

# Brewster residents launch drive to save open space

By Susan Milton

A group of 11 Brewster residents have launched a drive to preserve the rural character of their town by providing landowners with an alternative to development.

They are trustees of the newly-formed Brewster Conservation Trust, modeled after non-profit land trusts in neighboring towns that have encouraged the tax-deductible donation of open space and used gifts of money to buy land.

In the next few days the trust will send a letter to Brewster "Friends of Conservation," telling them about its goals and inviting them to its first annual meeting on Thursday, August 11, at 7:30 p.m. at the community center.

"Our first goal is to solicit charter members," said trust president G. Howard Hayes, owner of Bay Village Realty, and organizer of the trust. "There's been a lot of talk in the last couple of years about trying to preserve the town's rural character, one of Brewster's real assets, which many people want to see remain," said Mr. Hayes. "There has been a lot of change in the past but we're looking at the potential for change in the future. To preserve the quality of the town, you need to preserve the quality of life here. By buying land or accepting donations of land for conservation purposes, we will maintain the town's character and provide the private property owner with an alternative to development."

Joining him as trustees are other residents, including

vice president Mary-Louise Eddy, treasurer Ruth Eddy, clerk John Lobingier, and trustees Ernest Gage, Roger O'Day, Henri Rauschenbach, Berry Richardson, Glenn Rowley, Peter Soule and Kenneth Woods Jr.

The trust's goal was underlined by a recent survey of Brewster residents by the moratorium study committee, a poll "which certainly showed people wanted the town to remain rural and open," said Mary Louise Eddy.

The trust's three immediate priorities are to encourage Brewster land owners to make charitable donations of land; to seek contributions of cash and other assets, including bequests with which to purchase land for conservation and recreation; and to serve as an educational force "to help all of us enjoy and protect the natural resources and environment of Brewster."

Brewster has a conservation commission that also seeks to acquire land, either by donation or purchase. Its co-chairman Mr. Lobingier, also a trustee, emphasized there is no competition but only cooperation between the two groups.

"Efforts of the trust will complement rather than duplicate, the town's land conservation activity," he said. "There are landowners here who, for their own reasons, may prefer to deed open land to a private trust rather than to a town government. There are others who feel differently. With the Brewster Conservation Trust in place, donors of conservation property will have a choice."

"It was our hope that we could provide a means to make an immediate purchase of land or acceptance of a gift, which is something the town, which must get voters' approval, cannot do," Mr. Hayes added.

A trust "is much more flexible than a town," Mr. O'Day, an attorney explained. It can allow a donor to spread out a gift over five years and provide a vehicle for raising funds for property acquisition which, "given the restrictions of Proposition 2 1/2, may not be an opportunity open to the town in the future."

Through the trust, "there would be an ongoing effort of publicity, fund-raising and instruction which the town as such might not carry on if not done through a vehicle like this," said Mr. Wood.

While waiting for approval of its tax-exempt status, the trust already has received preliminary pledges of funds from trustees and of a fairly substantial parcel of land, said Mr. Hayes.

There are different levels of membership - \$500 for a life member, \$100 for a Brewster conservationist, \$75 for a sponsor, \$25 for a regular member and less than \$25 for an associate member.

At its first annual meeting on August 11, the trust will discuss its objectives, tax aspects of donating land and how the neighbor trust of Orleans, created in 1970, has "built its splendid record of acquiring land for conservation," according to the announcement.