

**Town of Bethlehem  
Citizens Advisory Committee On Conservation**

**April 10, 2006 Meeting**

Members Present:

John Smolinsky, Chairman	Valerie Newell
Michael DiPaolo	Ted Putney
Jeff Freedman	Michael Waldenmaier
Nancy Heinzen	Matt Watson
Libby Liebschutz	Caleb Wistar
John Mead	

Staff Members Present:

George Leveille  
Janine Saatman  
Deborah Kitchen

Welcome and Introductions:

Chairman Smolinsky welcomed Ted Putney, who introduced himself to the committee.

Administrative Actions:

Chairman Smolinsky noted that the CACC website contains the list of members, an invitation for suggestions with CACC's email address ([CACC@townofbethlehem.org](mailto:CACC@townofbethlehem.org)), and the agendas and minutes. Copies of the members' contact list were distributed and members were asked to advise staff of any corrections. Copies of the Community Survey 2004, survey results, and correspondence received regarding informal greenways, connectors, and open space, all from the Town's comprehensive planning process, were also distributed. In addition, members were provided with an email update regarding the Albany County Rail Trail project.

Members were randomly assigned two- or three-year terms, as follows:

Two-year term

Mike DiPaolo  
Nancy Heinzen  
Libby Liebschutz  
John Mead  
Matt Watson

Three-year term

Jeff Freedman  
Valerie Newell  
Ted Putney  
John Smolinsky  
Mike Waldenmaier  
Caleb Wistar

Draft Work Plan:

- 1) Slingerlands area trail network –

Mike DiPaolo gave a powerpoint presentation on the Tri-Village Greenway Committee (TVGC), a committee of the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy (MHLC). The MHLC was originally

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established as the Albany County Land Conservancy in 1992. The TVGC is working to establish a "Tri-Village Greenway", a system of corridors connecting existing MHLC preserves with Town and State parks and recreational areas in the Slingerlands, Delmar, and Elsmere area for walking, bicycling, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing. TVGC's trail concept, as outlined, would connect Elm Avenue Park to MHLC's Swift Preserve (Delaware Avenue and Evelyn Drive), to MHLC's Phillipinkill Preserve (Delaware Avenue and Fisher Boulevard), to the future Rail Trail, to MHLC's Normanskill Preserve, to the future MHLC Bethlehem Center Preserve (behind Walmart and Lowe's). More information is available from the Conservancy's website [www.mohawkhudson.org](http://www.mohawkhudson.org) or by calling 436-6346.

It was noted that each preserve's rules can vary because they are established in accordance with the owner's wishes. Many preserves allow public access, but others may be established for conservation purposes and not allow access by the general public.

2) Open space protection funding -

Joe Martens of the Open Space Institute discussed prioritization of open space acquisitions and funding issues. The Open Space Institute (OSI) is a not-for-profit conservation organization which operates in the Hudson River Valley from New York City to the Adirondacks.

Copies of New York State's *Open Space Planning Guide* were distributed to all members and to staff as a reference resource. A copy of the *Draft New York State Open Space Conservation Plan 2005* was circulated. This document may be viewed on the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation's website ([www.dec.state.ny.us](http://www.dec.state.ny.us)). It includes information on the state's rating system for various types of resources. A copy of OSI's criteria for ranking land acquisitions in New York State was also distributed as an example. It was noted that the Town's criteria for ranking open space conservation projects would probably differ from OSI's.

Funding can come from various sources including the state, local governments, land conservancies, and donations. The State's Environmental Protection Fund provides funding for open space projects with local matching funds required. Article 49 of the State's Environmental Conservation Law provides the authority for conservation easements. The conservation easement that OSI and the Albany County Land Conservancy helped establish at Indian Ladder Farms is an example. On Long Island, a small portion of the sales tax is dedicated to open space acquisition. Municipalities can also pass a bond act by permissive referendum. The Trust for Public Land conducts polls within municipalities and counties to gage the level of community support for open space bond acts. They are looking at conducting this type of poll in Guilderland, Colonie, and Bethlehem.

The Community Preservation Act proposed at the state level would allow municipalitites to adopt an alternative means of funding open space acquisition. However, it involves the use of a real estate transfer tax and is strongly opposed by the real estate lobby.

Public Comment:

Several residents in attendance raised questions and comments which were discussed with the committee.

Next Meeting: May 8, 2006 at 7:30 p.m. in Room 101 of Town Hall

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