

August 1, 2014

Ms. Elizabeth Kuehner , c/o Elizabeth Hanson Kuehner Trust
201 Cedar Avenue
Somerdale, NJ 08083

Re: Support for Preservation of Whitman Woods Property

Dear Ms. Kuehner:

Thank you for making me aware of your family's wish to see the family property, an approximately three acre parcel on the banks of Laurel Lake in Laurel Springs Borough, preserved in perpetuity. I was able to tour the site in the summer of 2012, when I was also invited to a Laurel Springs Borough Council meeting to present the findings of our study on the economic value of open space. I understand the property is now referred to as Whitman Woods, to memorialize the connection to Walt Whitman's days in the very same vicinity.

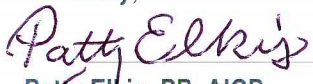
I found the Whitman Woods property to be a beautiful piece of land with mature trees, a nice network of trails, and even an access point to the lake front for fishing and boating. It appeared that the community has been using Whitman Woods for a long time as a place to walk, access the lake, and enjoy the serenity of the outdoors. This is especially important in a built up neighborhood like Laurel Springs, and again especially important for children, who need nearby places to experience and appreciate nature so that they can become our stewards of tomorrow.

At the council meeting that August of 2012, I relayed the findings from our study "Return on Environment" <http://www.dvrpc.org/openspace/value/> that demonstrate how the protected open spaces in our region generate millions of dollars in value every year by increasing property values, providing ecosystem services like cleaning the air and water, offering health and recreation benefits, and stimulating economic activity.

I was impressed by the turnout at the August council meeting, which was literally standing room only, and the outpouring of local support for preserving Whitman Woods. The neighbors spoke eloquently of their use and attachment to Whitman Woods, and their desire to see it preserved for generations to come.

I understand that you have secured the Walt Whitman Arts Center to become the nonprofit owner of the property, with likely stewardship assistance from South Jersey Land and Water Trust, provided funding for acquiring the property can be obtained. I know that you have worked very hard to investigate many options for how to make this work, I commend your efforts, and I hope that your family will be successful in preserving Whitman Woods for all to enjoy.

Sincerely,



Patty Elkis, PP, AICP
Deputy Planning Director