

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

June 12, 2006 Meeting

Members Present:

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

John Mead
Ted Putney
Michael Waldenmaier
Matt Watson
Caleb Wistar

Staff Members Present:

George Leveille
Janine Saatman
Deborah Kitchen

Quarterly Report to Town Board:

The final version of CACC's first quarterly report to the Town Board was distributed to committee members along with the revised work plan.

Administrative Actions:

Mike Waldenmaier provided copies of brochures regarding the following parks and preserves in the area to the committee: public preserves of the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy, Hollyhock Hollow Sanctuary, Thacher State Park, Five Rivers, and Emma Treadwell Thacher Nature Center.

Members were also given copies of the Executive Summary of the Town's Comprehensive Plan. CD's of the entire plan will be provided at the next meeting.

Draft Work Plan:

1) Slingerlands area trail network –

George Leveille advised the committee of a potential funding opportunity for the Slingerlands area trail network. Federal transportation funding authorized by the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) provides reimbursement for eligible Transportation Enhancement Program projects chosen to receive those funds. Financing of projects is a maximum of 80% federal and a minimum of 20% non-federal. The non-federal share provided by the project sponsor can include certain non-cash contributions such as donations of land. Eligible projects must fit into one or more of twelve enhancement categories, which include such things as provision of facilities for pedestrians and bicycles, acquisition of scenic easements and scenic or historic sites, landscaping and other scenic beautification, historic preservation, and preservation of abandoned railway corridors.

The Town could hire a consultant (using funds in the Department of Economic Development and Planning's current budget) to prepare a plan, which would be used as a basis for an application for SAFETEA-LU funding in 2007. A possible trail loop would be from New Scotland

Road along the Normans Kill to Rockefeller Road and then along the rail trail back to New Scotland Road. Committee members asked about the status of the Albany County/Canadian Pacific rail trail; no new information was offered.

A resident spoke with the committee regarding the proposed rail trail.

2) Open space protection funding -

The committee next discussed the draft Funding Report prepared by the Funding Subcommittee headed by Caleb Wistar. Members expressed their appreciation of the amount of work put into preparing the draft. Several members indicated it would be beneficial to have members of other agencies review it prior to finalization. It was agreed that a list of potential reviewers would be assembled comprised of names submitted by committee members.

The committee discussed the report and agreed that the focus should be on the material from Section V to the end of the draft report. Nancy Heinzen provided Caleb with information from the American Farmland Trust and discussed a cost of community services analysis done by the Town of Pittsford. Other comments on the draft should be forwarded to Caleb by June 27th, so that a revised report can be sent out around July 4th.

Nancy Heinzen also distributed information to committee members which lists open space selection and prioritization criteria from the NYS Open Space Conservation Plan, the Open Space Institute, the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy, and the Rensselaer-Taconic Land Conservancy.

Tax abatement was mentioned as a possible incentive to participate in some of the open space acquisition and it was recognized that the Town Board would have the jurisdiction to consider such tax reductions.

A couple of residents provided comments to the committee regarding economic and environmental benefits of open space preservation. Another resident spoke in favor of residential development.

Action Items:

- Chairman will get current status of the Albany County/Canadian Pacific rail trail for the next meeting.
- Comments on the draft funding report should be forwarded to Caleb Wistar by June 27th.

Next Meeting: July 10, 2006 at 7:30 p.m. in Room 101 of Town Hall