

Township of Franklin

Somerset County, New Jersey

Somerset County Open Space Trust Funds

Vote on November 8, 2005

We live in the most densely populated state in the nation. In fact, it is projected that within the next twenty years New Jersey will be the first state to be considered "built out". Every day we are forced to deal with crowds, heavy traffic, strip mall after strip mall and new developments encroaching from every direction. To help combat this, residents from many municipalities and counties have approved "open space trust funds" to preserve what little open space remains. Somerset County residents overwhelmingly approved their fund for this specific purpose. The Somerset County Freeholders now want to use some of these funds to construct active recreation facilities and have placed this on the November 8th ballot for our approval or disapproval. The Franklin Township Environmental Commission believes this would drastically reduce the county's ability to preserve our open space before it disappears forever. The voters were not casting a Yes vote to build "corporate retreats", ice skating rinks and indoor swimming pools, which is what some Freeholders are suggesting. Nor did they intend to supplement the County Parks Department's budget with open space trust fund money. While the Environmental Commission is not against active recreation, the use of these funds should not deviate from the voters' original mandate until the last parcel of privately owned land up for sale has been purchased. Only after this occurs should the voters be asked to either use these funds for other purposes or to eliminate the tax altogether. To formally protest the Freeholder's proposal the Commission sent them a resolution, which can be viewed on this website, in opposition. We are also actively working with other Somerset County Environmental Commissions to do the same. Regardless of what the Commission members think, the ultimate choice will be cast with your vote on November 8th. We urge everyone to exercise this most precious freedom. It is our belief that the majority of our county residents will send a clear message to our Freeholders that the preservation of our dwindling open space, which reduces pollution, protects natural resources, wildlife and valuable watersheds used for drinking water, is far more important than constructing "corporate retreats".

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