain sale), the value of the donation can be used as a federal income tax deduction. A conservation easement is a deed restriction placed on a property which prevents future development of the property. The landowner continues to own the property, and the easement is held by a land trust, or by the state or county. An appraisal determines the value of the conservation easement.

An appraisal of the property might look like this:

- The fair market value without an easement is $350,000
- The fair value market with an easement is $200,000
- The value of the conservation easement is $150,000

In this example, if the landowners donate the easement, or choose to accept less than $150,000 in grant money for the easement, then a donation is being made. The landowners can deduct a portion of that donation on their federal income taxes for up to 15 years after the donation is made. Each year, they can reduce the Adjusted Gross Income on their federal tax return by half, until the amount of the donation is used up. Paying federal income tax on only half your income is a great incentive to consider a conservation easement!

The deduction applies to passive income (investments, pensions, IRA distributions, and Social Security) as well as earned income. For landowners who qualify as farmers or ranchers, the value of the donation can be used to reduce up to 100% of income for up to 15 years.

Inheritance Tax Deduction. Family members who inherit property can be hit with a big inheritance tax bill. If the land is preserved the taxes could be lower, or even nonexistent. How?

Preserved land is appraised for inheritance tax purposes at its after-easement value, meaning that taxes are assessed on a lower amount. Remember the example of land values earlier in this article? The fair market value of the land with the conservation easement was lower, resulting in a lower inheritance tax.

In addition, up to 40 percent of the value of preserved land can be excluded from the value of the estate for federal estate tax purposes, if the easement qualifies under IRS requirements. This deduction is capped at $500,000. In Pennsylvania, land preserved with an agricultural conservation easement (but not the structures on the land) is exempt from inheritance tax.

Even after a landowner dies, donation of a conservation easement can reduce federal estate taxes. This technique was used by the late Frank D’Lauro, whose will provided for the permanent preservation of over 100 acres along Valley Forge Road.

The tax incentives for a donation or bargain sale of a conservation easement allow landowners to realize some of the economic value of their property while still insuring that it will be preserved forever. These landowners’ decisions to preserve their property have resulted in communities like Worcester, which continue to be rich in farmland and rural character. The federal income tax deduction and the reduction of estate taxes on conserved lands are two incentives for landowners interested in leaving a legacy to their community.


If you would like more information about preserving your property, please contact Barbara McMonagle (215-257-1436) or Dee Dee McGrane (610-584-6196).

The information in this article is not intended as legal or tax advice. Please consult an attorney or tax professional for advice that is specific to your situation.

Once it’s gone, it’s gone forever!

76th Annual Farmers’ Union Horse Show & WHS Flea Market Saturday, June 4

Heyser Field, 8:00 am
1031 Valley Forge Road, Fairview Village behind Worcester Township Community Hall

Come visit us at FOW’s fabulous Food Tent!

Visit farmersunionhorsecompany.org or call 215.990.2038 for more information
Everybody loves a vintage kitchen, and now you can walk into one at the Worcester Historical Society’s museum in Farmers’ Union Hall. The Society’s exhibits give visitors a snapshot of life more than 100 years ago in Worcester.

The kitchen has always been the heart of a home. Thanks to the generosity of several members, the Society’s exhibit features an oak Hoosier cabinet, along with many traditional kitchen tools, such as a dough knife, rotary egg beater, and one of the first electric toasters. Next to the cabinet is a Queen Bengal enamel cook stovve, built in Royersford by Floyd Wells Company in the early 1920s. Visitors can lift lids and open doors to see how dinners could be cooked and breads and pies baked in a coal-fired oven.

Every year the Worcester Historical Society welcomes some students from Worcester Elementary School, who visit as part of their history curriculum to learn about life in a farming community over 100 years ago. They thresh wheat on the floor of the Farm Museum, they turn the handles of the corn shellers, help make butter from cream, and sit at wooden desks in the old one room school. Most importantly, they learn about the many ways that life is different in 2016 than it was back in the 1800s.

The Society invites you to visit our museum in Farmers’ Union Hall. The museum is open every Saturday morning from 9 a.m. to noon, April through Thanksgiving. Research your historic house or your Worcester family roots in our library. Come share a family story or a piece of Worcester history with us.

We encourage you to become a member and help keep Worcester history alive! 🌟

Here is what residents have to say about the value of open space and the importance of preserving Worcester Township’s rural heritage:

- We have been living in Worcester Township for 10 years and love our community. We paid a premium to live in such a beautiful area with open space and I would like to keep it that way.
- My family and I have been here for 42 years and have appreciated the carefully paced and planned growth of Worcester Township. Please do not lose that asset of our beautiful township.
- As 30 year residents of Worcester we have always highly valued the township’s emphasis on open space preservation and comprehensive planning.
- We both love living here in no small part due to the preservation of open space as a priority of our township.
- We moved here for the open space concept, and the desire of the township to preserve open space.
- Worcester is rich in history and has a strong agricultural past. Everyone appreciates their Worcester neighborhood and we feel responsible to protect its beauty and value.
- My husband and I moved to Worcester specifically because we knew the township was committed to open space.
- Amongst several other reasons, the single most attractive feature of this township is the fact that open spaces are preserved.
- The green and open space of Worcester township is what makes it desirable and unique.
- Four years ago we moved to Worcester Township. We were captivated by its beauty and its proclaimed love for open space.
- It is Worcester’s unique rural environment that attracted our existing citizens to this community.
- What drew us to Worcester 22 years ago was its rural setting and natural beauty. We can make conscious decisions to preserve the characteristics of our township which its residents love. We do not need to give in to over-development.

We urge you to continue to voice your concerns and opinions to the Board of Supervisors and FOW. Only through efforts such as this will we be able to keep Worcester Township a beautiful place to live. 🌟
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Contact FOW at info@friendsofworcester.org or call Wini Hayes at 610-584-0371

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Contact us at 610-630-0254 or info@friendsofworcester.org

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: ____________________________________________
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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:
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P.O. Box 545
WORCESTER, PA 19490
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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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Stuart Land - Board Member (610-584-5749)
Paula Wiley - Board Member (610-724-1633)

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
3rd Wednesday of the month, work session, 6:00 p.m.
regular meeting, 7:30 p.m.

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

Zoning Hearing Board
4th Tuesday, 6:30 pm
Check worcestertwp.com for meeting date changes or cancellations.