

Let's Tell Wayne Township:
ACQUIRE THE "GRACE CHURCH/PREAKNESS AVE. FOREST" TO PROTECT WILDLIFE, 'OPEN SPACE' & THE GRACE UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH!



A deer resident in the 'Grace-Preakness Forest' 2/25/20

Wayne, N.J., February 25, 2020 -- Grace United Presbyterian Church, 981 Preakness Ave., received Wayne's permission* to sell off a three-acre forest but is now asking the Town to help save it**. The property is valued at about \$800,000, or about *twenty (20) percent* of Wayne Township's the *annual* "Open Space Trust Fund" revenues***.

JOIN / SUPPORT OUR COMMITTEE TO SAVE THESE WOODS - AND OTHERS IN WAYNE!

See: FACEBOOK "SAVE THE GRACE PREAKNESS FOREST"

- CONTINUED -

For almost 50 years, the Church has been the unpaid 'custodian' of the beautiful, wildlife-rich forest around its Church. The woods provide an increasingly rare 'oasis' among galloping development and environmental destruction in Wayne and elsewhere.)

Wayne enjoys a *legal mandate* in its own laws, to protect, preserve, and acquire natural ("open") space, to protect biodiversity and local Quality of Life:

"... Additionally, the purpose of this article shall be to control... [the] excess destruction, removal and culling of trees...which which will result in creating increased soil erosion and dust, deteriorated property values and most particularly adversely altering the biological and ecological composition and balance of the Township thereby resulting in irreparable harm to the environment to the detriment of this community..."

Wayne Ordinances, Chapter 134 (Land Development), Article VI (Environmental Protection), Section 134-91.1

Wayne has irreparably lost too FAR TOO MUCH
Natural space and CANNOT afford to lose ANY MORE
Let's ACQUIRE this land, with funds meant for that purpose!

Why are we at this point?

- It's been 'business as usual' -- Endless 'development' profits developers, adds construction jobs, sells material, and adds '**free tax revenues**' through property taxes, and the authorities have blatantly ignored the open-space 'balance' mandate.
- Demonstrating the relentless, often secretive development practices in the Town, last October, bulldozers summarily leveled a prominent fifteen-acre forest -- home to deer etc. -- on Hamburg Turnpike next to **Hibachi Grill/ Chase Bank/ Valley Rd.** -- with ZERO discernable public-notification or input. There was no 'balance', even next to a park. (See, www.Planet-in-Peril.org).
- The Wayne Zoning Board effectively ignores **neighbor-opposition** even when it has the power to say "No", despite continuous news about our deteriorating planet and communities: climate change, extinction, forest fires, wildlife de-population, excessive traffic, air and noise pollution, etc. The Zoning Chairman derides critics, or worse.*
- The **Wayne Open Space Committee** appears to be un-staffed and non-functioning.****
- The Open Space Trust Fund appears to be *ransacked* for non-open space purposes: the authorities appear to allocate almost all its annual revenue -- fully \$3 million -- to

mysterious "other expenses" with only \$50,000 listed as assigned to (but not spent on) "acquisition of lands"***. Our questions to Town budget officials have not been answered.

- The financial-accounting for the Open Space Trust Fund appears to be missing key data asked for in the official accounting work-sheet -- how much space has been preserved and how has the money been spent -- from Wayne's 'approved' 2019 budget (as carried online), with no explanation***.

Wayne -- and our deeply damaged Planet -- needs trees, shrubs, living soil and forests-system to sustain wildlife, birds, insects, fresh air, and mentally-enhancing communities. This small forest and others must be protected to (a) protect our future and (b) to follow Wayne's own laws.

The Church has approached the Town**** asking for help -- even after having received approval for a sub-division, calling preservation "**ethically preferable**"!

Help create a committee to lobby Wayne to acquire this small forest -- and others -- as protected 'Open Space'.

See Facebook, "Save the Grace-Preakness Forest" for important announcements.

*Contact organizer Richard Brummel at (201) 749-7065 and **rxbrummel@gmail.com**.*

NOTES:

*On Feb. 18, 2020, the Wayne Zoning Board finalized permission to 'subdivide' the forest, over-riding some neighbors' opposition and an online petition, with the Chairman Paul Van Giesen dismissing opposition and stating in effect, to paraphrase: "You live in a house too, so don't criticize houses" -- an empty **old canard** similar to saying "You have a car, so don't oppose a highway in your living-room" -- alleged 'logic' which effectively abdicates the job of the Zoning Board to control and regulate land-use. See <https://www.waynetownship.com/boa-agenda/board-of-adjustment-documents.html?task=document.viewdoc&id=6267> [viewed 2-24-20]

**Pastor Andy Smith emailed Wayne Mayor Christopher Vergano on Wednesday, Feb. 26, 2020: "Grace United Presbyterian Church -- Open Space Purchase Inquiry": "I'd also like to find out if the Town has any open space funds available..." The Church said it would entertain an offer "over \$600K".

***<https://www.waynetownship.com/finance-documents.html?task=document.viewdoc&id=5663> Wayne 'Approved' Budget for 2019, Sheet #43 [viewed 2-29-20]

****See the Wayne Township website, showing NO meetings and no members listed for the Open Space Committee <https://www.waynetownship.com/open-space-committee.html> [viewed 2-24-20]: The Environmental Commission is said to meet monthly, yet no Minutes are posted and there is no way listed to

contact it: <https://www.waynetownship.com/env-commission.html> [viewed 2-24-20]

Organizer Richard Brummel, author of Planet-in-Peril.org, moved to Pompton Lakes for a 'personal reason' two years ago from Long Island, where from about 2013 to 2017 he pursued over a dozen legal actions in state court against developers and local governments to protect nature and the environment. His work was featured in **The New York Times** (*see*, [nytimes.com/2017/02/26/nyregion/squirrel-hunt-western-new-york-animal-lovers-protest.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/26/nyregion/squirrel-hunt-western-new-york-animal-lovers-protest.html)) and on TV and print media throughout the Long Island region and upstate. He is not an attorney but with a background in public policy, journalism and law, became an effective non-attorney litigator in New York. "In Wayne, when they cut down the 'Hibachi Grill / Ullman Forest' a day after I passed the 'For Sale' signs, I knew it was time to get to work here, fast!" he explained.