Welcome and Agenda

- 6:00 – 6:45: Open House, Part One
- 6:45 – 7:15: Presentation and Questions
- 7:15 – 8:00: Open House, Part Two
  - Open House Stations include:
    - Open Space Values Maps, Conservation Criteria, and Draft Conservation Priority Areas Map
    - Open Space “Scenic Views Photo Survey”
    - Bethlehem’s Conservation Tools
    - Natural Areas and Wildlife in Bethlehem
- Comments, questions, suggestions: Comment Box
- Bethlehem Public Library display: month of November.
- Email OpenSpace@townofbethlehem.org

Thank you for coming tonight!
Background

- **Comprehensive Plan – 2005**
  - Develop an Open Space program
- **Citizens Advisory Committee on Conservation (CACC) – est. 2006**
  - Funding and Tools Report -2006
    - Identified potential criteria for establishing land preservation priorities
- **Comprehensive Plan Oversight Committee (CPOC)- 2007**
  - Recommended creation of a Farm and Open Space Protection Program
- **CACC Report on Open Space – 2009**
  - Recommendation 12: Develop land feature criteria to rate preservation opportunities
- **Agriculture and Farmland Plan – 2009**
- **Comprehensive Plan Assessment Committee (CPAC) - 2013**
  - Develop criteria for land protection and acquisition to be used by the Town Board purchasing or accepting land for open space preservation
- **Conservation Easement Review Board – est. 2014**
  - Administer the Conservation Easement Exemption Program
  - Advisory on current open space planning work
Finding the Balance

- The purpose of open space planning is to ensure that future consumption of land for development is balanced with the conservation of land for its open space value. -2009 CACC Report on Open Space

- Formally, open space resources include public and private parks and preserves, recreation areas and dedicated conservation lands (about 2,070 acres or 7% of the Town’s total area).

- More informally, open space resources also include its undeveloped wetlands, floodplains, water bodies, tidal areas, wildlife habitats, steep slopes, forests, fields and agricultural lands.

- Over the years, the Town has lost a good deal of its open space to the development of housing, industry, commerce and other land uses, many of which support and add value to the community.

- Most of these remaining open space resources are held in private ownership.
Purpose

• **Voluntary participation with interested landowners will be necessary if the Town is to conserve an open space system of any substance.**

• Conservation partnerships should result in a mutual benefit to both the landowner and Town.

• **Open space planning does not aim to stop or curtail development activity, or to limit or curtail the rights of private landowners.**

• The conservation of open space resources is essential if the Town is to maintain critical natural systems, the character of the community, its quality of life, property values, and recreation opportunities for Town residents.
Benefits of Open Space

• “Natural systems services”
  – Clean water, clean air, temperature cooling, farming, forestry, flood reduction
  – Cost savings, less need for engineered “fixes”

• Wildlife habitat, biodiversity

• Open land costs town less than residential/commercial uses:
  – Cost of community services studies

• Public health
  – Water quality, air quality, scenic beauty, local food, recreation

• Community character
  – Forests, farmland, diversity in landscape, connection to history, recreation opportunities, quality of life

• Decreased wildlife/human conflicts
Prioritizing Open Space

• Several prior Town open space initiatives recommended development of conservation criteria
  – Nine other NYS towns who have completed similar open space conservation priority analyses to develop the best conservation criteria and method of analyzation applicable to Bethlehem.
Phase 1 – Inventory Mapping / Conservation Values Maps

1. **Open Space Resources Inventory Mapping**
   ✓ Conservation Values Maps

2. **Review/Discuss with Conservation Easement Review Board**
   ✓ Throughout Spring/Summer/Fall 2017

3. **Presentation to Town Board**
   ✓ June 14th meeting/August 23rd meeting

4. **Public Engagement and Outreach**
   ✓ Scenic Bethlehem Photo Survey, Delmar Farmers Market, Hudson Kayak Eco-tour, Bethlehem Library display, website postings, newsletters, etc.
Conservation Values Mapping

- Identification of Existing Conditions
- Geographic Information Systems-based (GIS) process to efficiently evaluate overlap of multiple conservation values and resources resulting in the Open Space Plan
- Data collected from over 20 public data sources and the Town
- More than 70 datasets evaluated
Conservation Values Mapping

- **Conservation Value:** Community Character
- **Conservation Value:** Recreation and Greenways
- **Conservation Value:** Natural Water Systems – Streams, Wetlands and the Hudson River
- **Conservation Value:** Forest, Fields and Wildlife Systems
Value: Community Character

- Agricultural landscapes
- National Register Structures/Districts
- Cultural/Educational places
- Nature preserves and parks
Value: Recreation & Greenways

- Linkages/Connectivity (people & wildlife)
- Nodes
- Recreation areas
- Conservation areas
- Schools
- Habitat patches
**Value: Natural Water Systems**

- Aquatic biodiversity
- Water quality
- Estuary ecosystem
- Floodzones
- Public health

**Legend**

- Roads
- Stream/River
- Water Bodies
- Potential Groundwater Protection**
- Floodzone (100 yr)
- Steep Slope (>16%)
- Potential Wetland

**Known Wetlands**
- Freshwater Wetland
- Tidal Wetlands

**Land Use**
- Parks, Golf Courses*
- Conserved Lands*
- Conservation Easement*
Value: Forests, Fields & Wildlife

- Forest patches
- Biodiversity Areas
- Air/water quality
- Floodzones
- Rare Plants/Animals
- Croplands
**Conservation Values Mapping**

- GIS-based process to efficiently evaluate overlap of multiple conservation criteria based on existing conditions.
- Result will help inform the Open Space Plan and conservation priorities.
- Data collected will be input into a Conservation Analysis Tool to identify conservation priority areas town-wide.
- 25 Conservation Criteria – data driven, scientifically based, objective.
PHASE 2 – OPEN SPACE PLAN

1. Public Meetings
   - October – Meeting #1
     ✓ Public review/discussion on Conservation Values Maps
     ✓ Feedback and GIS-based model leads to Open Space Plan
   - November – Town Board Presentation
   - Meeting #2 – To Be Determined

2. Open Space Plan, including Open Space Priorities Map
   - Conservation Analysis Tool to develop Open Space Priorities Map
   - Open Space Plan
CONSERVATION ANALYSIS TOOL - METHODOLOGY
**Conservation Analysis Tool**

- **What:** GIS-based model created to efficiently evaluate overlap of multiple conservation values and resources

- **How:**
  - Identify Model Inputs
  - Determine Preservation Priority Score
    - Significant
    - High
    - Moderate
  - Map/Illustrate Results

- **Result:** Composite Map Illustrating Conservation Priority Areas within the Town to be used as a tool for town and interested land owners
**Conservation Analysis Tool**

- **Conservation Criteria**
  - 25 criteria applied to lands 5 acres or greater including vacant, residential with large acreage and agricultural land

- **Model Run**
  - A property receives a “1” for each criteria it meets
  - The more criteria met, the higher the numerical score ranging from 0 – 25
  - Results categorized as moderate, high or significant based on numerical score and mapped
**Conservation Analysis Tool**

- **Sample of Conservation Criteria (see handout for full list)**
  - ✓ Adjacent to preserves/conserved lands
  - ✓ Adjacent or containing parkland or outdoor recreation
  - ✓ Adjacent to town conservation easements
  - ✓ Adjacent to bike/ped priority network
  - ✓ Contains registered historic structure or district
  - ✓ Contains wetlands
  - ✓ Within floodplain
  - ✓ Contains designated trout stream/migratory fish run
  - ✓ Contains or connected to large forest patch
  - ✓ Contains Significant Biodiversity Area
  - ✓ Contains areas important for rare plants or animals
  - ✓ Contains active agricultural lands
  - ✓ Contains prime farmland soils
  - ✓ Contains soils with high erosion potential or steep slopes
DRAFT

Conservation Priority Areas

- This map does not direct the town to take any proactive action on lands

- Intended to assist the town when a landowner expresses interest in conservation
How will we use the Open Space Conservation Priority Areas Map?
Implementation

• Current Conservation Opportunities
  – Conservation Easement Exemption
    If a private landowner, with 5 acres or more, is interested in conservation and cost-savings.
  – Development review
    Conservation Subdivision and Planned Development Districts – clustering of units, variety of housing types and density incentives in exchange for open space conservation.

• Future Conservation Opportunities
  – Land sale
    If land that is considered “conservation priority” is for sale, town can consider purchase.
  – Purchase of Development Rights
    If private landowner is interested in conservation and financial savings, town (or a partnership) could consider purchase of development rights (PDR), while landowner retains ownership.
    – Both of these opportunities would require a substantial dedicated funding mechanism and partnerships (with state, federal and local entities and land trusts).

• Every conservation opportunity is unique
  – Multiple tools to accommodate diverse circumstances.
  – Through the implementation options both parties would see a mutual benefit.
  – Voluntary participation with interested landowners will be necessary if the Town is to conserve an open space system of any substance.
Implementation examples

- Van Dyke Preserve-
  - partnership with MHLC, Town, and developer
  - PDD - senior apartments and 33 acre preserve set-aside
- Newell Conservation Subdivision
  - 40 lots on Wemple, resulted in 16 acres preserved in vicinity of Dowerskill
  - 9 lots at end of Egmont Court
- Conservation Easement Exemption
  - (15 inquiries/1 approved)
  - 3 under review
  - Tilroe – Salisbury Road approved
- Scenic Hudson
  - Baker Farm purchase (155 acres) and Jennings conservation easement
Next Steps
Next Steps

- Gather Input from Public Tonight
- Refine Conservation Values Mapping
- Refine Conservation Analysis Tool
- Presentation to Town Board – November 8, 2017
- Public display of maps and materials at Bethlehem library in November
- Develop Open Space Plan
Questions/Comments
THANK YOU