

**TOWN OF BETHLEHEM
CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON CONSERVATION (CACC)**

October 15, 2007 Meeting Record

Members Present:

Libby Liebschutz, Chair; Mike DiPaolo; Jeff Freedman; Nancy Heinzen; John Mead; Val Newell; Paul Sieloff; Mike Waldenmaier; Caleb Wistar

Staff Members Present:

George Leveille, Rob Leslie, Debbie Kitchen

Chair Report:

A. Introduction of new CACC member

Ms. Liebschutz welcomed Paul Sieloff to the CACC. Each CACC member introduced themselves and provided a brief summary of their interests as a member of the CACC.

- B. Approval of August 13, 2007 Meeting Record:** Ms. Liebschutz asked the members if they had any final comments on the draft August 13, 2007 meeting record that was circulated. Hearing none, the members voted to approve the meeting record. Mr. Leslie indicated the approved meeting record would be posted on the Town's web site.

C. Other

Ms. Liebschutz informed the CACC that since their August meeting, the Existing Recreation, Conservation, Education and Municipal Lands Map (Task 3) and Memo was submitted to the Town Board. She indicated the Town Board accepted the submittal and agreed that Task 3 was complete. Ms. Liebschutz then turned the meeting over to George Leveille and Rob Leslie of the DEDP to lead the discussion on the Farm and Open Space Protection Program (Open Space Plan).

Farm and Open Space Protection Program (Open Space Plan)

Discussion of Scope of Work Development: Mr. Leveille provided a list of discussion items that were to be followed at the night's meeting. The discussion items included background/introduction, preliminary guiding principles, open space planning case studies, and a visioning exercise. Mr. Leveille provided some background regarding the purpose of the Town Board's assigned task to the DEDP. Mr. Leveille stated that tonight's meeting, as well as subsequent meetings this year, will mainly include discussion of the process to develop a Plan. He asked members to bring their attention to the September 6, 2007 memo to the Town Board regarding an approach for the Town of Bethlehem to undertake the development of a farm and open space protection program. He indicated that the memo recommends the CACC represent the advisory committee role of the study.

Preliminary Guiding Principles

CACC members reviewed the nine preliminary guiding principles and provided comments. It was decided that Principle 3 will include language indicating the CACC to serve as an advisory committee. Principle 6 through 8 were removed from the list since they are not process oriented items. Finally, Principle 9 will receive language from the Comprehensive Plan as it relates to statements regarding open space and willing landowners. Mr. Leveille indicated that these comments would be reflected in a second draft of the preliminary guiding principles, which will be reviewed at the November CACC meeting.

Open Space Planning Case Studies

Mr. Leslie stated that he had reviewed several open space plans of municipalities in the Capital Region and Hudson Valley and prepared a summary sheet of processes used by other municipalities in their development of a plan. Mr. Leslie stated that the processes and approaches

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were common throughout. (For example, an analysis of existing conditions was a common element). He asked members to provide their comments or concerns regarding the processes of other municipalities and what elements they wished to use for the Town's process. The comments included:

- Visioning Workshops
 - Should be topic oriented (focused)
- 4 Themes Areas
 - Very comprehensive
- Inventory should be respectful of landowners
 - Provide an objective analysis of existing conditions
- Survey
 - Face to face interview/survey
 - Mailing survey
- Focus Groups
 - Separate meetings for each group
 - Combined meetings to include all groups
- Utilize CACC's Task 1-3 in final product
- Engage landowners early in the process
- Cost of Community Service Study
 - Analysis of the fiscal impacts/benefits of open space
 - Fiscal responsibility
- Establish priority areas

Mr. Leslie stated that the results of the exercise would be used to develop preliminary planning process elements, which would be provided to CACC members for review at the November CACC meeting.

Headlines Visioning Exercise

The final discussion item of the night included a visioning exercise led by Mr. Leveille. Members were provided with the following statement: *"The Town has just completed an open space protection plan and you have been asked to write an article for the newspaper describing the process; what does the headline to your article say?"* Responses consisted of the following:

- TOWN SECURES NYS FUNDING FOR FARMLAND AND OPEN SPACE PROTECTION
- TOWN COMES TOGETHER TO PRESERVE CHARACTER
- BETHLEHEM GOES GREEN
- BETHLEHEM UNITED AS IT ADOPTS OPEN SPACE PLAN
- OPEN SPACE PROTECTION PLAN: FAIR FOR ALL?

Mr. Leveille stated that the results of the exercise would be used to develop a vision statement of the planning process, which would be provided to CACC members for review at the November CACC meeting.

Public Comment

- Ed Kleinke stated that it appears the process being discussed is a variation of the standard 'textbook' process normally used. He was happy to see this. He stated that language regarding willing landowners should be included in the guiding principles. Mr. Kleinke's visioning exercise headline would read: "LANDOWNERS CULTIVATE PLAN".

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- John Smolinsky stated that regardless of the outcome of the plan it is important to note that the Town is better off with a plan than without one. He suggested that the planning board will benefit from the plan since it will guide them during their review of site/subdivision plans. Mr. Smolinsky's visioning exercise headline would read: "BETHLEHEM TAKES ANOTHER IMPORTANT STEP IN IMPLEMENTING THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN".
- Linda Jasinski suggested the CACC could define protection. She stressed that the Town should not rely on the real property land use codes since they are not accurate.

Other

CACC members recommended that all materials to be distributed for upcoming CACC meetings should be sent at least one week in advance.

Ms. Liebschutz announced that the next CACC meeting is scheduled for November 19, 2007 due to Veterans Day on November 12, 2007.

Action Items:

- A. Staff to post August 13, 2007 meeting record on web site.
- B. Staff to revise draft preliminary guiding principles.
- C. Staff to prepare preliminary planning process elements.
- D. Staff to prepare vision statement based on the headlines visioning exercise.
- E. Staff to provide CACC members with the Town names of the example municipal open space planning processes.

Next Meeting:

Monday, November 19, 2007 at 7:30 p.m. in Town Hall Room 101