

March 1, 2006

Dear Wyckoff Planning Board,

I am inspired to write a letter to those who will determine the fate of the Ravine area in Wyckoff by a variety of reasons. I don't live in Wyckoff, but of course that would not keep me from being concerned that yet another natural space in our beautiful county was being destroyed. Several weeks ago, I read an article about a couple of high school students who were writing to Tara Reid to ask for her help in saving the land that she grew up on. Then last week I began seeing lawn signs reading "savetheravine.org" and realized I needed to do whatever small thing I could to help. We all need to realize what we are doing to our environment, destroying wetlands, adding to flooding problems, increasing fertilizer use (not too many animals insist on a chemically treated lawn!). I shudder when I think about the amount of trees that are clear-cut to make room for yet another house; when we erase our beautiful trees we are effectively eliminating the only thing protecting us from CO2 emissions and the heat of the sun. I still remember the day I drove down Century Road near Paramus Road and had to slow down in disbelief that all those trees were gone. I still shake my head when I drive past that development, ironically called "Bretton Woods"...and where are the woods?

I understand, however, that the people who own the property have the right to do what they want with their land. I suppose that is the ultimate dilemma. Many people want open space, but unfortunately nobody can bear the brunt of the cost.

I suggest that those in charge of determining the fate of undeveloped land look to something that my husband and I first learned about 15 years ago while visiting Nantucket, Massachusetts. It should be called the "Nantucket Model" and while it has not limited the size of mansions being built on this exquisite island, it has made sure that for every real estate transaction that takes place, some open space is preserved. The Nantucket Land Bank was established by a special act of the Massachusetts legislature in 1983 in order "to acquire, hold and manage a diversity of important open space resources for the use and enjoyment of the general public." Revenue for the Land Bank comes from a 2% real estate transfer fee levied against most real estate transactions. The Land Bank is managed by five elected commissioners who serve without compensation and four full-time year round staff members. Since its inception, it has collected \$121 million in real estate monies and acquired over 2,382 acres of land, which will be forever protected. Their website is www.nantucketlandbank.org for anyone who is interested in this forward-thinking initiative that is the only one of its kind in the nation.

Please think about what we are doing every time we allow developers to strip away the beauty of our land. There is still time to save what we have.

Sincerely,

Beth Toolen