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News & Events

Pennington Day Returns!

After a years' hiatus, Pennington Day is slated to return on Saturday, May 14. Please stop by the Friends' booth to meet Lauren (see below), view maps of the Valley's open space, ask questions, and pick up a t-shirt! We look forward to seeing you.

Big Changes for the Friends

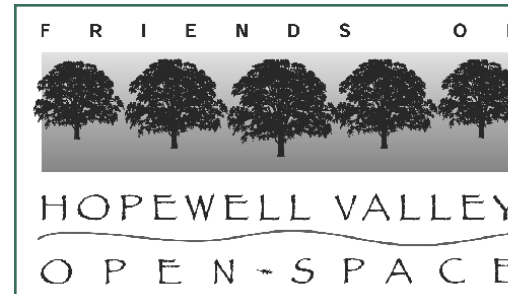
This past September, the Friends hired its first full-time employee! Lauren Hyer is running our new office in Washington Crossing State Park. She is working on some of the Friends' newest projects while helping get the word out about open space preservation. This big step would not have been possible without your generous support.

(President's Message cont'd. from page 3)

The total cost to Township taxpayers would be less than \$1 million, and the Township would save more than \$1 million annually in municipal services without the homes.

To save money, and to provide the densest area of the Township with much-needed open space, I urge you to support the redesignation of these parcels as unsewered areas and provide us with an opportunity to preserve these parcels. Write letters to the township elected officials or send letters to our local papers. Your voice should be heard. Let them know open space preservation in the southern tier is important to you. These 140 acres of open space can and should be preserved.

Ted Stiles



Spring 2005

Published by the Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space

FoHVOS News

How Does the Beazer Homes Development Proposal Affect You?

A Message from the President

Communities are faced with difficult trade-offs when weighing their housing needs against how intensely their land should be used. How land is slated for use is determined in many ways, but usually includes the development of a Master Plan and the creation of zoning ordinances to carry out the plan. Such trade-offs are at the heart of the complex, on-going negotiations underway in Hopewell Township about land located south of the Route 31 circle. Please understand that the community making these decisions includes anyone reading this who lives in Hopewell Township – in other words, you.

Beazer Homes, a major national developer, is currently working with a number of local citizens to propose the development of three properties in the southern tier of Hopewell Township. One of these parcels is owned by Beazer, and is located on the east side of Route 31. The other two are located on the side west of Route 31. They are under option to Beazer, but are currently owned by

other private parties. I will restrict my discussion to the two parcels west of Route 31.

Each of these two parcels is about 70 acres. If sewer systems are not built in this portion of the township, the land would probably support about 66 homes. These parcels are currently zoned to have one home per every two acres if there are no sewers. By sewerage the property, Beazer can, and has proposed to, build about 266 homes on these two sites. Although the two properties are within the current proposed sewer zone (208 zone), the Township has proposed removing this area from the sewer zone in the past, a proposal that is still under review.

Many homes in the vicinity of the properties have failing septic systems. Owners must pump their septic systems frequently, and even this does not always work. Beazer is potentially offering to help subsidize the costs associated with a new sewer line, and hook-ups, to encourage local homeowners to support their plans.

But new development does not come without environmental and financial

consequences. The construction of 266 homes with sewers, rather than the 66 that might be possible without sewers, will cost the taxpayers in the Valley. Each new home will require approximately \$13,000 in Township services each year, but the Township will only collect approximately \$7,000 a year in taxes from them. This \$6,000/year/home difference will leave Hopewell Township taxpayers with approximately \$1.2 million in additional taxes – not just once, but every year.

In addition to an increased tax burden, these homes will also generate additional traffic, noise and pollution. If construction leads to a significant increase in the school population, taxpayers will be asked to fund the construction of a new high school, which – if neighboring Montgomery offers us any lessons would cost a minimum of \$70 million. A new elementary school, which we discovered recently with the addition of Stony Brook Elementary, would cost about \$30 million. Beazer will not be covering these costs.

(President's Message cont'd. on page 3)

The purpose of the Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space is to promote conservation in the Hopewell Valley Region through open space preservation, wise stewardship, education and outreach.

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Preserved Land

The Kretch Preserve

The Friends acquired a beautiful stream-corridor property in January of 2004. The property is in the northwestern portion of Hopewell Township, adjacent to several large farmland properties that have been preserved under the Mercer County Farmland Preservation Program.

This 4.5-acre parcel includes a sloping successional field that meets a wooded stream corridor. It contains a part of the Harbourton Mature Woods, as delineated by Douglas W. White's, "The Woodlands of Hopewell Township, Mercer County, New Jersey." These woods contain a dominance of ash, red oak, tulip tree, basswood, black oak, and hickory. Some of the tulip trees and ash have diameters approaching 30 inches. The area has highly shaded stands of sugar maple saplings with an understory of spicebush and blackhaw. Wildflowers, including jack-in-the-pulpit, jewelweed, mayapple, bloodroot, wild geranium and bellwort, may be found in the forest understory.



Photo by Richard Grant
Snow covers part of the rolling stream on the Kretch Preserve.

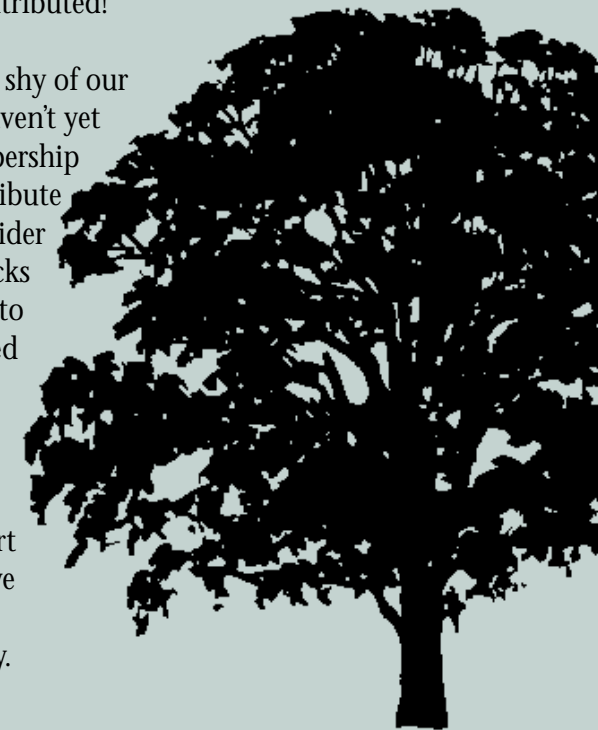
The property was acquired from Robert and Karen Krech, who sold the property to the Friends for half of its appraised value. Their extremely generous gift will be a legacy for the future citizens of the Valley who will be able to reap the benefits of this portion of their natural heritage in perpetuity.



Over 200 Strong

The Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space is in the middle of its annual membership drive. Over 200 people, in six different states, have shown their support for open space preservation in Hopewell Valley by joining the Friends. Thanks to all who have already contributed!

We are, however, still shy of our 2005 goal. If you haven't yet renewed your membership – or are able to contribute more – please consider doing so today! Checks can be made out to FoHVOS and mailed to
PO Box 395,
Pennington, NJ
08534.
We need your support as we work to preserve additional acres throughout the Valley.



(President's Message cont'd. from page 1)

Without sewers, there is a real possibility both parcels could be preserved for open space. The 140 acres could likely be purchased for less than \$5 million. Although \$5 million is no small sum, consider this. The additional tax burden of the Beazer homes would reach \$5 million in approximately four years. If the homes are built, this tax burden is permanent. If this development required a new high school, the costs to the taxpayers would be an additional \$5 million each year. In 10 years, the total tax burden could be \$62 million. Five million for acquisition then looks like a small sum.

With contributions from the State Green Acres Program (that will contribute 50% of the purchase price under the Green Trust Program, or \$2.5 million), and Mercer County's Municipal Assistance Program (that may contribute approximately \$900,000), and the Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space (that can contribute about \$1 million), we could be in a position to acquire the 140 acres that are under option to Beazer.

(President's Message cont'd. on page 4)



The Blackwell House, in Washington Crossing State Park, houses the Friend's new office.