

SCITUATE LETTER: Thanks for saving the woods

April 23, 2009

SCITUATE – To the Editor:

For the last eight years, we've looked out at beautiful woods just 30 feet from our back door. We hesitated to move here, however, because, at the time, the entire forest behind our home was under contract to the Toll Brothers who planned a 55-home development there. Like many others, we were thrilled, and extremely relieved, when the Toll Brothers' deal fell apart.

In the intervening years, the twin blessings of the Community Preservation Act and the Maxwell Conservation Trust enabled the town to purchase large tracts of the West End woods as conservation land. Trails were cleared and we noticed more and more people hiking, biking, horseback riding and walking their dogs past our back yard along Bates Lane. And we enjoyed watching the deer, fox, wild turkeys and coyotes roam there, too.

But the woods out our door were still owned by a family that we heard wanted to develop the property because it was held in trust for their children, to whom they had a fiduciary obligation. When we got the abutters' notice regarding the planned development, we were stunned to learn that only a small portion of the total property was to be developed, and that the land behind our house was targeted to become conservation land.

Since receiving that notice a year ago, we have attended many neighborhood and town committee meetings with members of the Hennessey family, supporting their effort to create "The Glen", a low-impact flexible open space development widely touted as a model of smart growth. The Hennesseys have worked tirelessly over two years with the Maxwell Trust to arrange the purchase of more than half of their property as conservation land using Community Preservation Act funds.

At last week's Town Meeting, we planned to speak in favor of the Hennessey purchase but had no need to, as no one opposed it. Still, we want to publicly thank the Hennesseys for their generosity to our town, and for the grace they have shown through numerous "bumps in the road" in the process of getting their plans approved through all necessary town committees. Every day, we feel blessed to look out on their beautiful woods, which are now our beautiful woods, and also yours.

It is hard to imagine how this could have happened without the dedication and determination of the Maxwell Trust to preserve the largest, unfragmented forest remaining in Scituate. We are all lucky to have the Trust working on behalf of open space preservation in our community. Thank you Maxwell Conservation Trust. Thank you Hennessey family. And thank you Scituate voters for purchasing the Hennessey property for us all to enjoy.

Shelley Allison and Mark Flieger
Scituate