

## Open Space Referendum - Frequently Asked Questions

### **1. Why is the referendum being proposed?**

- a. Pressure to develop open space is increasing. Between 2010 and 2040, population is expected to increase 29.8% in Chester County and West Bradford Township is specifically projected to grow by 32.2%.<sup>1</sup> Voting in favor of the referendum allows West Bradford to more effectively manage its remaining open space and natural resources and preserve the beauty and uniqueness of this special area we call home.

### **2. Doesn't development help West Bradford's tax base?**

- a. Currently, West Bradford Township's tax base is stable where the taxes brought in cover operating expenses. Additional housing development, while increasing West Bradford Township's tax base, actually costs West Bradford Township residents *more* than what the additional tax base brings in due to increased infrastructure (sewer, roads, schools, etc.) and community service (police/fire/rescue, etc.) costs. A general rule of thumb is that for every \$1 of taxes brought in each year by a new household, West Bradford Township pays \$1.08 to support that household. Approving the open space referendum will minimize new residential development, preventing the imbalance in the tax base described above.

### **3. How does the referendum benefit West Bradford Township residents?**

- a. Voting in favor of the open space referendum benefits the entire township because it:
  - Preserves West Bradford Township's history, beauty and scenic landscapes
  - Minimizes traffic volume and congestion
  - Preserves ecological benefits such as clean water and air
  - Allows West Bradford Township to counter pressure from developers
  - Preserves our stable tax base

### **4. How does West Bradford's open space compare to other Townships?**

- a. West Bradford has significantly less open space preserved versus neighboring Townships. Currently, West Bradford has 19% of open space preserved compared to East Bradford at 38%, Newlin at 55%, East Fallowfield at 37% and Pocopson at 31%.

- 5. Do other townships in the area have an earned income tax for open space preservation?**
- Yes. Surrounding townships that have already passed an earned income tax referendum to protect open space include Newlin, East Bradford, East Brandywine, West Brandywine, Kennett, New Garden and London Grove among others.
- 6. What happens after the referendum passes in November?**
- The Township will then begin the development of an official plan which will spell out how properties will be identified, graded, and how the funding will be allocated. The Board of Supervisors will then determine the appropriate rate at which to set the open space tax which likely wouldn't take effect until the early 2018. If passed, the referendum will allow the board to raise the Earned Income Tax  $\frac{1}{4}$  of 1% (.0025), however, the Board has the discretion to set the rate anywhere from 0-.0025%.
- 7. Shouldn't the Township have the plan in place prior to the referendum passage?**
- No. The absolute first step in the process is allowing the public to vote on the referendum. After the public approves the referendum, formal work on the open space program and funding plan can begin.
- 8. What does  $\frac{1}{4}$  of 1% mean for me? How much will I have to pay?**
- On every \$1000 dollars of earned income an individual would pay an additional \$2.50. A person making \$50,000 per year would pay \$125.00 annually, or \$0.35 per day.
- 9. How will this tax affect seniors living on a fixed income?**
- Earned income applies only to wages paid for work such as: Salaries, commissions, bonuses, tips and other fees. This means that Social Security, interest earnings, capital gains, lottery winnings, unemployment, 3<sup>rd</sup> party sick pay, insurance proceeds, gifts, bequest, inheritance, active military duty pay are not impacted by Earned Income Tax.
- 10. Are there other ways the funds could be used?**
- No. Funds raised by virtue of the referendum, by State law, must only be dedicated to open space preservation.
- 11. Doesn't the referendum primarily benefit large landowners?**
- No. The referendum is intended to protect our remaining rural and scenic landscapes enjoyed by all of us. Easements are permanently tied to the land, not the owners and they remain in effect in perpetuity. By putting

scenic properties under easement, no matter who owns the land, the view can be enjoyed by all West Bradford residents.

**12. How will it be decided which properties to preserve?**

- a. Once the referendum is passed and the Board of Supervisors votes to increase the earned income tax, West Bradford Township, working with the Land Preservation and Sustainability Committee will develop a plan that will include a hierarchy of potential projects that is based upon a set of agreed upon environmentally and conservation minded criteria. Individual landowners may feel free to contact the Township should they be interested in pursuing open space funding for the protection of their specific property either directly or working along with any of the local land conservancy organizations.

**13. What is the role of the new Land Preservation and Sustainability Committee?**

- a. The Committee was formed earlier this year by the Board of Supervisors to advise them on a full range of issues affecting not only land preservation but also issues concerning environmental sustainability and protection of our natural resources more generally. Their first priority, however, is to help the Township in gaining approval of the Referendum and then developing a plan that will permit its effective implementation.

**14. Is the intent of the open space referendum at all connected to the Embreeville property?**

- a. No. There is no intention to use open space funds to purchase Embreeville. Open space funds are governed strictly by state law and cannot be used for demotion, cleanup, or remediation. Currently, the Embreeville site is in litigation which could go on for several more years.

**15. Development has already hit West Bradford, isn't it too late to start a preservation program?**

- a. No. Currently West Bradford has approximately 50 properties that are between 20+ acres and undeveloped.

**FORE MORE INFO:** *If you have questions, comments or concerns about the referendum, please contact Justin Yaich, Township Manager. [Jyaich@westbradford.org](mailto:Jyaich@westbradford.org)*

<sup>1</sup>Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, 2012