



NO TAXPAYER MONEY TO FUND OPEN SPACE!!!!

By Marion Kells, 8/3/06

Lewis Eisenberg, co-chairman of Gardiner's Open Space Committee, announced that the committee, working with Behan consultants, was about to complete an Open Space Plan for our town. But there was the question of funding for this enormous undertaking. So, he proposed a \$1.5 million bond, which is to be seed money, mind you. There will definitely be much more money needed later. Taxpayer money. And he went on to justify this by reporting that the Trust for Public Land had just conducted a telephone survey of 175 Gardiner residents and found that everybody loves open space and wants more of it. When asked at the July Town Board meeting if the questions in the survey were available, Mr. Eisenberg wasn't sure, but said that TPL is very secretive.

Any dummy knows that a survey or questionnaire can be worded to get a desired outcome. The TPL's desired outcome is not hard to fathom.

Next, (was it because the above gaffe discredited the TPL survey?), a new survey came in the mail this week. It was from Supervisor Zatz. It also was about open space and "how do you feel about it?" It was almost like asking how you feel about apple pie. Who could be against it? But the glaring omission in this survey was "how do you feel about a tax increase to pay for it?" Since that question was missing from the supervisor's survey, we sent ours back unchecked.

On all sides this season there is an outcry against property taxes. Supervisor Zatz is one of the leaders in this movement. How can he and others overlook the burden open space bonding and the ensuing costs will place on taxpayers? The timeworn phrase "just a few dollars per thousand of assessed valuation" must not fool anybody anymore. It was by just a few dollars here and a few dollars there that the present "nightmare" was built.

I urge everyone in Gardiner to get a copy of the Open Space Plan. It is over 100 pages proposing control and restrictions on the land we own.

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