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*City of Milford*

## PressRelease

# Results Tallied in Survey Conducted By Mayor's Open Space Advisory Committee.

## **Mayor Richetelli Praises Work by Advisory Committee to Design, Distribute and Interpret Survey Data. Results Yield Some Surprises; Will Be Used to Set Future Agendas.**

**Milford, CT, May 3, 2010:** It is clear that Milford residents treasure their City's status as a coastal community, rich in history, and strongly support preserving Milford's open space, according to a recent survey.

The survey was the brainchild of the Mayor's Open Space Advisory Committee. Chairwoman Letty Malone said the group has experienced an increase in the number of subjects that it has been asked to consider. Mrs. Malone said the Committee also has seen a need to widen its agenda to include concerns about open space issues far beyond that of its original mandate to advise on open space land acquisitions.

To keep the committee aligned with community concerns, it was determined that a survey would be very helpful in setting future agendas. Mrs. Malone said the committee was pleased and honored to have the volunteer expertise of Meredith Stowe, a Yale School of Public Health epidemiologist and a Milford resident, who helped to frame the questions and interpret the responses.

The chairwoman explained that two groups were targeted for the survey: A control group of 250 randomly-selected Milford voters, and a group consisting of the general public. Returns from each group were tallied separately.

The control group was assembled in late 2009, when 250 Milford voters were randomly selected. This group consisted of men (47%) and women (53%) with a mean age of 51. Ninety-three respondents (37.2%) returned their completed surveys in the allotted time period, and these results represent the control group.

Earlier this year, an identical survey was made available to the public through a link on the City of Milford homepage for online respondents

and paper surveys available at the Milford Library. The online survey results and the paper survey results from 304 total respondents were then combined into what is referred to as the online group.

Interpretation of the results will take some time to complete, but the committee expressed great interest in some strong similarities between the control and online groups.

Milford is characterized as a “coastal community” by the majority of both groups - 72% of the control group and 65% of the online group. The second choice was “an historic town.” selected by 13% of the control group and nearly 11% of the online group.

“Preserving Milford’s remaining open space” received 77% approval from the control group and 96% of the online group. More than 81% of the control group indicated that it is important to protect “places of historic value”, which was affirmed by 91% of the online respondents.

Other options receiving high marks for potential preservation were “open spaces to protect water quality” (control 95%, online 97%); “land along rivers and beaches” (control 93%, online 95%); and “open spaces for

recreation” (control 75%, online 91%). Farmland preservation also scored high, with 87% of the control characterizing it as very important or important, echoed by the online group’s 79% favorable vote.

According to the survey results, “wildlife habitats” also are very important to Milford respondents, as indicated by the results of their choices: 85 % of the control group and 78% of the online group wish to preserve areas of natural habitats. “Scenic vistas” are worthy of preservation to both groups, as the control group indicated 88% importance and the onliners gave it a 96% vote.

In answer to a question about Milford’s specific open spaces, Eisenhower Park is the most well known with about 90% of each group indicating they had visited the park. However, more than 65% of the control group and 49% of the online group said they had never heard of the Solomon property. Mondo Ponds, Beaverbrook Trail and Beaverbrook Reservoir were familiar to about half the respondents in each category.

In regard to their own food purchasing habits, a majority of both survey groups said they choose locally grown produce and organic products,

and have visited local farm-based outlets for their food choices during the past year.

Mrs. Malone reported that 85% of the control group and 90% of the online group said it is important for the city to spend tax dollars to preserve open space. Forty-eight percent of the control group and 79% of the online group indicated they would voluntarily contribute to an open space fund.

The question, “Given limited resources, what are your highest priorities for open space in Milford?” produced divergent responses from the control and the online groups. The control group indicated preferences for restoring existing parks, general maintenance, and wildlife protection. The online chose preserving farms as its first priority, followed by preserving wildlife habitats, and restoring our existing parks and walking trails.