



# Open Space Referendum

*May 4, 2022*

Whitpain Township

# Introductions

- Kimberly Koch, Chair Whitpain Township Board of Supervisors
- Michele Minnick, Vice-Chair Whitpain Township Board of Supervisors
- Roman Pronczak, Township Manager
- David Mrochko, Assistant Township Manager



Open Space



# Open Space Ballot Question

- At the 2022 primary election, Whitpain voters will see a ballot question regarding an adjustment to the earned income tax to be used *exclusively* for open space.
- A Yes Vote will provide an additional dedicated stream of revenue for open space acquisition, open space debt repayment, and open space improvements by adjusting the earned income tax (EIT) by 0.06%.
- Increase to EIT must be approved by voters in a referendum.
- If approved by voters, this adjustment would not go into effect until 2023.



# Legacy of Preservation

➤ The Township has a long history of protecting and improving open space:

- ▶ 1966: Acquisition of 62-acre Cook Farm Tract
- ▶ 1997: Whitpain partners with Wissahickon Trails to acquire 57-acre Armentrout Preserve
- ▶ 1999: Acquisition of 82-acre Thomson Tract (*Opens as Prophecy Creek Park in 2001*)
- ▶ 2002: Acquisition of 37-acre St. Helena Tract (*Opens as Centre Square Park in 2015*)
- ▶ 2006: Whitpain partners with Wissahickon Trails to purchase conservation and trail easements over 33-acres of Haas Tract. Wissahickon Trails also acquires additional easements thus protecting 62 of the 100-acre tract
- ▶ 2008: Acquisition of 42-acre Walbridge Tract
- ▶ 2018: Acquisition of Cheston Property with Wissahickon Trails & MontCo
- ▶ 2020: Purchase of Mermaid Park

# Legacy of Enhancements

- Numerous improvements and acquisitions have occurred to parks and trails in recent years:
  - Restrooms built at Centre Square Park and Stony Creek Sports Park
  - Improvements at Erbs Mill Park are nearing completion
  - Crossways Trail from Penllyn Woods to MCCC (2014) & MCCC to Wentz Run Park (2019)
  - Planned improvements and the reopening of Wissahickon Park coming in the future
  - Artificial turf fields at Centre Square Park
  - Union Meeting Road Trail
  - Narcissa Road Trail connecting Prophecy Creek Park to Stenton Ave and sidewalk trails (2011)
  - Conversion of soccer fields to baseball fields at Wentz Run Park
  - Wentz Run Trail from Wentz Run Park to Henkels & McCoy (2015)
  - Centre Square Park walking trail (2016)
  - Improvements to softball fields at Wentz Run Park

# Ballot Question Details

- The ballot question will appear on the reverse side of Democrat and Republican ballots.
- Independent voters can also vote on the ballot question, but in their case, the question appears on the front of the ballot.
- Whether you vote in-person on May 17 or via mail, please remember to consider the ballot question carefully and Vote Yes if you value continued preservation and maintenance of open space.

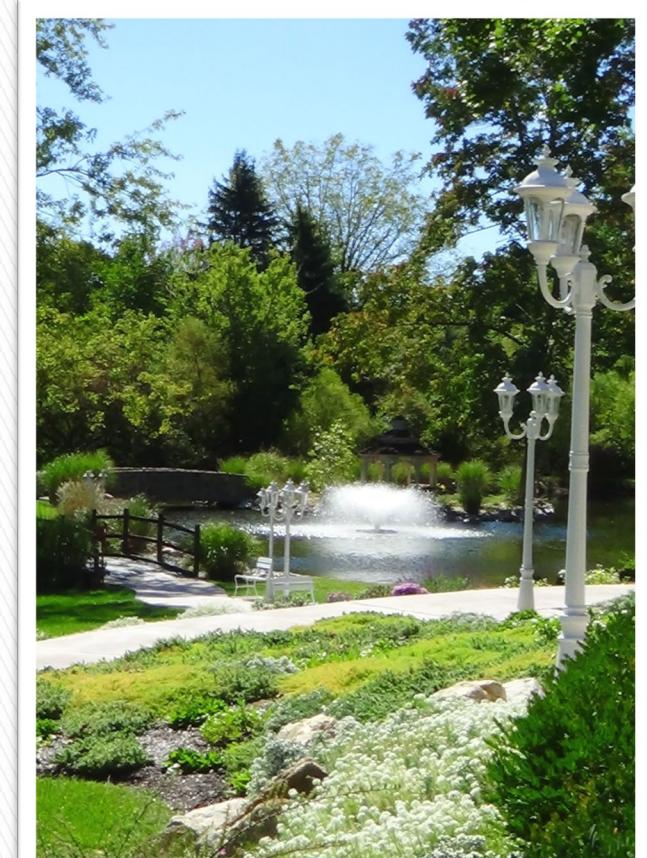
Whitpain Township Ballot Question	
Do you favor the imposition of an increase in the earned income tax rate for Whitpain Township residents from its current rate of one (1 %) percent to a rate of one and six one-hundredths (1.06%) percent to be imposed by Whitpain Township, with the revenues generated from the additional six one-hundredths (0.06%) of one percent to be used: (1) to retire the indebtedness incurred in purchasing interests in real property and/or to make additional acquisitions of real property in Whitpain Township for the purpose of securing an open space benefit; (2) to pay transactional fees that are incidental to such acquisitions; (3) to pay expenses necessary to prepare the required resource, recreation, or land use plan for such property; and/or (4) to develop, improve, design, engineer, or maintain such property?	
YES	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
NO	<input type="radio"/>



# Why is EIT Ballot Question Preferred?

If voters choose to increase the EIT, it will create a dedicated stream of revenue to pay down the debt resulting from previous open space acquisitions. Additionally, 25% of the revenue can be used for open space maintenance & improvements.

- Increasing the EIT will not be as impactful to seniors and those living on a fixed income when compared to increases in real estate taxes
- Voters maintain control
- Surveys conducted during the Township Comprehensive Plan update and Parks and Recreation Master Plan showed strong support for open space acquisition and maintenance as our most pressing concerns
- The increased revenue would be legally dedicated to pay down open space acquisition debt and for maintaining open space



# EIT Cost Example

Residents of Whitpain currently pay an Earned Income Tax of 1% which is split evenly between the Township and the School District

## ➤ Example

- According to census data (2019), Whitpain per capita income = \$67,515
- Residents earning \$67,515 currently pay 1% in EIT or \$675 per year
- If referendum approved to increase EIT by 0.06%, additional payment = \$40 per year

## ➤ Other Data Points

- The Open Space Ballot Initiative would generate approximately \$640k per year starting in 2023
- The 0.06% increase would be distributed as follows:
  - 0.045% to pay off debt tied to Open Space acquisitions
  - 0.015% for maintenance and development



# Voting Deadlines

➤ The Open Space ballot question timeline is as follows:



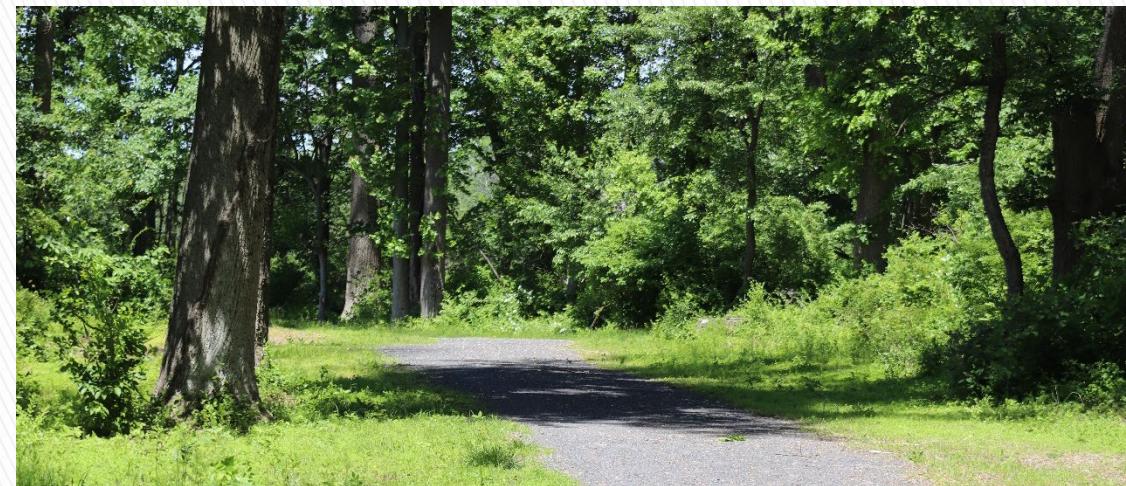
➤ Last day to register was Monday, May 2, 2022



➤ Last day to request a mail-in or absentee ballot is May 10, 2022



➤ In-person voting on May 17, 2022, from 7 am to 8 pm



# Closing Comments

- Please VOTE YES!
- Remember to flip over your ballot
- Independent voters can vote

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YES	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
NO	<input type="radio"/>

