

Official chose to not buy up tract

Monday, August 13, 2007

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To the Editor:

Committeemen Rick Watson's letter "No rush to spend in Morris Twp.," was a response to my input about the township's master plan.

I am certain that open-minded open space and township committees can find creative ways to increase our open-space inventory and improve our quality of life without wasting our open-space dollars. But this will require a change in their thinking and assumptions.

Eligibility should not be limited to large tracts, and greenways, because those opportunities are virtually exhausted. Today, only 100 acres of open space parcels remain for possible purchase, and most of it is wet, according to our planner and mayor. Yet, we are getting more crowded as we add high-density housing in so many parts of our township.

I would like to remind the people of Morris Township that since the 1992 establishment of the open space trust, Watson's inflexibility has lost us several opportunities. For example, he resisted obtaining the 21-acre Joest property when the owners gave the township first rights. Watson apparently objected to buying the building on the property along with the land.

Tree removal and construction of four homes is now slated. Likewise, the township decided against a purchase of pocket park land that was offered by a resident of Canfield Road. Now, a large home stands where specimen trees with a hawk's nest used to stand.

I say "zero spending" is not the same as "fiscally responsible." Responsible spending would improve the town over time. And I would like to warn the people of Morris Township that on Watson's watch over the past five or six years, the average annual increase in municipal budgets, taxes and spending has been in double digits. And that is without spending the open space trust fund surplus. Now that is extreme.

RON GOLDBERG

Morris Township

The writer is a Democratic candidate for the Morris Township Committee.

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