

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

May 8, 2006 Meeting

Members Present:

John Smolinsky, Chairman
Michael DiPaolo
Jeff Freedman
Nancy Heinzen
Libby Liebschutz
John Mead

Valerie Newell
Ted Putney
Michael Waldenmaier
Matt Watson
Caleb Wistar

Staff Members Present:

George Leveille
Janine Saatman
Deborah Kitchen

Public Comment:

There were no public comments at this time.

Administrative Actions:

Members discussed the draft public comment protocol prepared by Chairman Smolinsky. Several members expressed that comments at the end may work better than having a comment period at the beginning of the meeting. It was decided that there would be a comment period after each of the two task topics rather than at the start of the meeting.

The October 9, 2006 meeting was rescheduled to October 10, 2006 at 7:30 p.m., due to the Columbus Day holiday.

Draft Work Plan:

1) Slingerlands area trail network–

Chairman Smolinsky directed the committee's attention to a map prepared by the Town's GIS staff. The map shows such things as recreation sites, historic sites, conservancy lands, and educational sites, as well as floodplains, state wetlands, steep slopes, and creeks, in the Slingerlands and Delmar area of Town.

Mike Waldenmaier distributed copies of a Facility Inventory from the Town's Parks and Recreation Department to the members.

George Leveille gave a presentation on proposed projects in the New Scotland Road area. The VISTA technology park project is proposed to be located west of the Price Chopper Plaza between LaGrange Road and Mahar Road. The project contains approximately 400 acres; about 100 acres of that will be developed. When completed, the technology park is projected

to support 3,000 to 5,000 employees. The developers have expressed a willingness to include trails/pedestrian paths within the project.

The area north of the Price Chopper Plaza is the subject of the New Scotland Road Master Plan being looked at by the Town. All but approximately two of the properties there are owned by one of the four developers who own commercial property in that area. One of those developers, KKS properties, has also indicated that they are willing to incorporate trails/pedestrian links within their property. The proposed hamlet will be designed as a mixed use, pedestrian oriented development. The NYS Department of Transportation is also planning to install a sidewalk on New Scotland Road from the Albany city line to the Price Chopper Plaza.

An informational handout needs to be created for distribution to landowners potentially willing to participate in the Town's open space and/or trail network objectives. Chairman Smolinsky also mentioned gathering information on the Town's historic resources in the Slingerlands trail area; the historic sites are potential points of interest related to a Slingerlands trail. Nancy Heinzen mentioned looking at the *Soil Survey of Albany County* to check for soils suitable for trails.

Chairman Smolinsky asked for members willing to work on planning trails in the Slingerlands area and possibly to look into historic resources in the area. Mike DiPaolo, Libby Leibschutz, and Jeff Freedman volunteered for this task.

One member of the public spoke regarding a concern related to this topic.

2) Open space protection funding -

Chairman Smolinsky commented on two programs which he recently attended—the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy's presentation 'What's Happening in the Hilltowns' and the Trust for Public Lands workshop on open space funding options for local governments.

General funding options for municipalities were mentioned: include in the Town's regular budget, get bond referendum approval to borrow money, or get referendum approval to use measures such as the real estate transfer tax (Community Preservation Act). Members also raised the possibility of donations as a source of funding. The funding subcommittee will begin to research these options, as well as leveraging opportunities, and will address the pros and cons of the funding methods as well as try to describe the processes and prerequisites related to each funding method. Eventually the subcommittee should also address the methods of acquisition. This subcommittee will be lead by Caleb Wistar and will include Ted Putney and Matt Watson.

The committee discussed the importance of identifying the types of land to be acquired, because the types of open spaces to be preserved may influence the method of funding. Nancy Heinzen will begin to look at the issue of identification of categories of lands to be acquired and ranking, as well as the use of soil classification as a selection criteria.

Several residents had comments regarding this task, particularly creation of a donation fund and potential use of the Town's parkland reservation or fee in lieu of requirement as a means of adding to the Town's open space in the form of additional recreational land.

Action Items:

Members will be provided with a copy of the results of the Farm and Rural Lands Survey done during the Town's comprehensive planning process, prior to the next meeting.

Chairman Smolinsky will also send members a draft of the June 2006 CACC quarterly report to the Town Board, prior to the next meeting.

Next Meeting: June 12, 2006 at 7:30 p.m. in Room 101 of Town Hall