

Out-of-towners tip bond issues

'Big money' for Ulster open space

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By Paul Brooks
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Gardiner — Pam O'Dell was on one side of the Gardiner environmental bond issue in November. Little did she know what she was up against — big money from out of town.

O'Dell dug into her own pocket for \$700-\$800 to buy signs opposing the Gardiner ballot question. Records from the state Board of Elections show that environmentalists poured nearly \$9,000 into Gardiner and spent more than \$28,000 total across the towns of Gardiner, Marbletown and New Paltz.

Two of three ballot questions nearly fizzled. The bond issue in Gardiner passed by a single vote. In Marbletown, the margin of approval was only 7 votes out of 2,201. The winning cushion was a comfortable 899 in New Paltz.

The outcome: Environmentalists and their supporters won \$5.5 million to preserve open space. Voters approved \$2 million in New Paltz, \$2 million in Marbletown and \$1.5 million in Gardiner.

Most of the money and services backing the bonds came from outside the county. Environmental groups from Boston, Tallahassee, Fla., and New York poured more than \$21,000 into the campaigns. Individuals chipped in about \$7,000.

"A lot of people are bothered by the outside interests coming in and basically dictating what is happening in our town," O'Dell said.

"Outside money is infiltrating our county, and it is big money," said county Republican Legislator Glenn Noonan, who represents the area.

The hard money, about \$10,000, came from the Conservation Campaign in Boston. It's an affiliate of the Trust For Public Land, based in Tallahassee, which provided other services as well.

"The assistance we provided clearly made the winning difference in Gardiner and Marbletown," said Ernest Cook, director of the Conservation Campaign. "Those votes were unexpectedly close. We still don't know what happened."

Cara Lee works with The Nature Conservancy, based in New Paltz, and is director of the Shawangunk Ridge Biodiversity Partnership. She said the Conservation Campaign and TPL were invited to help by the towns involved.

The idea was to educate voters. "If they don't know about it, they are less likely to vote for it, because there is a tax implication," she said. "This was a robust discussion," she said. "I don't think anybody was suppressed or overwhelmed."

BIGGEST DONORS FOR open space bonds

- Gardiner Bond Campaign, a Project of the Conservation Campaign

\$8,950.71 total raised from 59 contributors. Approved 961-960, 1-vote margin

\$3,533: Conservation Campaign, Boston

\$954.13: The Trust For Public Land, Tallahassee, Fla.

\$500: James Ottaway Jr., Campbell Hall

\$300: Elan Schultz, Brooklyn

\$250: Gardiner Democratic Committee, Gardiner

\$200: David Rossetter, Gardiner

\$200: Steven Stankiewicz, New York

\$150: Kathryn Adorney, Gardiner

\$150: Philip Herschenfeld, New Paltz

\$100.47: Friends of Janet Kern, New Paltz

\$100: Yvonne Allenson, New Paltz

\$100: Matthew Bialecki, Gardiner

\$100: Anne Bienstock, Wallkill

\$100: Peter Bienstock, Princeton, NJ

\$100: Gale Foster, New Paltz

\$100: Alexander Garvin, Gardiner

\$100: Cheryl Greene, New York

\$100: Johanna Hecht, Gardiner

\$100: Frederic Mayo Jr., New Paltz

\$100: Raymond Smith Jr., Gardiner

\$100: David Straus,

Gardiner

\$100: Laurie Willow,

Gardiner

• Marbletown Farmland Preservation Bond Committee,

a Project of the

Conservation Campaign

\$6,974.22 total from nine contributors

Approved (on recount) 1104-1097, margin of

7 votes

\$3,708.62: Conservation Campaign, Boston

\$1,200: M1 Communications, Stone Ridge

\$1,000: Open Space Institute, New York

\$715.60: The Trust for Public Land, Tallahassee

\$100: Jennifer Cairo,

Stone Ridge

\$100: Robert Gilliland, Accord

\$150: Shari Turitz,

New York

• New Paltz Clean Water Open Space Bond Campaign, a project
of the Conservation

Campaign

\$12,772.10 total from

12 contributors

Approved 2,144-1,245, margin of 899

\$6,574: The Nature Conservancy, New Paltz

\$3,533: The Conservation Campaign, Boston

\$715.60: Trust For Public Land, Tallahassee

\$500: James and Mary Ottaway, Campbell Hall

\$500: The Open Space Institute, New York

\$150: Victoria Danskin, New Paltz

\$150: Ann Rodman,

New Paltz

\$100: Roger Roloff,

New Paltz

\$100: Craig and Debra Shankles, New Paltz