

To the Editor,

In the forthcoming Milford town vote on March 8th, the town's Conservation Commission requests the authorization of the town residents for Articles 17 and 28

Article 17 is for the appropriation of \$20,000 for the Land Fund, an annual cost of only ~\$3 to a Milford household of average property value.

The Land Fund is a 'rolling' fund i.e. monies accumulate from year to year (unless spent). The fund currently stands at \$53,000, and includes the \$20,000 generously authorized by the town last year. The Budget Advisory Committee has recommended in the past that this fund should hold a minimum of \$75,000, adequate to that reasonably required to execute land and easement purchases. We therefore ask that the voters also authorize this year's request. The failure to be able to protect land from development has, in the recent past, resulted in significant loss of land of high conservation value. The Land Fund has, over many years, helped protect in excess of 1000 acres of land in the town for wildlife habitat, groundwater protection and public recreation. Trails have been maintained and improved, and outreach conducted to encourage residents to take advantage of this free leisure resource.

The Commission also requests the voters support Article 28. This is zero-cost and seeks, through placement of a Conservation Easement, to permanently protect Hitchiner Town Forest's 193 acres from development, while continuing to allow timber harvests, and the many recreational pursuits actively enjoyed there by many town residents including hiking, biking, hunting and snowshoeing.

The current Town Forest designation does not permanently protect the property. It could be reversed by town vote at any point in the future. The easement request here is pursuant to the original Warrant Article (#21) in 1986 that put the property under the stewardship of the Conservation Commission "for the purpose of preserving the land in its natural state for the benefit of all the residents of the town of Milford".

The Conservation Commission hope that the townspeople will agree that these two warrant articles are worthy of support to advance preservation of land of high conservation value in the town, and we ask for your support by voting for Yes to Articles 17 & 28.

Milford Conservation Commission