

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

January 14, 2008 Meeting Record

Members Present:

Libby Liebschutz, Chair; Mike DiPaolo, Nancy Heinzen; John Mead; Val Newell; Ted Putney; Mike Waldenmaier; Caleb Wistar

Staff Members Present:

Rob Leslie, Debbie Kitchen

Chair Report:

A. **Approval of November 19, 2007 Meeting Record:** Ms. Liebschutz asked the members if they had any final comments on the draft November 19, 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. Members requested that the complete set of guiding principles as listed in the November minutes be distributed.

B. **2008 CACC Meeting Schedule**

Ms. Liebschutz distributed a proposed 2008 meeting schedule that consisted of the following dates:

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|-------------------|-------------------|
| January 14, 2008 | July 14, 2008 |
| February 11, 2008 | August 11, 2008 |
| March 10, 2008 | September 8, 2008 |
| April 14, 2008 | October 6, 2008 |
| May 12, 2008 | November 10, 2008 |
| June 9, 2008 | December 8, 2008 |

All dates reflect the second Monday of each month, except for the October meeting due to the Columbus Day holiday on October 13, 2008. Ms. Liebschutz asked the members if they had any conflicts with the dates listed above. Hearing none, the members approved the 2008 CACC schedule. Members agreed to move the meeting start time to 7:00 PM and agreed that there could be some flexibility in meeting start times as they move into the development of the Open Space Plan. Mr. Leslie stated that Room 101 would be reserved from 6:00 PM to 10:00 PM in anticipation of a potential change in start time to accommodate guest speakers, presentations, or public meetings associated with the Open Space Plan. Mr. Leslie indicated the 2008 CACC schedule will be posted on the CACC website.

C. **Other**

Ms. Liebschutz announced that there has been some correspondence amongst the CACC regarding concern of the DEDP's submittal of the NYS Agriculture and Markets grant application. Mr. Leslie informed the members that the basis for applying for the grant is the Comprehensive Plan, which identifies productive rural lands in its vision statement, and recommends the development of a Farmland and Open Space Protection Program.

Mr. Leslie indicated that the Town has applied for the maximum local grant request of \$25,000. The match requirement for the grant is 75% funding from the State and 25% funding from the applicant. Of the applicant's 25% match, 80% can consist of in-kind services, while 20% is required as local cash match. He stated that the Town's local cash match would be approximately \$1,500. NYS Agriculture and Markets has indicated that approximately 30 to 40 plans can be funded across the State.

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Ms. Newell expressed concern that the DEDP did not speak with landowners prior to submitting the application. Ms. Newell expressed concern that farming is not sufficiently economically viable in the Town to justify applying resources towards a farmland protection program and she and Ms. Heinzen expressed concern that such a program would take away resources from other components of the open space planning process. Mr. Leslie indicated that documentation in the Comprehensive Plan supported the application and an outcome of the extensive comprehensive planning process was that every zoning district permit agricultural uses.

Mr. Leslie will provide CACC members with the webpage address of the New York State Agriculture and Markets website where the grant application can be found.

Farm and Open Space Protection Program (Open Space Plan) Status of Open Space Planning Process

Mr. Leslie provided an update of the status of the Open Space Plan. Currently, the DEDP is conducting an evaluation of the qualified responses that have been submitted. Four responses to the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for Open Space Planning Services were submitted. Over the next month the DEDP will be making a consultant selection decision, and will either contact consultants to schedule an interview, request additional information, or inform them of the Department's progress. The DEDP plans to submit to the Town Board an Open Space Plan scope of work, which will include an outline of tasks to be undertaken, an implementation schedule, budget, recommendations regarding consulting services, and a description of public meetings and potential topical areas. It is anticipated that the guiding principles and scope of work will be submitted to the Town Board in February 2008.

Mr. Leslie will provide CACC members with a copy of the RFQ, guiding principles and scope of work.

The DEDP seeks to hire a consultant for assistance with the Plan; however, typical consulting services are not desired. The DEDP desires a consultant who can perform a mentoring role during the planning process. It is anticipated that a consultant would work with the CACC during its monthly meetings but might have a limited role during public meetings or workshops. Tasks that can be performed by the Department and/or CACC, such as GIS services and data collection, will remain "in-house" so as to limit costs for consulting services.

There was discussion regarding the role of the CACC in the development of the Open Space Plan. Mr. Leslie indicated the CACC would serve as the advisory committee to the DEDP during the process, as recommended in the DEDP's September 2007 memo to the Town Board. Mr. DiPaolo expressed a desire for the CACC's role to remain as it has during other tasks, as advisory committee to the Town Board.

Members indicated they are willing to actively participate in the development of the Open Space Plan, and are willing to help write the document. They encouraged the DEDP to use the technical skills of the CACC members at every opportunity in order to limit the need and costs for consulting services.

Other Business

It was suggested that during the February 11, 2008 CACC meeting a representative from another municipality that has completed an Open Space Plan speak to the Committee about their experience.

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Public Comment

- Lisa Evans expressed concerned that the Town does not currently have an Open Space Plan in place. She indicated that a recommendation of the Route 9W Corridor Study is for a Selkirk Bypass that crosses the Vloman Kill and could impact the stream corridor. She encouraged the DEDP and the CACC to begin the study. She recommended that all active Study Advisory Committees in the Town to be notified of the activities of other committees.
- Steven Downs stressed that there is a pressing need for an Open Space Plan. He suggested that key stream corridors and wetlands should be identified as key ecological resources for preservation of the Plan.
- Linda Jasinski stated agricultural uses are not permitted in every zoning district because site plan approval is required.

(Note: Agricultural uses are permitted By-Right in the R, RH, I, and RLI Districts. In the RLL, RA, RB, RC, CR, MR, H, CH, C, and MED districts agricultural uses in existence as of the effective date of the Zoning Law, and agricultural use located in a County Agricultural District are permitted By-Right. For new agricultural uses, the seasonal planting of crops is exempt from Site Plan Review. For instances where Site Plan Review is required, the Planning Board shall refer to "Site Plan Process" Guidelines as set forth by the Commissioner of Agriculture and Markets.)

Action Items:

- A. Staff to post November 19, 2007 meeting record on web site.
- B. Staff to post 2008 CACC schedule on CACC webpage.
- C. Staff to provide final draft of preliminary guiding principles and scope of work to CACC.
- D. Staff to provide webpage address of NY State Agriculture and Markets Grant Application
- E. Staff to provide a copy of the Request for Qualifications for Open Space Planning Services document.

Next Meeting:

February 11, 2008 at 7:00 PM