

# THE FRIENDS OF WORCESTER

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

Fall 2007

## MISSION STATEMENT

**Recognizing the uniqueness** of Worcester's rapidly vanishing farmlands, woodlands, and historic structures, and understanding that the preservation of these areas contributes greatly to the quality of life, now and for future generations, we have joined together under the name "Friends of Worcester."

**Our vision** is compelling: preserve open space and conserve our rural agricultural, natural, and historical heritage.

**Friends of Worcester works** to educate and inform citizens and government of the value of open space preservation and the need for citizen involvement. As advocates for open space and historical preservation, we work to promote the implementation of Worcester's Comprehensive and Open Space Plans.

## Why Do I Live in Worcester?

Has anyone ever asked you this? At first, it may seem like a simple question with a simple answer. But when you think about it, the answer reveals something about each of us and what we value. Maybe you were born in Worcester and have lived here all your life. You may have grown up here, moved away, and then come back to be near family. Many move to our township because it is in the Methacton School District. Some enjoy the convenience of living near their workplace or being centrally located among major highways and commercial areas.

Often, the reason people are attracted to Worcester is our well-known rural atmosphere within a horseshoe of dense suburban development. We enjoy the fact that we can live within sight of farmland and Philadelphia at the same time.

Perhaps you live in Worcester is a combination of these reasons. You may even have moved here without really knowing the area or its character. But once you're here, you quickly realize that our community is unique among its neighbors.

Whereas surrounding townships have allowed themselves to be gelled together into one massive suburban conglomerate, Worcester has a feel all its own. It is our hope that Worcester will continue to be a special place to live



among natural beauty and a centuries-old farming heritage.

Our municipality will no doubt be facing some grave challenges in the years ahead—some are rising to the surface right now. Before conflict, disputes, and misunderstanding have a chance to entrench themselves here, as is the case in many other communities, we should ask ourselves the very thoughtful and self-revealing question: "Why do I live in Worcester?" Hopefully, your answer is reason enough to get involved in order to have a positive influence on Worcester's future. 🌱

## Interview With Worcester Township Manager John Cornell

Recently Friends of Worcester had the opportunity to interview John Cornell, Worcester's Township Manager. Although he is relatively new to Worcester, having been our manager for a little over a year, John's many years as a township manager have brought us someone with a lot of experience. We found John to be very open to our inquiries. Thank you, John, for giving us your insights into our growing community.

*FOW: Tell us about yourself. What did you do before you came to Worcester?*

John: My family and I live in Franconia Township. I have been in municipal government for over 20 years. I started my municipal government experience as the Zoning Code Officer for New Britain Township and later became their Assistant Manager. From 1993 until 2006, I was the Township Manager for East Rockhill Township in Bucks County.

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*FOW: What do you do as Worcester's Township Manager?*

John: Everything from soup to nuts. I oversee our staff and the township budget, and report to the Supervisors. Our elected Supervisors establish the township's vision, and the manager implements this vision. I also respond to township residents' concerns and complaints.

*FOW: What are the most common residents' complaints?*

John: Traffic is the main complaint, especially speeding. We now have a digital speed sign that does a good job of slowing people down. The State Police have also set up speed traps. We do not have a lot of police complaints. We have heard some concerns over the turnpike widening and the need for noise barriers.

*FOW: What do you see as Worcester's greatest asset?*

John: Definitely it is the people. Worcester has a very well-educated population. Even if we don't agree, people are willing to listen, discuss the issue, and give input toward a solution rather than just being reactionary.

*FOW: What challenges do you see as Worcester grows?*

John: Traffic — The main problem I see is developing ways to address traffic congestion while maintaining the quality of life that residents want. Worcester is unique – it is not overly developed.

*FOW: Do we need police protection? How would that affect the township budget?*

John: Police -- It is not a problem today. We have police protection from the State Police. There is no cost to the township for their services. Adding a township police department could add 50% to 75% to the municipal budget. Fortunately, Worcester benefits from other municipalities having their own police department. It frees up the State Police for coverage in our area. Purchasing coverage from neighboring municipalities is an option if needed.

*FOW: What is your experience with Open Space programs?*

John: Open space and easements help enhance property values. Open space lessens the need for public and emergency services. It also reduces the number of children who would otherwise be attending our schools. The township, however, incurs some cost of additional maintenance of parks and trails.

*FOW: How do you see Growing Greener fitting into the larger picture of open space preservation?*

John: To date, only one development plan has been filed under the Growing Greener ordinances. I think it is a great idea and an interesting concept.

*FOW: What are the sources of income for the township budget? What do our township taxes pay for?*

John: Income comes from a variety of sources. The single largest source is the earned income tax (EIT). The EIT supplies about 50% of the township's annual budget, whereas property taxes are a little more than 1%. The township's portion of the property taxes that residents pay is very small (just 0.5 mill). The vast majority of the property tax (21.76 mills) goes to pay for our schools, not for township services. The largest expense categories in the township budget are road maintenance, staff and administration, and acquisition of parks and open space.

*FOW: How soon do you foresee the Zacharias Creek Trail completed so residents can use it from Heebner Park to Evansburg State Park?*

John: The first section of the trail, from Hollow Road to Green Hill Road, has gone out to bid. The next phase will be from Green Hill Road to Evansburg State Park. 🌳

## **Two Great Ways To Preserve Land in Worcester**

### **Saving the Farm**

“Keep Farming in Montgomery County” is the slogan of the Montgomery County Farmland Preservation Program. Since 1989, this program has preserved 109 farms, for a total of 7145 acres that will forever be farmland in Montgomery County. The Farmland Preservation Program is a statewide effort and is one of the most successful state-run land preservation programs in the country.

Farmland is a rapidly disappearing natural resource. According to the American Farmland Trust, the United States is losing two acres of farmland every minute to new development. Agriculture is considered Pennsylvania's number one industry, but from 1992 to 1997, Pennsylvania lost 134,900 acres of prime farmland. Montgomery County, being so close to Philadelphia, is particularly vulnerable to losing productive farmland to residential and commercial development.

If developers are willing to pay a high price to buy farmland and build homes or offices, why would a landowner want to sell an agricultural conservation easement?

- Selling a conservation easement can permanently protect a family's farmland from being lost to future non-agricultural development.
- Farmers can receive cash for some of the equity tied up in their land and still own the farm. The money can be used to expand or improve a farm operation, pay off debt, buy out other family members, or help fund the farmer's retirement. In many cases, settlement occurs much faster than when selling to a developer.

- Conservation easements can be used as an estate planning tool to help landowners minimize tax burdens and successfully pass farms on to the next generation.

The Farmland Preservation Program is funded with state and county money. Some municipalities, such as Worcester, contribute local dollars to preserve farms in their townships. Why? Protecting local farmland keeps property taxes down for all township taxpayers and keeps working farms in Worcester.

According to the Pennsylvania Farmland Preservation Association, for every dollar a farm family pays in property taxes, they use only 33 cents in public services. In contrast, residential property owners use more than a dollar's worth of services for every dollar in property taxes paid. Single-family residential developments are a net drain on a community's fiscal resources, because residential developments require costly school, road, and utility services.



Horses in a pasture on one of Worcester's preserved farms.

Preserved farmland protects Worcester's rural atmosphere and keeps the quality of life high for local citizens. Many of Worcester's new residents tell us they moved to the township to experience a more rural lifestyle and to be closer to farmland. They are thrilled to live so close to Montgomery County's only certified organic fruit and vegetable farm (Willow Creek Orchards, on Stump Hall Road) and one of its largest working dairy farms (Merrymead Farm, on Valley Forge Road).

Worcester now has eight preserved farms, for a total of 430 acres that will never be developed. Each year the Farmland Preservation Program preserves four or five farms in Montgomery County. Three Worcester farms were preserved in 2007, and five more Worcester farmers are applicants.

Funding for this program can vary from year to year, so farmers are encouraged to apply as soon as they can. Applying does not require a landowner to do anything further. It is always the farmer's decision whether to participate in the program.

What do Worcester farmers have to say about the program? Before he sold his development rights, one farm owner commented: "My biggest worry was that I would wake up one night years later in a sweat, realizing that I had made a huge blunder." When he received the money from the sale of his development rights, this landowner bought income-producing property (which allowed him to defer paying federal income tax on the capital gain from the sale). His real estate investments are now paying him rental income. "So far," he notes with a smile, "I haven't lost a bit of sleep."

When asked why he wants his farm preserved, another farmer noted: "Selling to a developer results in money in the bank, but not happiness and good health. Farm preservation enables one to leave a legacy to future generations which will contribute to their happiness and good health." Another applicant put it this way: "By preserving my farm, I can get some money to fund my retirement and still keep my farm. Plus, I am helping to preserve our quality of life in Worcester." That's a win for everyone.

Applying to the county's Farmland Preservation Program is simple. Information on the program is on the Montgomery County Planning Commission website, or you can contact the township's Open Space Coordinator, Susan Caughlan (610-584-5619 or [sgc@dca.net](mailto:sgc@dca.net)). To be eligible for preservation in 2008, your application must be filed by December 31<sup>st</sup>.

## Save on Your Taxes

Donating a conservation easement on your land is easier than you think, and now it can also provide a significant tax benefit for many landowners. Since August 2006, landowners who donate a conservation easement to preserve their land for open space or farming may be able to reduce their adjusted gross income by up to 50% on their federal tax form, for as long as 16 years. A landowner could end up paying only half of his or her usual federal income taxes for many years! Even better, some farmers may be able to qualify to reduce their taxable income by 100 %.

The purpose of a conservation easement is to protect important natural resources, scenic resources, or farmland. A landowner and the land trust representatives work together to customize the easement to reflect the landowner's desires and the mission of the land trust. A conservation easement can protect historically important buildings, working farmland, woodlands, or open fields. Conservation value does not necessarily depend on the size of the property. An easement can be donated on just part of a landowner's property.

These federal income tax deductions are scheduled to end on December 31, but land preservation advocates across

the country are working with Congress to make the deductions permanent. These tax incentives are a powerful tool to encourage the donation of conservation easements and preserve open space for the benefit of future generations.

There are additional benefits to a conservation easement for the landowner's heirs. Land that is permanently preserved is eligible for a reduction in federal estate tax. This is true whether the landowner donates a conservation easement during his/her lifetime, or in his/her will. In fact, the landowner's heirs can qualify the estate for a tax reduction by donating an easement on the land that they will inherit. Reducing the estate tax in this manner can be an effective way for families to pass land to the next generation.

Long-time Worcester resident, Planning Commission Chair, and FOW supporter Frank D'Lauro, who passed away in February, insured the preservation of his 104-acre property on Valley Forge Road by donating a conservation easement to a land trust in his will.

There are several sources of funding to help landowners with the costs associated with donating a conservation easement. Contact Worcester's Open Space Coordinator, Susan Caughlan, at [sgc@dca.net](mailto:sgc@dca.net) or 610-584-5619 for more information. 🌐

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

## Turnpike Widening Project

By now, most Worcester Township residents are aware of the bridge reconstruction and Northeast Extension turnpike widening project. The 10.5-mile stretch of the turnpike from the mid-county tolls to the Lansdale exit will be widened from four to six lanes, with 12-foot shoulders and a 26-foot median area. In the last 10 years, turnpike traffic has increased by approximately 50%, from 47,000 cars per day to 67,000 cars per day. In the next 30 years, that figure is expected to grow to 100,000 vehicles per day. We all recognize the need for this expansion, the first since the Northeast Extension was completed in 1957. However, what does it mean for Worcester Township?

The first construction phase of the project is scheduled to begin in the spring of 2008. In a recent interview, Frank Kempf, Chief Engineer for the project, stated that the overhead bridge replacements will be done first. Once this is completed, the turnpike widening phase of the project will begin, sometime in 2009 or 2010. Construction on the Kriebel Road and Bethel Road bridges is expected to begin early in 2008. Detours during bridge reconstruction are to be expected.

Worcester residents have expressed concerns about noise abatement and stormwater management. Following the strong and well-organized petition of residents living along

the turnpike, and with the urging of local elected officials, turnpike authorities recently conducted a second noise impact study. The Turnpike Commission plans to release the results of the reconstruction and widening noise study for the 10.5-mile project area from the Mid-County Interchange to the Lansdale Interchange in the spring of 2008.

Township officials and residents have also asked the turnpike engineers and officials to consider using stormwater management strategies that avoid large retention basins, which would make some tracts of farmland unusable. Naturalized retention basins and other run-off control strategies may be more eco-sensitive, attractive, and satisfactory solutions. As a result of "unprecedented" public input, plus the support of local officials and state representatives, the Turnpike Commission is reviewing new locations for stormwater basins in order to reduce the impact on residential properties.

The Commission is now preparing an alternative engineering design that may reduce the number of properties to be impacted by a taking. In early October, Project Manager Gerald Rollman stated: "The plans for the new design will be available for public review once additional work is done, and we coordinate with the regulatory agencies to ensure that their requirements can be met."

Go to FOW's home page, [friendsofworcester.org](http://friendsofworcester.org), and register your concerns on our Turnpike Project survey. For more information and to register to be included on the turnpike's e-mail list, go to the project website at [www.paturnpike.com](http://www.paturnpike.com) and click on the Major Design/Construction Projects link. 🌐

## PECO Substation Update

PECO announced this summer its plans to build an electric transmission substation in Worcester at one of two locations. The two sites being considered are the intersection of five PECO powerline corridors just west of the "S" bend in Fisher Road, and the southeast corner of Wentz Church Road and Fisher Road. Each site is approximately 9 acres in size.

In addition to several new transmission towers, PECO will build several structures that will be 20 to 30 feet high. An artist's rendering of a possible site design is posted on FOW's website, [friendsofworcester.org](http://friendsofworcester.org).

Once the site has been selected, PECO need only apply to the Pennsylvania Utility Commission for permission to build the substation. No township approvals are needed, although PECO has expressed a willingness to consider the township's input.

Updates on the siting and other issues will be posted on FOW's website, [friendsofworcester.org](http://friendsofworcester.org). 🌐

## FOW 2007 Photo Contest Winners

Congratulations to the winners of FOW's 2007 Photo Contest! This year, we expanded the contest to include a division for Worcester residents (amateurs only) as well as one for students at Methacton High School. The contest theme was "Water in Worcester."

You can see all of the winners' photographs in color at <http://friendsofworcester.org/2007photocontest.htm>.

### Adult Amateur Division — Digital First Place



Amy Alfonso  
Fairview Village

### Student Division — Digital First Place



Kristen Paciello  
Evansburg State Park

### Adult Amateur Division — Traditional First Place



David John Place  
Fairview Village

### Student Division — Traditional First Place



Jeff Kissinger  
Evansburg State Park

## Army Reserve Center Will Be a Park

Since June 2006, the township has been working with the Army and the Department of Defense's Office of Economic Adjustment to plan for the closing of the 19-acre North Penn Army Reserve Center on Berks Road. The closing is scheduled to take place in 2011.

The planning process was completed in September with the submission of the Base Reuse Plan to the Army. The plan calls for the base to become a township park. The township has already been given preliminary approval by the National Park Service (NPS) for its plan to redevelop the base as a park. The Army will review this plan and notify the township of its decision later this year.

Specific plans for the park will be developed closer to the date when the township will actually acquire the property. In the interim, the township will work with the Army and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection to ensure that the Army completes any necessary environmental cleanup. 🌱

# **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

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

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  
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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.

F07

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## CALLING ALL HORSE LOVERS!



Farmers' Union Horse Company is looking for new members. If you love horses and are interested in getting to know other equestrians in the area, why not join us at one of our meetings, which are held the first Monday of each month at 7:30 PM. Call Marty for information and directions — 610-584-5348.

We would also love to see you at one of our Flea Markets on Saturday, November 10, or Saturday, December 8, at Worcester Community Hall in Fairview Village — 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM.

[www.farmersunionhorsecompany.org](http://www.farmersunionhorsecompany.org)

## 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)

### Join us at these upcoming meetings and events

Meeting: Wednesday, Nov. 14  
7:30 p.m., Bean Road Nursery, at the corner  
of Bean Rd. & Whitehall Rd.

Holiday Potluck: Thursday, Dec. 27, 6:30 to 9 p.m.  
RSVP 610-584-0371

## Worcester Township Public Meetings

**Community Hall, 1031 Valley Forge Rd, Fairview Village**

### Board of Supervisors

Monday 8 am: Dec. 3  
Wednesday 7:30 pm: Nov. 21, Dec. 19

### Planning Commission

Thursday 7:30 pm: Nov. 8, Nov. 29, Dec. 13

### Zoning Hearing Board

Tuesday 6:30 pm: Nov. 27, Dec. 18

### Supervisors/Planning Commission Joint Meeting

Monday 9:30 am: Dec. 3