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LOWER PROVIDENCE TOWNSHIP WELCOMES OPEN SPACE ACQUISITION

Land Deal Brings American Revolution Center Museum Project to Township

LOWER PROVIDENCE TOWNSHIP *February 26, 2007:* Members of the Lower Providence Township Board of Supervisors and Township staff were on hand February 15 as the Montgomery County Commissioners approved a land deal resulting in the preservation of some 46 acres of open space in Lower Providence. The open space property that the county will secure is along Pawlings Road, next to the county's Perkiomen Trail, the John James Audubon Center at Mill Grove and near the Schuylkill River Trail.

A public-private partnership involving officials of the American Revolution Center, along with Montgomery County and the state, acquired 126 acres of open space from the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. The nation's only museum dedicated to the American Revolution is planned for 78 of those acres.

Officials of the American Revolution Center have been invited to present an overview of the project at the March 1, 2007 Board of Supervisors meeting to be held at 7:30 p.m. in the Township Building. Plans call for the museum, a critically acclaimed, environmentally sensitive building, to be built into the surrounding hillside. The site also will include outdoor gathering areas for community use. The Center, first envisioned in 1995, will house rare artifacts and manuscripts never before available to the public.

Township officials support the project as a creative way to preserve open space, create jobs, and honor America's heritage. Under current Township zoning, hundreds of houses could have been built on the land. The center is seen as a natural complement to historic Mill Grove and the county's trail system within the Township.

"It's a unique opportunity to be part of an important project with national and international significance," said Township Manager Joseph Dunbar.

As part of the acquisition, Lower Providence Township will continue to lease a portion of the land included in the purchase. The site is currently used for playing fields and a master plan is being finalized by the Township to determine the use of the leased land.

The \$7.1 million deal includes \$2 million in county open space funds, a \$1 million Department of Conservation and Natural Resources grant, and \$1 million from the state. The Lenfest Foundation is contributing \$3.1 million toward the purchase. H.F. "Gerry" Lenfest serves as chairman of the board of the American Revolution Center (ARC) and has been a driving force behind the project.

The ARC, which will build and operate the museum, has initiated a fund-raising campaign, with a goal of \$150 million. Approximately \$25 million already has been raised. Construction of the Center is expected to take two years.

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