

**CHARLESTOWN CITIZENS for
OPEN SPACE**

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Vote YES on April 22

Dear Charlestown Neighbor:

Subject: Use of new tax dollars

Charlestown Citizens for Open Space is a Political Committee created for the sole purpose of supporting the Open Space Referendum in Charlestown Township. It is comprised of a few Charlestown citizens who are committed to educating Charlestown voters on the benefits of open space preservation, which we believe is critical to keeping our taxes low long term and preserving the character of the township. To that end we have raised a small amount of money that has paid for the signs you will see throughout the township and a postcard that you will receive urging you to **VOTE YES** in the upcoming referendum.

Why should Charlestown voters be concerned about the upcoming referendum on open space?

The township supervisors have stated that they intend to increase the township tax by ½ of one percent (.005) in January 2009.

This is an action they can take under Pennsylvania law with or without a referendum. The supervisors are giving Charlestown voters the opportunity to commit this tax to preserving a portion of the remaining open space in the township. Passing the referendum accomplishes three major things:

1. It precludes the current and future supervisors from using the additional revenue to build an expensive township building, or to buy unneeded trucks, automobiles or other items that can be less expensively procured by outsourcing the township's required services.
2. It allows the Supervisors to borrow money via bonds so they are able to preserve more land from the onset of the implementation of the tax.
3. It protects the funds from the Great Valley School District.

Lower Taxes: In an article in the April 4 *The Phoenix* a Schuylkill Township Supervisor, Norm Vutz, "described the township (Schuylkill) as living "fat and happy" while proposed developments were coming in. Once the developments were completed, "the need for services" consequently grew, and the excess of funds depleted. Resident William Paul ... commented on the "**800 percent** tax increase over the past three years."

This scenario has played out again and again in townships in Northern Chester County. Charlestown enjoys the benefits of balanced development; the cost of excessive development is something we have the opportunity to avoid.

Preserving open space in Charlestown not only affects the tax rate in our township but it also affects the school taxes we pay to the Great Valley School District. We enjoy one of the lowest tax rates of any of the nearby districts. We estimate that the open space that has already been preserved, if developed at normal allowable density in Charlestown, would have required the building of an additional school and of course the school district would have incurred the cost of staffing and operating the school as well. In other words, since the original Earned Income Tax was enacted, Charlestown's preservation efforts prevented a school from needing to be built.

Real Estate Values: The Natural Lands Trust (<http://www.natlands.org>) in survey after survey has found that real estate values in areas with significant amounts of preserved land are higher. In a Penn State Study of Berks County, the University found that, regardless of the type of property, proximity to preserved open land increased the value of the residence. Conversely they found that proximity to open land that is not preserved reduced property values. When new housing is continuously available, existing homes may not be as desirable.

Our homes in Charlestown may be the largest single investment many of us have. Voting to commit the additional tax to the preservation of the value of this investment seems to be a prudent decision.

Water Quality: Whether you drink water from a well on your property or your water is piped in, preserving the quality of ground water and preserving the quality of the watershed are equally important. The reservoir on Route 23 is fed by Pigeon Creek, Pickering Creek, and other Charlestown streams. Over 550,000 people get their water from Pickering Creek Reservoir including those residents of Charlestown that receive their water from Aqua. For those residents with wells it is important to keep the aquifer replenished and undeveloped land allows for ground water absorption.

Quality of Life: Regardless of where you live in Charlestown Township, you and your children are in close proximity to enjoying the benefits of land preservation. Whether you enjoy walking on one of the many hiking trails spread throughout the township or just enjoy driving on Charlestown's scenic roads you are benefiting from land preservation.

The Slip Ramp: There is a finite amount of undeveloped land left in Charlestown that is not already designated for development. The turnpike slip ramp is coming soon. Undeveloped land in close proximity to this major artery connecting Charlestown to the Delaware Valley's major employment centers will put heavy pressure on our remaining land to be used for development.

An Immediate Opportunity: The Thompson Farm of over 400 acres bordering White Horse Road is now being used as a golf course. This land has been designated for development. Working with Schuylkill Township and the Thompson Family, Charlestown has the opportunity to drastically reduce the number of houses that are scheduled to be built there and to preserve a large portion of the land. The Supervisors need a yes vote on the referendum to save this important tract.

Now is the time for the citizens of Charlestown to act!

Vote YES on the upcoming referendum.

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