

THE FRIENDS OF WORCESTER

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

Spring 2004



President's Report for 2003

As we reflect on the events of the past year, we can see how much Friends of Worcester has accomplished, and also how far we still have to go. Our outreach focus was fueled by three newsletters that highlighted various open space issues in the township. Our web site has become an outstanding source of both information and organizational muscle, as we realized with the success of the on-line petition to defeat the proposed CVS at Trooper Road.

FOW had some notable successes during 2003. Perhaps the most visible victory was our fight against CVS. FOW raised residents' awareness that CVS was out to radically alter a historic intersection in Worcester. You, the residents of the township, registered your outrage on our web site, and the township supervisors and CVS got the message. Just as important, however, was the fact that, in the wake of this victory, the next chain drugstore developer to come to Worcester made sure that he contacted FOW before he submitted development plans, to get the group's input for his project. You can read about the result inside, in **New Village Center for Fairview**.

FOW grew in many ways during 2003. Membership increased dramatically, a positive sign that more residents in the township are realizing the importance of open space and the negative impact of sprawl development. FOW formed an important alliance with 10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania, which now keeps us informed on state issues related to open space and planning. Finally, we have an opportunity to partner with our newly formed neighbor organization, Friends of Lower Providence, and to learn from each other's experiences in working to improve life in each of our townships.

FOW intends to continue with our community outreach efforts to spread the message that we, the residents of this township, save ourselves money every time we purchase open space. We are looking into how the Zoning Hearing Board and Planning Commission do their jobs. Are there things that can be improved, so that some open space is preserved, even when land is developed? There is much that we can be doing in our township to preserve our rural quality of life. It is time-consuming work, but the scenic views that we still have on many of our roads, the working

farms that we still have in our community, the village atmosphere in Fairview Village and Center Point, make it all worthwhile. 🌳

Open Space Makes \$ense

How many of you have lived in this area most of your lives? Remember how it used to be? We no longer live in the "country." Most of the surrounding townships have succumbed to suburban sprawl. Our open land is rapidly being consumed by new developments.

Last November, Montgomery County voters authorized the county to spend \$150 million over the next 10 years to preserve open space, farmlands, recreational trails, historic resources, and more. Worcester benefited from the county's previous open space program with several purchases of land or development rights using a combination of money from the state, county and township. Beyond the benefits of land preservation, why should we continue to spend our tax dollars this way?

THESE ARE THE FACTS!

Let's take a look at what Worcester has spent:

To date, Worcester has purchased three township parks and has helped to permanently preserve five large parcels of farm land in the township totaling 302 acres. The cost was \$3,527,252, which includes all acquisition fees – appraisals, legal, engineering, and consulting costs. The average cost to the township per acre was \$11,676.

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WHY IT MAKES SENSE

Assuming that these parcels could have been developed as 2-acre lots, these permanently preserved acres could have produced 151 new houses. Each household in our school district averages 0.8 public school children. The average amount paid by Worcester residents in school taxes in 2003 was \$4588 per home, but the annual cost to educate one child in the Methacton School District for the 2003-2004 school year is \$11,900. That’s a tax shortfall of \$4932 per household. If those 151 homes had been built, the resulting tax shortfall would have been \$744,732 each year. This is the amount that would have to have been made up by the rest of the taxpayers in the district, every year.

Let’s look at our most recent conservation easement purchase, completed in February 2004, which preserved the Scarlett farm on Shearer Road. The easement, which protects 50.1 acres, cost the township \$150,300. Assuming that 25 houses could have been built on this property, how soon will taxpayers see a tax benefit from this purchase?

Here’s the math:

25 homes x 0.8 students per home	=	20
Cost to educate each child	x	<u>\$11,900</u>
Total cost to educate	=	\$238,000
25 x \$4588 (average real estate tax)	-	<u>\$114,700</u>
Shortfall shared by all taxpayers <u>each year</u>	=	(\$123,300)
One-time cost to preserve 50 acres	=	\$150,300
Tax shortfall each year	÷	<u>\$123,300</u>
	=	1.2 years

That’s right! After only 1.2 years, there will be no additional costs to district taxpayers, and this property will be preserved forever as farmland. In contrast, new homes continue to cost all of us additional taxes forever.

WHAT IS OUR PLAN?


Worcester’s population has grown by 66% in the 10 years from 1990 to 2000. By 2005, projections are for 90% growth in the 15 short years from 1990 to 2005. In the last 10 years, approximately 1500 new building lots have been approved. Additional subdivisions totaling 384 homes are currently proposed and awaiting final approval.

In the face of all this development, what can we do? Investing taxpayer dollars in land preservation actually saves us money. We can still preserve our rural township from being developed completely. Here’s how—

The Open Space Referendum that Worcester residents strongly supported last November is only one source of available funding. There are several state programs in which Worcester can participate. Additionally, many townships in the area have authorized bond issues ranging from \$4 million to \$10 million specifically to preserve open space. Several other townships have enacted a 0.25% earned income tax for the same purpose. Finally, landowners can be encouraged to donate land or conservation easements. They can realize tax benefits and provide a legacy of open space to the community.

We all benefit from land preservation. Fewer homes means less demand for costly municipal services, less demand on limited groundwater aquifers, reduced air pollution, and reduced street and yard flooding. For more details, visit www.friendsofworcester.org.

The time is NOW to preserve our community character and quality of life! We must not miss this opportunity! Later this spring, Worcester’s Open Space Committee will be holding a public meeting to discuss the goals of Worcester’s new Open Space Plan. Check the township’s website (www.worcestertwp.com) for information. Let our supervisors know that you want them to continue to use township dollars to preserve open space.


Once it’s gone, it’s gone forever! 

Another Worcester Farm Preserved

In February, Worcester’s latest farm preservation project became a reality when 50 acres of the Scarlett family farm on Shearer Road were preserved with an agricultural easement that ensures it will be a farm forever. The family raises horses and operates a riding stable there.

At the Board of Supervisors meeting on March 17, members of the Montgomery County Agricultural Preservation Board presented Worcester Township with a commemorative plaque thanking the township for its participation in the farm preservation program.

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Three farms in Worcester have now been preserved through this program, totaling almost 150 acres. In **Open Space Makes Sense**, you can see how this latest acquisition saves money for Worcester taxpayers. Open Space Coordinator Susan Caughlan confirmed that Worcester is continuing this momentum to preserve our farmland with two new applications to the farmland preservation program (the Palmer and Schierenbeck farms) for the 2004 funding cycle. 

Why Do We Have Zoning and Land Development Ordinances?

Worcester Township is growing, as we all know every time we take a different route to work and exclaim, “Hey, I didn’t know they were building here!” Worcester residents will see more houses, more shops, and more office buildings in the next few years. As these places are developed, we can and should ask whether our township is doing the best possible job of preserving Worcester’s rural character.

Worcester is now revising our Comprehensive Plan and our Open Space Plan. These two documents will set the tone for future land preservation and development in the township. Because we are under so much pressure from developers, both residential and commercial, we must continually review our ordinances to make sure that they are actually benefiting the township.

If a commercial development is proposed, will the stores and offices look like a village, or does the developer want to build ugly big-box stores with acres of parking? If it’s houses we must have, will they be clustered so that most of the open space on the parcel is preserved, or will the developer bulldoze the entire site and carve it up into a checkerboard of endless houses and lawns?

In either case, will the developer be required to make the neighborhood pedestrian-friendly? For commercial areas, this means including sidewalks to get to the stores, as well as designing the parking areas so that pedestrians can safely walk from one store to another without having to navigate a sea of unfriendly asphalt. For residential developments, this can mean building sidewalks or trails within the neighborhood as well as connecting the neighborhood to our proposed township network of trails. It should also mean requiring the developer to set aside some land within the neighborhood for a park for the residents.

Here are some suggestions for ordinances we should have in

place to benefit the township when a parcel is developed.

Parkland Set-Aside. Many townships already require residential developers to set aside a certain amount of acreage on the parcel to be used as recreational space. If the land is not available, the developer can instead pay the township a fee, which is used for the purchase of another parcel of land to serve as a neighborhood park. When houses are clustered to preserve open space, it makes sense to provide a nearby recreational area for the residents to use.

Trail Connections. If a residential or commercial development is planned on a large parcel, let’s make sure that an appropriate connection is provided to existing and proposed trails in the community. Currently our township Greenway and Trail Plan is nearing completion. As large tracts of land are developed, it makes sense to have our Planning Commission consider whether there are important trail links that should be incorporated into the site development plan.

Village Commercial. Worcester’s commercial-zoned areas are in Center Point and Fairview Village. These are both areas that should be developed to look like the small-town centers they once were. These areas are not appropriate for strip development or large chain stores. A village commercial ordinance would promote pedestrian accessibility and allow various options such as multi-use buildings, shared parking, and side-by-side buildings. In order to make sure these areas grow into pedestrian-friendly town centers, we must adjust our commercial zoning and enforce it strictly so we do not end up with a strip of stores geared solely to automobile access.

Historic Preservation. Worcester has many old farmhouses, barns, and other historic structures that we would like to see preserved when the land is sold for development. Although we cannot prevent the demolition of older buildings, a historic preservation ordinance could offer incentives for developers to save our historic structures. Such an ordinance would, for example, allow for adaptive re-uses of a historic building, such as a bed and breakfast or an artist’s studio, in order to save the building.

As our township updates its Comprehensive Plan,

enacts mandatory state stormwater management regulations, revises its Open Space Plan, and approves a Greenway Plan, we need to enact the ordinances that will make these plans a reality. Later this spring, Worcester's Open Space Committee will be holding a public meeting to discuss the township's goals and objectives for preserving open space. Check the township's website, www.worcestertwp.com, for information about the meeting. With appropriate ordinances in place, our forward-thinking township supervisors will have the tools to ensure that Worcester will retain its rural character in the future.



New Village Center for Fairview

Last summer, FOW was contacted by commercial developer Allen Kann of Baldrige Development Co. in St. Louis, MO. Kann wanted to develop two properties in Fairview Village, at the corner of Germantown Pike and Valley Forge Road. His plans included an Eckerd drug store on one corner and a large shopping center on the other. Kann knew of FOW's opposition to the proposed CVS at the intersection of Germantown Pike and Trooper Road, and he wanted to avoid a similar negative community reaction. FOW was pleased to be invited to discuss his proposals, and a committee was formed to meet with Kann. Thus began a series of meetings that have continued through this spring.

Under discussion were the properties owned by the

Milners (now Milner's Auto Repair) and the Dubners (now Fairview Auto). Kann is planning to build an Eckerd drugstore on the Milner property and a village-style retail/office complex on the Dubner site. Both corners are already zoned commercial, and there are businesses currently operating at these locations. However, the developer needed zoning variances for both projects.

The spirit of the meetings was one of compromise. The developer was firm about many of the conditions for the drugstore because Eckerd has a number of standard requirements for their stores. The footprint for the store is smaller than many chain drugstores (9227 square feet instead of 13,000), but it still exceeds the allowable size for the lot (6500 square feet). The FOW committee was not happy about having a chain drugstore in Fairview Village. The committee pressed for the store to be as small as Eckerd would build, and also tried -- largely unsuccessfully -- to convince the developer to decrease the parking so that no more than 50 percent of the site will be paved surfaces, as required by township ordinance.

In November, the developer took the Eckerd plan to the Zoning Hearing Board (ZHB) to obtain the necessary variances. All requested variances were granted by the ZHB on December 16th, despite the fact that the Montgomery County Planning Commission rejected the plan because the project was deemed too large for the site. The county report focused on the excessive amount of impervious coverage (the ratio of paved area to green space) as well as the number of variances requested.

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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 share 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 Friends are involved on a strictly volunteer basis. Friends receive our monthly agenda and minutes as well as phone chain notification of important township events.

- Supporter - \$30 Contributor - \$50 Benefactor - \$75 or more

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

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____

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You may include my name as a contributor in your newsletter.

Please send your tax deductible contributions to:

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

(New Village Center for Fairview, continued from page 4)

When the plans were reviewed by the township Planning Commission, the Commission was unable to comment on the suitability of the proposal because the ZHB had already granted all the necessary variances. Instead, the Planning Commission worked with the developer to come to an agreement over the architectural drawings for the drug store. Next the plan will be presented to the supervisors for their approval.

The larger size of the Dubner site (about 12 acres) provided more flexibility for design, and the FOW committee was able to negotiate many of the issues that will make this development more of a village-style center. This includes smaller scale stores with their storefronts facing the street; sidewalk store entrances, like a typical Main Street; pedestrian walkways between groups of stores; and an outdoor sitting area. We agreed to disagree about the excessive amount of parking insisted on by the developer, which caused the impervious coverage to be over 70 percent instead of the township's maximum of 50 percent. In addition, the developer insisted that the site needed a large "anchor" store, which the committee was able to shrink from 62,000 square feet to 36,000 square feet, with the developer's promise that he will try to attract a bookstore or specialty food store to the anchor spot.

As this newsletter goes to press, the Eckerd proposal and the shopping center plan continue through the township approval process. While there may be some changes, we anticipate that both projects will eventually be approved. The series of meetings was time consuming for Allen Kann, his consultants, and the FOW committee. FOW appreciates the developer's willingness to work with the community to create a village center that we believe will be an asset to the township's residents. 🌳

****Contest -- Name our New Village Center****

Now that a new village center is coming to Fairview Village, let's name it! Mail or e-mail your suggested names to FOW by 5/15/2004 and we will present them to the developer. The winner will receive a gift certificate to the new center.

Worcester Historical Society and Peter Wentz Bring Speakers to the Area

The Worcester Historical Society and the Peter Wentz

Farmstead have teamed up to bring a speaker series to the local community this year. The events take place at the Farmer's Union Hall on Valley Forge Road in Center Point. The presentations consist of four lectures. The first one, held in November 2003, focused on General George Washington's movements in the area during 1777. This was followed by James Beidler, of Lebanon, PA, discussing the journey of the 18th century Germans who traveled to the colonies. The most recent lecture was in March and focused on the natural motifs found in Pennsylvania German art.

The staff of the Historical Society and the Farmstead watched with excitement as more than sixty people attended each of the lectures. The final lecture will be on Wednesday, May 12, at 7 p.m. This presentation will feature information about the role the Pennsylvania Dutch and Hessian soldiers played in the American Revolutionary War.

The partnership series resulted from a grant awarded to the Farmstead by the Pennsylvania Humanities Council. The intent in offering the lectures at Farmer's Union Hall was to create an environment conducive to intellectual exchange while also providing an opportunity to generate awareness of the collection housed within this building. Given the number of attendees at the past lectures, both the Historical Society and the Farmstead have deemed the series a success. 🌳

On Saturday, May 1, the Worcester Historical Society will hold its 29th annual Flea Market & Show at Worcester Township Community Hall in Fairview Village. For more information, contact Marianna Nulty at 610-539-3175.

Fairview Village Gets Public Water, Sewer

Stockpiles of stone, pipes and various construction items have been noticeably dwindling as construction of the Fairview Village sewers is entering the final stages. Fairview Village East was the last district to be completed, with lateral lines on Ethel and Artmar Roads finished as well as main and lateral lines on sections of Valley Forge Road. Hookups will begin this spring. The township has tested all lines and the pumping station.

Next comes the water! Pennsylvania American Water will

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(Fairview Village Gets Water, continued from page 5)

need about 60 days to install their lines, once that phase of the project begins. Late this winter, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) met with the Board of Supervisors concerning some contaminated wells in the area. The DEP began testing last year and is continuing to test wells in the Fairview Village area. Residents with contaminated wells have been receiving bottled water from the DEP. The DEP will assume the cost of connecting public water to the affected homes.

Currently, the source of the contamination is unknown. The DEP will hold an informal meeting (at 6 p.m.) and a public hearing (at 7 p.m.) at the Worcester Township Community Hall, Fairview Village, on Tuesday, April 20, to inform residents and summarize its plan. Call Lynda Rebarchak, DEP Community Relations Coordinator, at 484-250-5820 for more information.

Paving and grading of township roads will not be done until the sewer and water projects are completed. Because it is a state highway, Valley Forge Road must be resurfaced within a designated time frame, whether or not the work is complete. Fairview Village residents have all been inconvenienced and welcome the news that this project is coming to an end.

50 Years Ago in Worcester

The following article originally appeared in the Norristown Times Herald on January 30, 1952. We would like to thank Dave Dubner of Fairview Auto for bringing this to our attention. We can see that the residents of Worcester have a long-standing history of interest and participation in their local government.

Worcester Taxpayers Form Township Civic Association

More than 100 taxpayers of Worcester Township gathered at a public meeting at the Assembly Hall, Fairview Village, last night, as the "Worcester Township Civic Association" was organized.

These temporary officers were elected: J.E. Fauser, president; Donald Todd, vice president; Mrs. Elizabeth Colins, secretary; and Nathan B. Dubner, treasurer.

These nine directors also were elected: J. Raymond Marple, Robert Brooke, Mrs. Shirley Josephson, Thomas Emerson, William Smith, George F. Himsforth, Harry Haupt, Ellis Up-

degraff and Carl Faust.

The group will adopt a constitution at an annual meeting, the date to be set. Their primary interests this first year will be highway safety and zoning.

The purposes of this nonprofit nonpartisan organization are: to foster public interest in government; to assist in the maintenance of good mutual understanding between the citizens and public officials; to promote public knowledge and appreciation of our township's problems, and to inform, arouse, and lead public opinion toward their solution; to promote efficiency and economy in government; and to promote acquaintanceship, friendship, and sociability among the residents of Worcester Township.

Any taxpayer residing in Worcester Township, owning property therein, is eligible for membership in the Worcester Township Civic Association. Annual dues are \$1 a person.

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 (215/699-8225)

Join us at these upcoming meetings and events WE WELCOME YOUR SUPPORT

April 14 Wednesday	7:30PM	Bean Road Nursery Whitehall & Bean Roads 610-584-1805
May 18 Tuesday	7:30PM	Bean Road Nursery Whitehall & Bean Roads 610-584-1805
June 5 Saturday	8:00AM	Farmers Union Horse Show & FOW Flea Market Heyser Field (behind Worcester Township Community Hall) Call 610-489-7904 for info

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

Board of Supervisors – Mondays 8 a.m. April 5, May 3, June 7; Wednesdays 7:30 p.m. April 21, May 19, June 16

Zoning Hearing Board – Wednesday 6:30 p.m. April 28; Tuesday 6:30 p.m. May 25, June 22

Planning Commission – Thursdays 7:30 p.m. April 22, May 6, May 27, June 3, June 24

Friends of Worcester would like to thank the sponsors below for their generous support in producing this newsletter and promoting open space preservation.

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Willow Creek Orchards Farm Stand
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Transitioning **ORGANIC** family farm!
Pick-Your-Own Strawberries, Raspberries, Pumpkins
Array of **vegetables**, many heirloom varieties
Farm Friend Club, connecting our farm to you...

\$30 membership brings you...
~10% off all purchases - At our stand and pick-your-own~
~Children's Garden - Teach your kids where food is grown~
~Spring Planting Day & Fall Potluck Luncheon for members only~
~Weekly emails - Featuring farm updates & recipes~
~Volunteer workdays - Not mandatory!~

For Farm Friend membership details call 610.222.0975 or
Email melissasmith@willowcreekorchards.com



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**64th Farmers Union Horse Show
& Friends of Worcester
FLEA MARKET & RAFFLE**

June 5, 2004 — 8 am to 4 pm

Community Non-profit Groups are Invited to Join Us with a
Game Booth to Make This a Fun Day in the Country!

*Over Twenty Different Raffles
Each Item or Service Donated by Local Businesses*

AT HEYSER FIELD
BEHIND WORCESTER TOWNSHIP COMMUNITY HALL
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SPACE AVAILABLE: \$10.00 — CONTACT MARIE 610-630-0254

HORSE SHOW PRIZE LIST & INFO -- CONTACT JEANNIE 610-489-7904

All Methacton High School Students!

**Friends of Worcester
PHOTO CONTEST**

Theme: *Worcester Up Close*

Prizes for top three winners in each division:

**A - Un-retouched black and white or
color**

**B - Digital or digitally enhanced black
and white or color**

*All Entries will be on display at the
**FARMERS UNION HORSE SHOW and
FOW FLEA MARKET***

June 5, 2004

**Winners will be announced at noon at
the FOW tent at the Horse Show**

See Mr. Bosler for details and entry forms

FRIENDS OF WORCESTER
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