

Westminster Campus

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the site. "It seems to me wise and cost-effective that the community keeps the existing musical facility in place and alive," he said. "The music history is an asset for Princeton, not a liability."

Westminster Conservatory faculty member Amy Wolfe commented, "If the best course of action for the Conservatory is to be acquired by Princeton, I'm okay with that. But it is so important that a piece of this property retain the roots of the Choir College. The Conservatory should remain on the property. Part of it should be retained as the Westminster legacy. Princeton is a community that has always been known to support the arts. I hope you as a Council will continue to support Westminster Conservatory, in whatever capacity works."

Historian Clifford Zink congratulated the Council "for this bold and very important initiative for the future of the town," adding that the Westminster property has been cited in the town's Master Plan as a potential future historic district. "I would recommend

that the town proceed with designating that core and finding appropriate uses for it," he said. Zink also urged the Council to be creative in repurposing the site.

"It has 12 buildings. Certainly not all of them are fully usable, but it will be years and years as the town develops uses," he said. "Many of the buildings are suitable, so be creative in using what's there, for as long as possible."

Architect Joshua Zinder expressed concern should any or all of the property be turned over to the Princeton Public Schools district. The district "has demonstrated that they are poor stewards of the structures in their hands, as can be seen in how they have let the Valley Road School fall apart when they should have been trustees of that building and other buildings," he said. Zinder added that he is optimistic about the potential of the sale. "But I am fearful of giving the school district more of Princeton's architectural history to squander."

Maria Juega said she was concerned about the lack of public disclosure about the sale, including details about how much money and time will be put into the project.

She also asked whether creation of a task force was being considered. Sacks responded that this early phase of the project is only about acquisition, and that the appointment of a task force is possible.

"The most important thing we want to see happen is that this property be used for the benefit of the residents of Princeton," said Sacks. "Our interest here is ensuring this property belongs to the public, and Princeton's public. We hope there will be maximum public input."

Council members Michelle Pirone Lambros, Leticia Fraga, and Leighton Newlin thanked those who provided comments in person or over Zoom. "We're hearing some concerns, some good ideas, comments, and a lot of questions," said Lambros. "We're not at the point yet in the process, but when it is appropriate there will be a robust planning process that will incorporate the community."

"All of us on Council have real ties to this property," Sacks concluded. "What happened is what happened. We can't change that. The only thing we on Council can do now is try to make the best of the situation for future generations. I think there is room for all sorts of things, once we get past this very challenging legal stage."

A public hearing on the financial process of the sale will be held at the October 14 meeting of Council.

—Anne Levin

Get the scoop from
Town Topics**New Jersey Initiative****Targets Food Insecurity**

The Meal Recovery Coalition (MRC), a coalition across the private and nonprofit sectors, officially launched September 18 at a summit held at Rutgers University's Cook Student Center. The Coalition, which aims to promote the recovery of healthy, surplus meals from large cafeterias and deliver them to food-insecure residents across New Jersey, was celebrated by Gov. Phil Murphy, Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin, and other leaders.

**Helene Lancuit**

This event, including some of New Jersey's largest corporations and institutions, is dedicated to reducing hunger and food waste. In his keynote address, Murphy lauded the Coalition's efforts in tackling both food security and environmental sustainability and pioneering an approach that will keep tons of food out of landfills and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Attendees also heard from experts in food security and waste reduction and engaged in discussions on how best to collaborate to support food security through meal recovery in their communities.

"I am proud to see New Jersey lead the way in addressing hunger and food waste," said Murphy. "The Meal Recovery Coalition is taking bold steps forward by pioneering this effort. This initiative will not only divert food from going to landfill and compost — which will reduce greenhouse gas emissions — but will also put meals on the tables of New Jersey residents facing food insecurity."

The Coalition's vision is to establish meal recovery as a standard practice throughout New Jersey, with the long-term goal of creating a scalable, sustainable model that can be replicated nationwide. By improving the capabilities of meal recovery programs, increasing awareness of meal recovery as a vital food source, and fostering collaboration among private, nonprofit, and government stakeholders, the MRC aims to address food insecurity and reduce food waste simultaneously. The Coalition has set an ambitious goal to recover 500,000 meals annually by 2026, which will provide sustenance to an additional 6,400 people each week.

The Princeton-based nonprofit Share My Meals has been the driving force behind the formation of the MRC. Founding members include Bristol Myers Squibb, Novo Nordisk, Campbell Soup Company, Johnson & Johnson, Novartis, Sanofi, and Capital Health. These organizations have, between them, committed to the recovery of surplus meals as well as serving as ambassadors for meal recovery and supporting the Coalition



PLANTING SESSION: September 28 is National Public Lands Day, and Friends of Princeton Nursery Lands invite the public to join a planting session for Hamsika Y's Eagle project. Help plant 150 deer-and-drought-resistant native plants and shrubs into the prepared plot at the Mapleton Preserve. Bring shovels, pitchforks, and trowels for planting. No experience is necessary and volunteer service hours are available. Visit fpnl.org for more information.

through financial contributions and advocacy efforts.

"Nearly one million New Jersey residents live with food insecurity because they don't have enough affordable, nutritious food," said Helene Lancuit, CEO of Share My Meals. "At the same time, in New Jersey alone, we estimate that 5 million prepared meals end up in landfills annually in the food service sector. The Meal Recovery Coalition aims to break this cycle by providing a user-friendly, safe way of diverting those meals to support food security in the state and adding them to the other food sources New Jersey is bringing to bear to achieve that goal."

Since its inception in December 2023, the Meal Recovery Coalition has already recovered 100,000 meals, diverting over 295,000 pounds of CO₂ equivalent from landfills. With continued support, the Coalition aims to expand its impact exponentially.

Voter Education Events At West Windsor Library

West Windsor Library has partnered with the Princeton Area League of Women Voters to host two voter education events this fall. These free events are open to both adults and teens: new, experienced, and future voters are all welcome.

On Wednesday September 25 from 6:30-7:30 p.m., "How To Vote: Rules of the Road" will present a complete introduction to the mechanics of voting —

especially helpful to new voters, but given the early voting and mail-in options, there is something for everyone. Those who have recently turned 18, are newly naturalized, recently moved, or curious about voting status or voting options are encouraged to attend.

On Tuesday October 29 from 6:30-7:30 p.m., "Vote By Design" will guide participants through a nonpartisan, issue-agnostic process for selecting candidates whose values and priorities support their own. The session will consider what qualities we look for in our leaders and what influences informed voting.

"The voting process has changed over the years, so come for an update and leave with a voting plan," said Jean Nitzberg, president of the League of Women Voters Greater Princeton Area Chapter and one of three presenters of the programs.

"The right to vote is an incredible privilege we enjoy as American citizens," said Mercer County Executive Dan Benson, "but many still face challenges or questions that prevent them from voting. Through this program, we're providing our residents with the tools they need to make their voices heard this November and for years to come."

Both events will take place at the West Windsor Branch of the Mercer County Library System, 333 North Post Road, Princeton Junction. Visit mcl.org for more information.



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