

Open Space Update

Protecting Open Space Remains A Priority

2005 was a busy year for the North Castle Open Space Committee (OSC). Over 2,442 acres in North Castle consist of privately owned, unprotected, and undeveloped land. The OSC's focus is to protect as much of this land as possible through conservation easements, donations, land swaps, rights of first refusal, and finally, when all else fails, acquisition. Thanks to the citizens of North Castle the town has a \$3M bond fund for open space acquisition. Obviously \$3M can't buy 2,442 acres. The OSC is determined to recommend expenditure of bond funds for acquisition only where and when using the money to leverage funds from State, County and private sources, the money can make the biggest impact. We are working constantly to make this a reality.

The following is a brief overview of some of the many projects the OSC was involved in in 2005 and our involvement continues in 2006:

1. Miller House / Washington Headquarters. This site of great historical importance has deteriorated to a terrible

condition. The OSC led the effort to get this site preserved and as a result there is a preservation effort under way today. But much remains to be done!

2. Seven Springs. This is the OSC's number one priority parcel for acquisition. **See story on p. 2.**

3. Armonk Square. This is a retail and residential development proposed for three acres in downtown Armonk (bordered by Main St., Maple Ave. and Bedford Rd.) that is currently before the Planning Board. The current 58,000 SF plan includes placing a road with parking on both sides through the Historic District located on Bedford Rd. The OSC has recommended protecting the Historic District by eliminating the Bedford Rd. access and decreasing the density of the plan. The developer rejected the OSC's idea of a land swap between the town and the developer so that one acre of open space could be added to the plan by moving some of the required parking to an extension of the current town parking lot.

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**North Castle
Open Space
Committee**

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Open Space Facts:

- ***95% of Town's water supply comes from wells***
- ***Decreasing open space degrades the quality of our water resources, ecosystems, recreational opportunities, and overall town character***
- ***North Castle is 16,776 acres. Only 1,882 acres are specifically preserved as open space***

Town Needs Your Input. Now is the Time!

North Castle needs your input on new legislation proposed by the Moratorium and Planning Zoning Study. One of the goals of the proposed legislation is to better protect our environment and open space. Public hearings have been held in January and February with another hearing set for March 8th at 7:00 pm at H.C. Crittenden School, MacDonald Avenue, Armonk.

The study and legislation may be viewed on the Town website at : <http://www.northcastleny.com/Moratorium/> or at the North Castle Town Clerk's office. The proposed actions include:

1. The rezoning of almost 2,100 acres of land from one residential zoning classification to another.
2. The rezoning of approximately 107 acres of land either to, from or between non-residential zoning classifications in the Town's three hamlet centers.
3. The adoption of an Aquifer Protection Overlay Zoning District designed to provide greater protection for approximately 1,680 acres of land situated over the Town's mapped groundwater aquifers of 10 acres or more.

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4. Rolling Hills. This was a 7 house subdivision located on Green Valley Rd. Due to the environmentally sensitive nature of this site and its location in a nature corridor, the OSC joined with the Conservation Board in recommending that at least 3 of the lots be donated to the town as permanent open space. To date, 2 of the 3 lots have been dropped making this a 5 house subdivision.

5. Dubos. This 30 acre parcel on Baldwin Road drains directly into Byram Lake. The owner, the Dubos Center, a non-profit organization, has tried to sell it to the developer Capelli. The sale was litigated since Dubos had received the property in return for its promise to keep it a nature center. The sale of the property is now before the Attorney General. The OSC has spoken with the Assistant Attorney General handling the

case and he understands our position that the donor's intent to keep this land a nature preserve must be honored.

6. DEP Purchases in the Kensico Watershed. The NYC Department of Environmental Protection has a large budget for purchasing land in the Kensico watershed. The OSC met with the DEP in 2005 to review parcels in North Castle that are in the Kensico Watershed which we thought the DEP should purchase. The DEP is pursuing a number of these parcels.

7. Former Armonk Bowl Site. This site on Old Route 22 is of extreme environmental importance because of the role it plays in the Kensico basin. The Kensico Reservoir holds drinking water for approximately one million NYC residents and more than 500,000 lower Westchester residents. The NYC DEP has expressed interest in purchasing the site, removing the building and parking lots and restoring a natural wetland system. In

addition, NYC would pay property taxes to the town. The OSC is working to make purchase and protection of this site a reality.

Who We Are

Open Space Committee Members:

Kerri A. Kazak-Lowe, Co-Chair

Richard A. Nardi, Co-Chair

Howard Arden

Jeff Brown

Joyce Gober

Robert M. Greer

Kate M. Hohl

Anthony R. Marano

Lawrence J. Nokes

Ann Putalik

Hal Silverman

Sharon Tomback

Julie Mucker—Committee Secretary

Seven Springs : OSC's Number One Priority Parcel

Seven Springs is the OSC's number one priority parcel for acquisition. Located on Byram Lake Road, Seven Springs is strikingly beautiful, from its acres of forests to its dramatic rock outcroppings, and rolling meadows. This 213-acre property straddles the towns of North Castle, Bedford, and New Castle, and has exceptional and unique characteristics. Out of the eleven North Castle properties identified as vital for open space preservation in the 1985 Westchester County Open Space Study, seven already have been developed. Now, the Trump Organization is proposing to build 17 homes on the property; nine homes in North Castle, totaling 103 acres, 8 homes in Bedford, totaling 80 acres. The application is currently before the Planning Boards of North Castle and Bedford.

Seven Springs is critical to the environmental quality of the area. This parcel is a primary source of water supply to Byram Lake, which is the sole source of drinking water for over 10,000 residents of Mt. Kisco, the business center, and Northern Westchester Hospital. Byram Lake also supplies drinking water to parts of Bedford and New Castle. Seven Springs serves as a critical link in a nature corridor of over 1,500 acres that runs from Leonard Park and Marsh Sanctuary in Mt. Kisco south through Butler Memorial Sanctuary, Merestead County Park, Westmoreland Sanctuary, and Meyer Preserve in Bedford and North Castle. These large tracts of contiguous open space protect our drinking water, provide habitats for a wide range of species, and provide the towns' residents with miles of recreational opportunities. The proposed development of this site will destroy and fragment important habitats. Furthermore, as the former estate of Eugene and Agnes Meyer of the Washington Post, this property is also an important historic site that provides a glimpse into the area's rich past. The former Seven Springs Farm and the Nonesuch properties which comprise the entire site are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

On April 20, 2005, the OSC held a work session with the Town Board to explain why Seven Springs is the OSC's number one priority parcel for acquisition. At the conclusion of this meeting, the Town Board agreed that if the owner was willing to sell, and we could get Mt. Kisco, Bedford, and New Castle, as well as the County and State to contribute money, that the Town Board would commit \$1M of the open space bond fund to purchasing Seven Springs. The OSC continues working to make the preservation of Seven Springs a reality.

Prioritizing Potential Open Space Acquisitions

The OSC uses the following criteria for identifying and prioritizing properties for potential open space acquisition:

- Presence of wetlands, lakes, ponds, streams and other water bodies on the property
- The impact of the property on wetlands and water bodies on adjacent lands
- Presence of steep slopes
- Location of property within an area identified as environmentally sensitive
- Presence of habitats and role the property plays as part of a nature corridor
- Presence of adjacent or nearby parcels of existing preserved land
- Historical significance of the property and structures on the property. Presence of adjacent or nearby property of historical significance
- Recreational opportunities and presence of adjacent or nearby property with recreational opportunities (for example: the ability for hiking trails on one piece of property to be connected with trails on adjacent property)
- Scenic significance, including reclamation of environmentally compromised areas and visually blighted areas

News Briefs

Inter-Municipal Protection of Open Space

On March 24th, the OSC will host an Inter-Municipal Conference on Open Space Protection for thirty five officials from North Castle, New Castle, Mount Kisco, and Bedford. The conference will focus on ways for communities to work together to protect our natural resources and open space. The Land Use Law Center of Pace Law School will conduct the training program. The OSC received a grant from the Hudson Valley Greenway to help fund this conference.

New Citizens Group Focuses on Smart Growth

Get involved with shaping the future of North Castle! Join the new citizens group called North Castle Residents for Smart Growth. The group focuses on informing residents

about development issues immediately impacting North Castle, particularly downtown Armonk, and lobbying for inclusion of citizen opinion in the planning process. For more information call 730-0145.

Meeting on the Community Preservation Act

The Community Preservation Act is a bill being considered in Albany to give towns the authority to establish a transfer tax for land acquisition. This act would help local communities create an ongoing funding source for open space acquisition. But its success in Albany is not guaranteed - and it needs our support. Find out what you can do. Come to the North Castle Town Hall Annex on March 7th at 7:00 pm. The Westchester Land Trust and Westchester Open Space Alliance are hosting a meeting on this important topic.

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4. The adoption of a Roadscape Preservation Ordinance to protect the attractive character of certain roadways.

5. The adoption of a Senior Citizen Housing Floating Zone designed to encourage the construction of housing for people 65 years of age and older.

6. The adoption of stronger Steep Slopes Regulations.

7. The adoption of "Environmental Subtraction Regulations" to reduce the land count of environmentally sensitive areas toward meeting minimum lot area requirements and also require that every new building lot contain a "Minimum Contiguous Buildable area"

exclusive of such environmentally sensitive features.

8. The Increase of the wetland buffer from 100 to 150 ft along high quality wetlands, waterbodies and watercourses.

9. The adoption of residential Floor Area Ratio (FAR) controls designed to limit house size in proper proportion to lot area.

10. The adoption of maximum Impervious Surface Coverage (gross land coverage) limitations.

11. The adoption of a modified building height standard.

If you can't attend the public hearing, please send your comments to the Town Board at 15 Bedford Road, Armonk, N.Y. 10504

North Castle Open Space Committee

17 Bedford Road
Armonk, NY 10504
Phone: 914-273-0346
Fax: 914-273-3554

MAILING LABEL

What Can I Do For Open Space?

- *Explore open space protection for your property—any size*
- *Get Involved*
- *Attend Town Board and Planning Board Meetings*
- *Ask Questions*

The Open Space Committee is a group of volunteers appointed by the Town Board. We are dedicated to tackling the challenge of preserving open space in North Castle. Our meetings are open to the public. We meet at 7:30 pm in the Town Hall Annex on the following Tuesdays: February 28, April 25, June 27, August 22, October 24, December 19. Come see what we are all about!

Call us at 273-0346