

Proclamation

Office of the Mayor of Princeton



WHEREAS, the Friends of Princeton Open Space, commonly referred to as FOPOS, is a charitable organization formed in 1969 with the mission of acquiring land for preservation, protecting natural resources, maintaining and extending trails, providing environmental education and advocating for sound land-use decisions; and

WHEREAS, FOPOS's volunteer board members have worked tirelessly for the past 51 years to achieve these goals, in collaboration with Princeton Township, Princeton Borough, and the Municipality of Princeton; and

WHEREAS, during this time, FOPOS has taken the lead or has collaborated with other non-profits to permanently preserve over 1200 acres of land in Princeton, including the 75-acre Billy Johnson Mountain Lakes Nature Preserve; Turning Basin Park; the conservation easement on over 650 acres of land owned by the Institute for Advanced Study; the 124-acre Woodfield Reservation; Greenway Meadows Park; a large portion of Tusculum; the Ricciardi property, the 25-acre Mt. Lucas Preserve, Rosedale Road Woods, the D'Ambrisi property, the All Saints Church property and others, including most recently the 153-acre Province Line Woods property; and

WHEREAS, during this time, FOPOS has secured and contributed approximately \$8 million in public and private funds for land acquisition and conservation, including funds from the federal, state and county governments and donations from individuals and foundations; and

WHEREAS, leaders of FOPOS created a related entity, Mountain Lakes Holding Corporation, which for over 30 years has been a faithful steward of Mountain Lakes House, assuring that its maintenance is not a burden on the taxpayers and generating funds for open space acquisition and stewardship from its rental; and

WHEREAS, under the municipal adopt-a-park program FOPOS has specifically adopted 140 acres of land in which it builds and maintains trails for the benefit of all visitors, including John Witherspoon Woods, Coventry Farm Park (also known as Mountain Lakes North), and Mountain Lakes Preserve itself; and

WHEREAS, FOPOS created the Stony Brook trail leading to the Stony Brook pedestrian footbridge, which was a particular collaboration of long-time Trustee Helmut Schwab and the Township Engineering Department, and assisted in obtaining funding and permission for trail connections for the bridge; and

WHEREAS, FOPOS obtained and donated a \$50,000 foundation grant to assist in creating the Coventry Farm Boardwalk; contributed funding and volunteer labor to completely overhaul and improve the Woodfield Reservation trail system; contributed funds and labor to assist the town in building two footbridges at Mountain Lakes Preserve; has constructed and maintains multiple deer exclosures to protect native plantings in the Mountain Lakes recreation area; and for many years conducted annual trash pickup walks along Princeton's roads, among other stewardship projects; and

WHEREAS, FOPOS recently successfully completed an 18-acre forest restoration at the Mountain Lakes Preserve for which it secured and contributed over \$165,000 in funding as well as countless hours of staff and volunteer labor, and has now embarked on the restoration of 25 acres along the shores of Mountain Lake and the banks of its feeder and outlet streams; and

WHEREAS, FOPOS members have assisted the municipality with many contributions to the process of planning, zoning, and adopting ordinances, including the Master Plan Open Space Element and the Open Space Tax referendum, and collaborated with Sustainable Princeton and others in developing Princeton's Climate Action Plan; and

WHEREAS, FOPOS's educational activities have included participation in numerous environmental forums at the Public Library and elsewhere; a long-running lecture series called "Tea and Talks" and more recent seminars on environmental topics at Mountain Lakes House; bringing important speakers on environmental issues to address the public at its annual meetings; helping train the next generation of environmentalists through its internship program; donating to the Native Plants Collection at the Princeton Public Library; and joining with organizations like the Garden Club of Princeton to bring speakers such as Professor Douglas Tallamy to give public lectures; and

WHEREAS, FOPOS since 2006 has supported first part-time and now full-time natural resource managers who devote their talents to the public parks it has adopted, with the current Director of Natural Resources and Stewardship, Anna Corichi, building up a 500-member corps of volunteers who come to work on projects that sustain and improve the environmental quality of these parks; and

WHEREAS, FOPOS has demonstrated its commitment to environmental equity by holding a series of events for Communities of Color in 2021, to be continued in 2022, and is a member of the Outdoor Equity Alliance that promotes equal access to open space; and

WHEREAS, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, FOPOS nonetheless in 2021 provided crucial assistance to the municipality in securing a major New Jersey Historic Trust grant for work on a historic stone bridge at Mountain Lakes, and in securing the necessary public and private funding to acquire the largest undeveloped tract of land in Princeton, the unique mature forest known as Province Line Woods;

NOW, THEREFORE, because of the Friends of Princeton Open Space's commitment to the Town of Princeton, we jointly, Princeton Mayor and Council acknowledge their service to the town and their unconditional and demonstrated commitment to make Princeton a better place to live, work, do business and raise a family.

FURTHERMORE, do hereby call upon the citizens to hail the Friends of Princeton Open Space outstanding service to the Princeton community with boisterous cheering and sustained applause, and proclaim January 10th, 2022, in the Municipality of Princeton as:

Friends of Princeton Open Space Day

Given under my hand and seal this 10th day of January, 2022.

Mark Freda, Mayor
Princeton