

FOWWOS NEWS



Friends of West Windsor Open Space, P.O. Box 73, West Windsor, NJ 08550
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President's Message

By Alison Miller

The past year has been a mixed one for FOWWOS. On the plus side, Trustees Kevin Appelget and Ken Carlson (also the President of the West Windsor Bicycle and Pedestrian Alliance) have organized and led a number of successful trail walks and trail building events. Thanks to their efforts, our preserved open space is more accessible to a more knowledgeable public. Also on the plus side, Trustees Ron Slinn, Kevin Appelget, Andrew Kulley, Bob Murray and as an alternate, I, have participated in meetings with the township administration in developing Individual Property Plans for open space parcels which remain undeveloped or still farmed. West Windsor Township has purchased the development rights to the Appelget Farm; FOWWOS was not involved in the agreement, but I was delighted to speak in favor of it in front of the Township Council. Also, FOWWOS began tabling at the Farmers Market in September, and intends to do so again next season, once a month.

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However, on the minus side, ongoing negotiations for purchase of several properties have not come to fruition, despite efforts by FOWWOS Trustees and West Windsor Township. And we have lost two of our most active and valuable Trustees, President Helen Rancan and Newsletter Editor Dick Snedeker. Dick has provided us with a final report on the Grover's Mill Pond dredging project while he has moved on activism in other organizations, and Helen's letter of resignation of February, 2008, explains her reasons for resigning. Both are and will continue to be missed.

Notice of Annual Meeting February 17th, 2009

Grovers Mill Pond Restoration Complete

By Richard Snedeker

Grovers Mill Pond Restoration Complete

After over forty years of discussion and planning, Grovers Mill Pond has finally been restored. The final steps of the long-awaited dredging took place in November with the final removal of the dredging equipment that had removed over 150,000 cubic yards of silt and vegetation that had built up and clogged the 37-acre lake during its 250-year lifetime. The newly transformed lake should now become an attractive spot for water-based recreation and the foul odors of rotting vegetation that frequently emanated from its surface during the summer will be a thing of the past. The silt deposition site at Community Park will be regarded next summer.

As long ago as the 1960s, studies showed the need for

pond restoration, but for decades there was always some drawback that prevented anything from actually being done. Not until this decade did a satisfactory plan emerge through the cooperative efforts of the N.J. Department of Environmental Protection, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, a plan that shared the cost among the township, the state, and the federal government.

A key element in the planning for restoration was the township-funded study in 1978 of the pond's ecological condition. Conducted by Allied Biological Control Corporation, this study revealed, among other things, that the pond contained over ten times the level of phosphorous. Please see *Pond* on page 3

Trail Walks

By Alison Miller

Trustees Kevin Appelget, naturalist, and Ken Carlson, President of the West Windsor Bicycle and Pedestrian Alliance, have been co-hosting a series of trail walk and trail cleanup events. Over the year, thanks to Kevin and Ken, the Zaitz Preserve trails were cleared and marked, a bridge was constructed and installed so that people could gain access from a new entrance off Southfield Road next to the Public Works facility, and a nature walk was held to introduce the public to this newly accessible amenity. Trail clearing was also performed and a nature walk also held at the Millstone and Rogers Preserves, during which people enjoyed the woods, familiarized themselves with the paths, and learned about the plants and birds common in the area. Unfortunately, the day set aside for walking in Bridegroom Run Park, the largest contiguous West Windsor-owned preserved open space was rainy, and will



Grovers Mill Pond

be repeated in the spring.

Walking wooded trails in West Windsor is an all-season pleasure. Cool in the summer, cozy in the winter, it is part of FOWWOS' mission to make more people aware of these local treasures and understand the value of preserving open space. The trails exist so people can enjoy nature; not for mountain biking or other vehicle-centered activities. Trail maintenance is intended to Please see *Walks* on page 4

Individual Property Plans (IPPs)

By Ron Rogers

Most of West Windsor's open space tax revenue (approximately \$1.5 million) is earmarked for additional land acquisitions. However, the November, 2006, referendum approved an increase in the proportion of those revenues that could be spend on open space "maintenance and development," from "up to 10%" to "up to 25%."

FOWWOS publicly opposed this provision, largely on the grounds that it would reduce the ability of the Township to acquire additional desirable properties as open space. However, when the referendum was approved, FOWWOS took the opportunity to work with the Township administration in developing precise maintenance and development proposals on selected open space properties already purchased by the Township. In other words, FOWWOS became involved in determining how the "up to 25%" of open space tax revenues might appropriately be spent.

The administration welcomed this involvement and set up a

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committee consisting of FOWWOS Trustees, some of whom are also Environmental Commission and/or Shade Tree Commission members, and Township staff members, to meet periodically to review draft IPPs for those properties that FOWWOS felt warranted specific maintenance and development budgets.

To date, volunteers have drafted IPPs for seven properties: The Rogers Preserve, Millstone Preserve, Zaitz Park (Preserve?), Crawford Woods, Chamberlain Park, Van Nest Park and the Rogers Arboretum.

The initial drafting process has, however, revealed the need for professional help, particularly with estimating the likely cost of proposals, but also with providing and documenting essential site-specific information on environmental aspects such as the presence of invasive vegetative species, the need for reducing fire hazards, and measures that will provide the desirable habitat for indigenous wildlife. To that end, the administration has recently engaged Chris Jepson, an environmental engineer who has served as environmental consultant to the West Windsor Planning and Zoning Boards for many years, to work with the drafting volunteers and staff to provide the necessary information to render IPPs effective and economically viable "manuscripts."

Past President's Message

By Helen Rancan

January 22, 2008: Dear Officers and Trustees of the Friends of West Windsor Open Space,

When I author the final version of business letters, I strive to remove the appearance of emotion from my original drafts. This time, I know I will not be successful. Because my eyes keep filling up with a salty liquid, it is impossible for me to write an emotion-neutral letter here.

It is with a deep sense of disappointment that I must render to you my letter of resignation as President of FOWWOS, effective February 29, 2008. I am resigning for reasons beyond my control. As a state employee, I have always had restrictions on outside employment or activity in which I may wish to associate. I have consistently met those obligations without question, as I do today. But those restrictions have changed, causing me, if I were to continue to adhere to conditions placed on me, to become ineffective as an officer or trustee of FOWWOS.

I come from a family which values civic engagement. As a West Windsor resident for only three months, I joined FOWWOS in January 1996, the day the old car was being auctioned for seed money for our infant organization. Since

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compounds that were considered characteristic of eutrophic conditions; that is, conditions that could never be improved unless the phosphorous content was drastically reduced. These compounds, which entered the pond with centuries of runoff from farms in the watershed upstream, promoted the uninhibited growth of bottom vegetation that clogged the pond's circulation and seriously degraded the quality of its water as a wildlife habitat.

Another important step was taken in 1988, when West Windsor celebrated the 50th anniversary of Orson Welles' radio broadcast of "War of the Worlds," the fictitious play that, by chance, was set in Grovers Mill. The celebration called widespread public attention to the condition of the pond and prompted then-Mayor Forrester to propose a three step plan toward restoration; first, the development of the waterfront at Van Nest Park, which borders the pond, in order to attract people who would support pond restoration, second, restoration of the dam at Clarksville Road (declared hazardous

then, I have had two children. My daughter was brand new when I was locked out of the car (with her sleeping in it) while placing a roadside sign for the 1998 referendum. Now, my five year old son enjoys running from tree identifier to tree identifier on the walkway at the arboretum. How the Rancan Family has grown with FOWWOS! Even with legal advice that I am making the correct decision, it is unimaginable for me to not be associated with FOWWOS in an official capacity. It is not that I believe FOWWOS cannot be successful without me, but that I need FOWWOS and the personal relationships I have grown to appreciate and respect. I know FOWWOS will continue to be an effective organization, to the benefit of township citizens.

I want to take this opportunity to thank my husband, Peter, who has been undying in his support of me. It is with his support that I have had this great and long tenure with FOWWOS.

Thank you all very much for your friendship, guidance and support. We may not have always agreed on specific open space issues, but I am a better person because of my association with you. So, too with your help, I hope I have instilled a sense of civic responsibility on my young children.

With deepest appreciation, Helen L.L. Rancan, President.

by the Army Corps of Engineers in 1979), and third, to restore the pond itself.

It may have taken twenty years, but the three-step plan is now complete.



Grovers Mill Pond

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**Preserving Land in West Windsor
Since 1996**

Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 17, 2009, in Room B at Town Hall. Everyone is welcome to attend. There are three Trustee incumbents up for re-election. All members who have paid their 2009 dues are eligible to vote. Past and future activities will be discussed, and the latest updates presented.



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maintain the integrity of the system and protect the area's natural resources. The Preserve Rules state, "Take nothing but pictures, leave nothing but footprints, kill nothing but time."

We're on the Web!

Visit us at:
www.fowwos.org

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Customer Name
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City, ST ZIP Code

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