

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

July 10, 2006 Meeting Minutes

Members Present:

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

John Mead
Valerie Newell
Ted Putney
Michael Waldenmaier
Caleb Wistar

Staff Members Present:

Janine Saatman
Deborah Kitchen

Administrative Actions:

Chairman Smolinsky discussed the presentation of CACC's first quarterly report (June 2006) to the Town Board. The Town Board was pleased with the progress that the CACC has made so far. The Board reiterated that the committee should focus on the tasks currently assigned to it. If other issues of importance arise which are outside of those tasks, the committee should feel free to bring them to the Town Board's attention. The addition of the preparation of educational materials for landowners, developers and the public to the draft work plan was noted; the revised work plan was included with the quarterly report.

Draft Work Plan:

- 1) Slingerlands area trail network –

Chairman Smolinsky informed the committee that he had spoken to the Director of the Albany County Department of Economic Development, Conservation and Planning and to Mary Witkowski in the Albany County Executive's Office regarding the status of the Albany County rail trail project. Negotiations are progressing, and they estimate that it may be six months to a year to finalize details with Canadian Pacific Railroad. Access to Pearl Street is planned. When the County acquires the land, other issues such as design and maintenance of the trail will be addressed.

Next the Chairman gave a summary of CDTC's Regional Greenway Visioning Workshop held on June 20th. After an introductory information session, those attending broke into small groups and looked at potential regional linkages. The possible use of utility rights-of-way for pedestrian/bicycle paths was discussed. CDTC indicated that results of the workshop would be posted on their website, www.cdcmpo.org, when they become available. Copies of CDTC's 2006 Regional Bike-Hike Trail Map were distributed to committee members. This map can also be viewed on CDTC's website.

A revised Slingerland's trail network map was presented to the committee. The size of the map was enlarged for easier viewing. Changes shown on the map include the 100-foot setbacks to streams as identified in the Town's new zoning and highlighted properties in the New Scotland Road vicinity, such as the VISTA property, which are potential connections in the trail network.

For an official copy of the minutes, please visit the Town Hall, 445 Delaware Avenue, Delmar, NY or call 439-4955.

The committee discussed what the extent of the Slingerlands network area would be and whether it should extend to Rockefeller Road as previously mentioned. The consensus was that the focus would be on a smaller area (Slingerlands), but that the area east to Rockefeller Road would be included on the map so that the potential for future expansion to other areas near the rail trail could also be considered.

The September 15 and 16, 2006 charrette for the New Scotland Road Hamlet area will include looking at possible locations and types of trails on properties such as VISTA and KKS Properties.

The Town's intention to pursue funding through the NYSDOT Transportation Enhancements Program (SAFETEA-LU) was discussed next. The Town has interviewed a consultant who would be hired to prepare a plan which would be used as a basis for the SAFETEA-LU application. An update will be provided at the next meeting. John Mead commented that projects eligible for SAFETEA-LU funding are geared toward transportation rather than recreation and that handicapped accessibility requirements may be an issue.

Nancy Heinzen briefed the committee on a Normans Kill Riparian Stream Corridor Study that has received funding from the Hudson River Estuary Program. The study will be done by the National Audubon Society of New York in conjunction with Albany County Planning. Results of the study will be shared with municipalities and will be useful for the CACC. A handout was distributed outlining the data collection and mapping for the study.

One member of the public commented regarding this topic and suggested that the map show trails on the Albany side of the Normans Kill to avoid duplication.

2) Open space protection funding -

The revised draft of the Open Space Funding Report was discussed. Val Newell suggested distributing copies to members that show the edits that have been done so that it is easier to identify revisions. Caleb Wistar stated that the report was revised based on comments from a number of the committee members, staff, and Katherine Daniels of the New York Planning Federation, who had also reviewed the report. Input regarding school district information was being sought from Howard Shafer of the Ravena-Coeymans-Selkirk School District. The Albany County Department of Economic Development, Conservation and Planning will also be reviewing the document. In addition, review by someone with farmland preservation expertise was suggested. Val Newell expressed concern with distribution to individuals in outside agencies at this point in the process, since the draft is not intended for public review at this time.

Discussion of whether to include all funding options in the report took place. It was suggested that all options be included and then ranked as to which ones the committee thinks are preferable or more realistic for use in our local context.

Caleb mentioned that a future step would be to look at each tool in more detail, continue discussions with experts in the field, and consider feedback from the Town Board. Comments from the committee on the revised draft should be forwarded to Caleb by August 1st.

There was a brief discussion of open space selection and prioritization criteria. It was noted that they are important components of an open space plan and are essential to evaluate acquisition opportunities. There was a short discussion regarding the Colonial Acres Golf Course, although it was noted that that immediate opportunity is not a direct part of CACC's tasks. There was also discussion of pros and cons of mapping certain areas or the alternative of developing and applying descriptive criteria rather than identifying parcels for acquisition. The chairman suggested that this is an appropriate topic for future CACC meetings.

A resident expressed dissatisfaction with how the committee had conducted certain aspects of its business, particularly the limited distribution of the CACC draft material.

Action Items:

The trails subcommittee will meet before the next meeting to evaluate the status of the Town's consultant and the implications for CACC's work on the trails task.

Committee members should provide comments on the draft funding report to Caleb Wistar by August 1st.

Next Meeting: August 14, 2006 at 7:30 p.m. in Room 101 of Town Hall