

Letters To The Editor

MORRIS TOWNSHIP

Don't 'redirect' open space funds

To the Editor:

In 1991, Morris Township voters approved a new \$.01/\$100 "open space" tax and trust fund by a margin of 2 to 1 and later, approved two 1-cent increases. The mandate to the township committee was to use this new tax and trust fund to purchase and preserve open space in the township. Last year, the committee voted to not collect two-thirds of the allowable amount, since it said it had enough money without it and wanted to lower taxes where it could. Now the committee proposes an ordinance that would redirect "open space" funds toward improvements and development of active recreation facilities and fields. In my view, this would be improper use of "open space" funds and contrary to the will of the voters.

I am disappointed that last year the committee couldn't find a way to use the new tax dollars as mandated. Surely there are pieces of

land to buy. But perhaps not collecting the tax is the committee's way of showing disagreement with two-thirds of the electorate that voted for the open space tax.

Although I'm disappointed that two-thirds of the open space tax wasn't collected last year, I'm outraged that the committee wants to do an "end run" and use the money to supplement its operating budget. This is a de facto general tax increase.

We have already experienced general municipal tax rate increases over the last three years adding up to more than 40 percent.

This committee is ambivalent about using targeted tax dollars to purchase and preserve "open space" and is ambivalent about bringing our property taxes back into line. Is this committee worthy of the trust voters Morris Township voters have placed in them?

RON GOLDBERG
Morris Township