PENFIELD, N.Y., MARCH 7, 2012 – The Town of Penfield’s 2010 Comprehensive Plan calls for continued commitment to open space preservation. In support of this recommendation, the Penfield Town Board has formed a new 2012 Open Space Committee to review and update the 2006 Open Space Plan. The committee is charged to review the town’s existing open space inventory and identify new properties for consideration for open space designation.

The original open space index was established in the 1970s and has been updated throughout the decades, most recently in 2006. Since 2001, with the adoption of the town’s Open Space Plan, approximately 1,200 acres have been preserved in the town of Penfield, most of which is farmland. Notable examples of open space preservation designated for public use are Rothfuss Park (active recreation) and Sherwood Fields (passive recreation). The 2012 committee is reviewing remaining parcels from the 2006 inventory with specific criteria in mind such as preservation of fragile terrain, connection of trail systems, and preservation of parcels with environmental significance.

The committee invites Penfield property owners to nominate their own parcels for consideration of open space preservation. Parcels must be at least five acres with attributes like environmentally sensitive features, proximity to other open spaces, the potential for active or passive recreation, and preservation of plant or wildlife species.

“Penfield continues to be noted for providing a balance of residential, business and open space growth across the town,” said Supervisor Tony LaFountain. “This great community started generations ago on a strong agricultural and open space foundation, and the goal is to preserve that for many generations to come.”
Property owners who would like to nominate their own land for consideration of open space preservation should complete an online submission form (see details below) or contact Planning Department Head Mark Valentine at 340-8645 or valentine@penfield.org by Friday, March 30.

Only property owners may recommend parcels for consideration. If a property is already under consideration by the Town of Penfield is does not need to be re-submitted.

While most of the funds from the $10 million bond for open space preservation approved by tax payers in 2002 have been spent, it is important to have a list of priority parcels should grant funding or other mechanisms of funding become available. The Town Board is committed to using a portion of funds generated through the Incentive Zoning Local Law for future open space presentation.

The 2006 Open Space Plan, details regarding the 2012 Open Space Committee and a property nomination form are all available online. To learn more go to www.penfield.org homepage and choose “Open Space Update Committee” in the “Quick Links” box on the left.

Town of Penfield’s Open Space History

Penfield’s Open Space Plan was adopted by the Penfield Town Board in 2001. In February 2002, the Town Board voted unanimously to allow local residents to decide whether or not the community should borrow up to $10 million to purchase properties and development rights targeted for preservation in the Open Space Plan.

While $10 million was authorized by the residents of Penfield by referendum vote, Penfield has successfully won grant funding totaling nearly $900,000, which reduces the total amount the Town is borrowing for its Open Space program.

The Open Space referendum was held on April 23, 2002. The vote created the largest non-election turn-out in Penfield history, with voters approving the referendum by a 2:1 margin.

The majority of the acreage already preserved under the 2002 Plan is farmland, where the development rights were purchased. A few properties are being preserved through Open Space Easements, which expire after a certain number of years.

The Open Space Plan Update is available for public review; a copy of the update is also available in the Penfield Public Library and on the Town’s website, www.penfield.org.

The Town of Penfield Open Space Plan has been admired, reviewed and adapted by many other municipalities across New York State. The property identification and ranking process is easily described in the Plan and adaptable to the circumstances and needs of other communities. In September 2002, the Town of Penfield received an award from the Upstate New York Chapter of the American Planning Association for its Open Space Plan. The Town was awarded the 2002 Outstanding Planning Project – Implementation, for its efforts toward resource preservation.

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