

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

November 13, 2006 Meeting Minutes

Members Present:

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

Valerie Newell
Ted Putney
Michael Waldenmaier
Caleb Wistar

Staff Members Present:

George Leveille
Janine Saatman
Deborah Kitchen

Chairman's Report:

Chairman Smolinsky congratulated the CACC members on all the work that went into the Funding Report, which he presented to the Town Board at their October 25, 2006 meeting. The Town Board will take some time to review the report and CACC will await their next instructions. The Town Board did suggest that a public comment meeting be held. The purpose of this would be to try to answer questions that the public may have in relation to the report. This meeting would be advertised by a variety of means and copies of the report can be made available in the library (in addition to accessing the report on the Town's website). Chairman Smolinsky also mentioned the letter of dissent submitted to the Town Board by committee members John Mead, Val Newell, and Mike Waldenmaier and George Leveille's letter to the Town Board responding to their comments.

The December 11th meeting was discussed and it was decided that the time would be changed to 4:30 p.m. so that it would be more convenient for Town officials to attend the meeting to hear the presentation on the pedestrian network.

The next quarterly report will go to the Town Board in January. Members also received a copy of a news brief on New York's Conservation Easement Tax Credit.

Draft Work Plan:

- 1) Slingerlands area trail network –

The Chairman introduced Brian McMahon and Jaclyn Hakes of Edwards and Kelcey (E & K), the Town's consultants for the preparation of a Slingerlands Pedestrian Network Plan. Jackie Hakes illustrated Edwards and Kelcey's work with a PowerPoint presentation, which is available on the Town's website at <http://www.townofbethlehem.org/pages/depServices/advisoryCom.asp#CACC>. The pedestrian plan is an extension of concepts discussed in the Town's Comprehensive Plan. To analyze existing conditions, E & K staff walked the New Scotland Road and Cherry Avenue Extension corridors looking at their use with respect to all types of users, but with an emphasis on pedestrian users. Information gathered in this "complete streets audit" was used in formulating recommendations for the pedestrian network. Three types of pedestrian linkages

were considered; those within the hamlet, the district, and the region. On the hamlet level, they considered characteristics being sought in the Town's planning of a hamlet area on New Scotland Road: mixed uses; buildings close to the street; parking in the rear, side, or on-street; walkable blocks (generally 300-500 feet); pedestrian links; and urban design. Uses that are within 1500 feet or about a five-minute walk are considered "walkable".

Creating streets that accommodate a variety of transportation modes and are designed in a way that is attractive to those users can have numerous benefits including reducing pollution by use of alternatives to automobile trips, increased opportunities for exercise, choices of travel modes, opportunities for social interaction, and a sense of place. Elements looked at in relation to the hamlet area include gateways, mixed uses, crosswalks, sidewalks and planting strips. Gateways can announce the entrance into the hamlet area and can provide traffic calming by making motorists aware they are entering a pedestrian priority area. The railroad overpass at the southerly end of the corridor in the hamlet of Slingerlands has the potential of being transformed into an inviting gateway through the use of architectural treatments and/or murals. Planting strips provide separation between pedestrians and vehicles and also allow for snow storage. Crosswalks are planned at about every 400 feet along the section of New Scotland within the new hamlet area. Other elements to consider in the design of New Scotland Road are the transition zones (the areas between the street and the pedestrian access zone) and on street parking, which can provide a buffer between pedestrians and street traffic.

The number and extent of curb cuts may be able to be reduced. Existing sidewalks in the corridor need to be fixed or replaced. A pedestrian bridge may be used to provide a connection to the VISTA development. The old Delaware Avenue bridge in Normansville may be able to be used as a pedestrian link to trails on the Albany side of the Normans Kill. Next steps include finalizing the Hamlet Master Plan, implementing design guidelines, working with partners on early wins, and seeking funding partnerships.

The committee asked about access to the VISTA, the Hamlet Master Plan and pedestrian access to Blessing Road. George Leveille relayed that the VISTA access has been worked out and that a draft report of the conceptual Hamlet Master Plan was anticipated later this month. Pedestrian improvements are dependent on other steps going forward; there are economic and geographic factors. The Chairman added that development of the hamlet and pedestrian improvements would evolve over time, not happen all at once. NYSDOT's plans for the Slingerlands Bypass include a pedestrian bridge along the Normans Kill under Route 85. Another possible connection would be to bring in a bridge for pedestrian/bicycle use at the former McCormack Road bridge location.

Connections to the rail trail may involve coordination with the State if they are in areas of state rights-of-way. Another committee member commented that the presentation did not appear to address use of the area and connections to it by bicycle. George indicated that the guidelines would address bicycle accommodations. There was discussion of the number of proposed crosswalks (every 400 feet). A suggestion was made to have a parallel route for pedestrians and bicycles to keep them off New Scotland Road to minimize pedestrian/traffic conflicts. Both are currently proposed – pedestrian accommodation on New Scotland Road as well as off it within the hamlet. If density is achieved in the hamlet, the proposed crossings will be needed. A resident, however, disagreed, stating that if most of the development was located on the northwesterly side of New Scotland Road, not as many crossings are needed to the southeasterly side of the road.

The final pedestrian network plan will focus on components of the SAFETEA-LU grant application. Once the hamlet master plan is finished, it will be presented to the CACC. George Leveille said that the zoning there allows three stories now; overlay district zoning may be needed to allow more stories in order to get the necessary density.

Action Items:

Edward's and Kelcey will finalize the Slingerlands Pedestrian Network report for presentation at CACC's next meeting.

Next Meeting:

Monday, December 11, 2006 at 4:30 p.m. in Room 101 of Town Hall