

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

August 14, 2006 Meeting Minutes

Members Present:

John Smolinsky, Chairman
Jeff Freedman
Nancy Heinzen
John Mead
Valerie Newell

Ted Putney
Michael Waldenmaier
Matt Watson
Caleb Wistar

Staff Members Present:

George Leveille
Janine Saatman

Administrative Actions:

Chairman Smolinsky discussed the timing of CACC's second quarterly report to the Town Board. The report will probably go to the Town Board in late September or early October. The question is whether the Funding Report will be ready for inclusion.

Draft Work Plan:

- 1) Slingerlands area trail network –

The Town has hired Edwards and Kelsey as consultants to assist with the development of a Slingerlands Integrated Pedestrian Network Plan. George Leveille reiterated that the network will be a system of connectors between residential, work, retail, and recreational destinations. The focus is not on hiking trails. A project initiation meeting took place on August 4th at which the consultant was instructed to focus on the Slingerlands area, but also to keep in mind the potential for future connections beyond the Slingerlands area. Edwards and Kelsey will participate in the Town's charette for the New Scotland Road hamlet master plan on September 15th and 16th, because of the proposed hamlet's relationship to the pedestrian network plan; CACC members are encouraged to attend as well.

As part of the network plan development, the consultant will be doing a "complete streets inventory" within the focus area to assess how well existing streets accommodate various modes of transportation - pedestrian, automobile, bicycle and transit. The consultant's report will result in guiding principles for the network and general routing recommendations. It will also be the basis for the Town's SAFETEA-LU (NYSDOT Transportation Enhancements Program) application next year. The trails subcommittee will meet with the consultant and Town staff to discuss their work and recommendations.

Val Newell stated that in her discussions with other residents the primary concern expressed is with pedestrians getting safely to destinations such as the Elm Avenue Town Park, the Little League fields, and the library (via existing streets), rather than creating trails in the woods. The committee agreed that connectivity is a major component of an integrated pedestrian network, but trails are also an important component depending on circumstances and funding availability. Ted Putney expressed the hope that where opportunities for trails, such as those along stream

corridors, exist, that they won't be excluded. The committee discussed the potential use of the parkland reservation requirement of the Town's zoning as a means of establishing additional links in a pedestrian network.

Next the Chairman relayed that no new information regarding CDTC's Regional Greenway Visioning Workshop (June 20, 2006) is available at this time. Nancy Heinzen stated that the Albany County/Audubon Normanskill Corridor Study is underway. As expected, slippage-prone clay slopes exist along the corridor, but details of the study are not yet available.

A resident expressed concern with the lack of a sidewalk on the southerly side of Delaware Avenue from Verstandig's to Elm Avenue. Students walking to and from the High School have to cross Delaware Avenue because of this.

2) Open space protection funding -

Draft #3 of the Open Space Funding Report had been distributed to committee members prior to the meeting. Comments on draft #3 compiled by Val Newell, John Mead, and Mike Waldenmaier were handed out to the other committee members as discussion of this item began. Caleb Wistar stated that the report was reviewed by Mark Fitzsimmons, Director of the Albany County Department of Economic Development, Conservation and Planning. A portion of the report, Section VI.D, was also reviewed by Tom Della Rocco of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Comments from Mark Fitzsimmons, who is one of the authors of Albany County's open space plan, have been incorporated into this draft. Tom Della Rocco indicated that he thought the section of the draft that he reviewed looked good.

Caleb continued by pointing out that Sections II and IV have been deleted in the current draft. Section II will need to be incorporated back into the report at the appropriate time; however, it was the consensus of the committee that Section IV should not be added back to the report at a future date. The "do nothing" and "hybrid" approaches were moved to the conclusion, since they are not exactly funding methods but alternative strategies.

Val Newell commented that she feels the report will be used by the public as well as the Town Board. She questions whether Section VII.E regarding zoning should be included in the document since it is not a funding method. She still doesn't like the approach of stating "pros" and "cons", and thinks the public perception may be negative if a lot of "cons" are listed. Val suggested that each set of pros/cons or advantages/disadvantages be combined into one list, perhaps titled "points of interest". The committee discussed the issue of stating advantages/disadvantages and the potential for subjectivity in classifying various characteristics of the methods. In some cases it may also be unclear whether the advantage or disadvantage is to the Town or to the homeowner. Val indicated that she would go back over the advantages/disadvantages to see if there were items of particular concern.

Mike Waldenmaier asked how the 10-acre zoning referred to under Natural Resource Zoning was arrived at. It was stated that this is an example of a tool that can be used, not a specific recommendation regarding certain lot sizes. George Leveille indicated that the intent is to provide examples, not to give recommendations for actual zoning changes. Concern regarding showing open space on an Official Map for the Town was discussed (preparation of an Official Map is a recommendation of the Town's Comprehensive Plan). Would open spaces shown be only those of willing landowners? George responded that an Official Map typically focuses on infrastructure; inclusion of open space areas has not yet been determined.

Nancy Heinzen mentioned a relevant article regarding the Town of Warwick's use of the Real Estate Transfer Tax and Transfer of Development Rights, a copy of which was given to Caleb for his reference in working on the funding report.

A question was raised as to whether the committee would try to prioritize the funding strategies. Val suggested waiting until the landowners come forward and then identifying the most applicable tools for their situations. John S. agreed that it is desirable to have all of the tools available to fit various circumstances and that we need to describe the tools and circumstances so landowners know what the options are.

George indicated that a next step would be for the Town Board to direct the preparation of an open space plan. Such a plan is needed in order to apply for funding. Nancy suggested finding out more about what is involved in an open space plan. The committee discussed various methods that could be used to notify landowners in order to identify those who are willing to participate in open space preservation.

Comments from the committee on Draft #3 should be forwarded to Caleb by August 28th.

John Smolinsky mentioned that he and Nancy will make revisions to the open space selection and prioritization criteria; the criteria can be included as an appendix to the funding report.

Three residents shared comments with the committee. Keeping the focus on willing landowners was reiterated, as well as the recommendation that those landowners be identified first and then the appropriate funding method(s) chosen for their circumstances. Concern was expressed regarding possible takings issues associated with zoning. It was felt that the points listed as "pros" and "cons" should be more objective. In addition, it was suggested that the Town Board make the recommendation regarding an open space plan rather than CACC.

Action Items:

Committee members should provide comments on Draft #3 of the funding report to Caleb Wistar by August 28th.

Next Meeting:

September 11, 2006 at 7:30 p.m. in Room 101 of Town Hall