July 10, 2014

Camden County Freeholder
Camden County Parks Division
Camden County Open Space Director Jack Sworaski
Walt Whitman Arts Center
Elizabeth Hanson Kuehner Trust

c/o Elizabeth Hanson Kuehner Trust
201 Cedar Avenue
Somerdale, New Jersey 08083

RE: Kuehner Parcel, Beech and Glen Avenues, Laurel Springs, Camden Co, NJ

Dear County and Preservation Professionals:

The Kuehner Trust proposes preserving the last undeveloped access to Laurel Lake. This parcel has a long local history that ties generations of Laurel Springs’ citizens to the water resources offered by Laurel Lake. I know this because I was one of those kids that fished from the banks and roamed this parcel from the late 1950s through the 1970s. I know this property intimately and know how valuable it is to the Borough and the County.

The Kuehner property offers nearly 550 feet of frontage on Laurel Lake. The Borough offers no such lake access other than the ends of Park Avenue and Walnut Avenue. The Kuehner tract could be the best access into the public lake that is otherwise inaccessible to the General Public. This tract offers some of the best roosting sites for two notable protected bird species. The tract supports massive, ancient American beech, white oaks and other native species. These trees have been on the site prior to the inception of the Borough in 1929. Recent wildlife observers have seen the bald eagle and red-shouldered hawk roosting in these trees. Both birds are protected raptors now frequenting the Big Timber Creek. The site occupies an upland terrace upon which my great grandfather collected middle archaic archaeological relics in the early 1900s, documenting the continuity of land uses on the tract that spans nearly 7,000 years.
In addition to the biological and cultural significance, the site also supports globally restricted geological deposits. Exposed on its lakefront is the globally rare Vincentown Formation. Within the deposit are fossils of a marine species. This formation is a piece of ancient Eocene marine deposits found nowhere else but in a narrow band in southern New Jersey and again in Denmark and northern Germany.

Indeed, this is a small tract with many opportunities to preserve a range of resources as well as providing open space in a Borough lacking such a natural setting. Unlike many Camden County municipalities, Laurel Springs is unique. The Borough has been near a complete build out, the occupation of every available parcel, since the 1960s. Only small infill parcels have been available for residential development, providing very few opportunities to offer open space. The Kuehner tract is one such infill parcel that offers the rare opportunity to provide open space and natural resource protection within a landscape that is in dire need of such an undeveloped parcel.

It is your decision on how open space money is spent. The Kuehner tract may not be the ideal property, offering acres upon acres of space, but it provides aspects of open space that mimics such larger parcels. Unfortunately, you are about 50 years too late to provide acres of open space to the citizens of Laurel Springs. Those days have passed us by, with the exception of the Kuehner parcel. Tracts such as the Kuehner land come by but once in a lifetime. It is our last chance to provide protection to a bit of prehistory, natural resources and unique Big Timber Creek landscape that drew so many to the region. I hope that you will concur the site has merit and is worthy of your consideration and dedication of a small bit of open space funding. The choice is yours. Please do not let this opportunity to preserve critical open space on Laurel Lake pass.

Thank you,

Sincerely,

Joseph Arsenault