



## **Institute Housing Battle Continues**

**October 10, 2007**

**Matthew Hersh**

Preservationists opposing a planned development for increased faculty housing for the Institute for Advanced Study are again vowing to fight for land that, they say, is hallowed ground because of its proximity to the site of the Battle of Princeton, fought more than 230 years ago during the Revolutionary War.

The preservationists, in the form of the Princeton Battlefield Society, contend that while the 85-acre Princeton Battlefield State Park is preserved to commemorate the January 3, 1777 battle where Gen. George Washington fought, and won, what is regarded as one of the most important battles in U.S. history, 22 separate acres of land, privately owned by the Institute, are now at stake.

Those acres, preservationists said Monday night before Princeton Township Committee, represent an important component of the Battle of Princeton, and should not be developed.

The Institute, or IAS, plans to build 15 houses on eight of those 22 acres, in an area not directly adjacent to the Battlefield. Current IAS plans indicate that the houses will be built near existing houses "with no further disturbance to the Battlefield site line."

IAS also outlines a 200-foot-wide, seven-acre, buffer zone, separating new houses from the Battlefield. The Institute would then relinquish its development rights on roughly 10 acres of its remaining land after the housing project is completed.

Institute officials said Tuesday that the housing project is still in the planning stages, but Monday's presentation by the Princeton Battlefield Society is only the latest in a long battle over this 22-acre expanse.

The Institute first presented its development concept to the Regional Planning Board of Princeton in 2003, immediately drawing fire from preservationist groups, as well as being critically viewed by the Planning Board, but those plans, Institute spokesperson Christine Ferrara said Tuesday, have been revised and are still in the works.

And while the Institute sold 32 acres to the state in 1973, increasing the Battlefield Park by 60 percent, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection has expressed interest in purchasing the remaining property, though it has been reported that the budget-challenged state is currently unwilling to buy the land.

In 1997 the Institute also relinquished 589 acres of woodland and farmland partly encompassing what is now known as the Institute Woods.

Jerry Hurwitz, president of Princeton Battlefield Society, said Monday that new information from a survey report, prepared for the Institute by the East Orange-based Louis Berger Group, provides more fuel for the preservation argument. That information, Mr.

Hurwitz said, includes information about military artifacts found on the site “which we believe definitively establishes that heavy fighting took place in that field.

“We believe that is where Washington’s climactic counterattack took place, and we believe that site well deserves to be protected,” he said.

Battlefield Society member Kip Cherry suggested that a land swap, while unlikely, could be brokered, exchanging the 22 acres for a piece of the Institute Woods, which is public and managed by the state’s Green Acres program. Ms. Cherry also suggested that the housing be built on already-developed parts of campus.

The land swap would be an unlikely scenario because of the parties with a stake in preserving the Institute Woods. Princeton Township aided a handful of private conservation groups in a successful effort to purchase the development rights to the woods. One of those groups, the Friends of Princeton Open Space, contributed \$25,000 to the Institute Lands fund-raising costs and then in 1997, the same group was able to contribute \$565,000 for the conservation easement on the Institute Woods lands.