

**Statement to the Town Board**  
**April 21, 2009**  
**Disposition of Town Owned Properties**

My name is Linda Miller and I'm speaking on behalf of Citizens for an Informed Yorktown.

Within the next two months, the town board will be deciding what to do with approximately 100 vacant town owned parcels. The board has several options. The parcels can be designated parkland, simply left as open space, or put them up for sale, with or without conservation easements. The board could also do nothing.

Before those decisions are made, CIY would like to offer the following comments.

We also want to urge the board to set aside a work session so that the public has an opportunity to provide input on this important issue **before** actual decisions are made.

First, we'd like to express our appreciation and support for the work of the volunteer Open Space Committee. OSC members have put in considerable time pulling together this list, reviewing the parcels, grouping them into categories with recommended dispositions for each category.

Categorizing the parcels is especially important as they vary in terms of size, location and environmental or recreational value to the town.

We realize that the quickest and easiest disposition of these parcels would be for the board to make a blanket decision designating them all parkland. This would preserve all of them as open space and take them off the tax roll so that the town would no longer had to pay county and school taxes on them.

On closer examination, though, we caution that there are several reasons why the board may not want to rush ahead with a "one solution fits all" approach. A blanket parkland designation for all 100 parcels may actually not be in the best long term interests of the town.

As you know, once a parcel is designed parkland, any future use of the parcel is severely restricted by state law. And, for all practical purposes, the designation can't be changed. This could -- and indeed has -- lead to unexpected and less than desirable consequences that have tied the hands of our planning board.

On the dollars and cents side, keeping all the parcels in town ownership, including those that have no intrinsic recreational or environmental benefits, creates a costly maintenance problem for the town. It's not very cost effective to have to dispatch town staff all over town to mow or clean up litter on these scattered parcels, some only a few hundred square feet. These resources would be better spent on maintaining parkland that actually has recreational value.

There are other financial aspects to consider. By selling some of the parcels, the town could realize some much needed revenue. And, as part of the purchase price, the buyer would have to pay off any existing liens on the property.

The board should also consider that when parcels are taken off the tax rolls, it means that the remaining taxpayers have to make up the difference. And that means higher taxes.

What's needed is a two step process. First, with input from the OSC and the public, the board needs to decide on the criteria that's to be used when considering the disposition of vacant parcels. And once that's done, then the criteria needs to be applied on a parcel by parcel basis.

Thank you