

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

**November 19, 2007 Meeting Record**

**Members Present:**

Libby Liebschutz, Chair; Jeff Freedman; Nancy Heinzen; John Mead; Val Newell; Ted Putney; David VanLuven; Mike Waldenmaier; Caleb Wistar

**Staff Members Present:**

George Leveille, Rob Leslie, Debbie Kitchen

**Chair Report:**

**A. Introduction of new CACC member**

Ms. Liebschutz welcomed David VanLuven to the CACC. Each CACC member introduced himself or herself and provided a brief summary of their interests as a member of the CACC.

- B. Approval of October 15, 2007 Meeting Record:** Ms. Liebschutz asked the members if they had any final comments on the draft October 15, 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**

Mr. Wistar informed members that the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy and Cornell Cooperative Extension-Albany County are sponsoring a program on the "Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) - Preserving Open Space and Protecting Private Property Rights." The program is being held on Wednesday, December 12th from 6:45 - 9:15 p.m. at the Cornell Cooperative Extension - Albany County, 24 Martin Road, Voorheesville.

**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 the preliminary process vision statement, preliminary guiding principles, and preliminary planning process elements (draft scope of work). Mr. Leveille stated that comments from the October meeting are reflected in the updated vision statement, guiding principles and draft scope of work. He indicated that tonight's meeting is intended to review the updates to the three discussion items and finalize. These items will be included in the scope of work for the Open Space Plan that is to be prepared for the Town Board.

**Preliminary Vision Statement**

CACC members felt the vision statement reflected a desired state after the Open Space Plan was completed, not a desired state after the completion of the open space planning process (which was the intention of the exercise). Unanimously, members agreed to remove the vision statement from the package to be submitted to the Town Board. However, members agreed the exercise was useful as a brainstorming tool to begin discussion of the open space planning process.

**Preliminary Guiding Principles**

CACC members reviewed the seven preliminary guiding principles and provided comments. Mr. Leveille reminded members that the guiding principles are intended to reflect key values to guide decision making during the development of the Open Space Plan. It was decided that Principle 2 would be changed to read, *"The open space planning process will define the term "open space" in the context of the Town of Bethlehem's wants, needs, and priorities for undeveloped lands and natural resources, and associated amenities including among other things pedestrian facilities and park lands."*

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Principle 3 would be changed to read, *“The process will be led by Town staff with CACC serving as an advisory committee, and will be supplemented as appropriate by outside consultants with local regional expertise in open space planning and farmland protection.”* Principle 4 will be removed since it does not represent a key value. Principle 5 would be changed to be based on the planning process. Principle 7 will be moved to the top of the list. It was suggested that another principle should be added which provides language to integrate the recommendations from other planning initiatives, most notably the Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan and Route 9W Corridor Study, with the recommendations of the Open Space Plan. Finally, members decided not to rank the guiding principles so as not to imply that one principle is more important or is a greater priority than another. Mr. Leveille indicated that these comments would be reflected in a final draft of the preliminary guiding principles.

**Draft Scope of Work**

Members reviewed the draft scope of work. Mr. Leveille stated that the draft scope was included in an Open Space Plan Request for Qualifications that was mailed to several local consulting firms and is posted on the Town webpage. Mr. Leslie informed the members that the NYS Agriculture and Markets is providing a funding opportunity to local municipalities for the development of local municipal agriculture and farmland protection plans. The maximum local grant request is capped at \$25,000. NYS Agriculture and Markets has indicated that approximately 30 to 40 plans can be funded across the State. Mr. Leveille mentioned the Town is looking to apply for the grant to help fund the agriculture and farmland protection component of the Open Space Plan. In submitting an application, the Town has no obligation to execute a grant agreement, if approved. Mr. Leveille indicated an eighteen to twenty-four month duration to complete the Plan is envisioned with a cost of about \$75,000. Ms. Newell expressed concern that the State would make specific requirements to the Town regarding recommendations if the Town were to accept a funding award.

**Public Comment**

- Lawrence Fahn expressed concern that the Open Space Plan will be another form of control on land and property owner’s rights.
- Jeff Vadney questioned if the Open Space Plan is mandated by the state, similar to how the Comprehensive Plan was mandated. He questioned if other Towns have completed Open Space Plans and if Bethlehem was at the forefront in developing such a Plan in the Capital Region. He suggested placing the term “large landowner” in the Plan’s title.
- Nancy Neff questioned the definition of stakeholder. She suggested that the agriculture and farmland protection plan component should have a study advisory group consisting of residents that are active in the agriculture and farming community. She felt CACC should not represent the study advisory committee.
- Tom Newell stated that agriculture and farming are no longer viable businesses in the Town.
- Jeff Vadney expressed concern that Town residents do not respect the private property of large landowners and suggested education regarding trespassing and private property rights be included as a discussion topic during a public workshop.
- Linda Jasinski asked what are we protecting farmland and open space from?

**Other**

The comments from the night’s meeting will be incorporated in the various documents. Mr. Leveille stated that the preliminary guiding principles, and draft scope of work including an implementation schedule, budget, and recommendations regarding consulting services will be provided to the Town

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Board at an early 2008 Town Board meeting. It was decided that the December CACC meeting would be cancelled. CACC members will be informed of the next CACC meeting.

**Action Items:**

- A. Staff to post October 15, 2007 meeting record on web site.
- B. Staff to revise draft preliminary guiding principles.
- C. Staff to revise preliminary planning process elements.
- D. Staff to prepare package for Town Board submittal.

**Next Meeting:**

December 10, 2007 meeting is cancelled.

January 14, 2008 meeting scheduled.