

**TOWN OF BETHLEHEM**  
**CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON CONSERVATION (CACC)**  
**June 9, 2008 Meeting Record**

**Members Present:**

Libby Liebschutz, Chair; Katherine Daniels, Mike DiPaolo, Jeff Freedman, Nancy Heinzen, John Mead; Ted Putney, David Van Luven, Mike Waldenmaier, Caleb Wistar

**Staff Members Present:**

Jeff Lipnicky, Rob Leslie, Debbie Kitchen

**Chair Report:**

- A. **Approval of April 28, 2008 Meeting Record:** Ms. Liebschutz asked the members if they had any comments or corrections on the draft April 28, 2008 meeting record that was circulated. There was discussion regarding the term “principals” and it was decided the term should not be included in the minutes. Following this discussion, the members voted to approve the meeting record. Mr. Leslie indicated the change would be made to the meeting record, which would be posted on the Town’s web site.
- B. **Other**  
No discussion items to report.

**Farm and Open Space Protection Program (Open Space Plan):**

**A. Update on Agricultural and Farmland Study Advisory Committee**

Mr. Leslie provided an overview of the Agriculture and Farmland Study Advisory Committee (SAC), which included the following information:

- Established by Town Board at its May 28, 2008 meeting
- Consists of 10 members
- 1<sup>st</sup> SAC meeting scheduled for June 23, 2008
- Task is to provide a sounding board and community perspective on study related issues, potential solutions and alternatives
- American Farmland Trust (AFT) to be consultant on Farmland Protection Plan
- Agenda for June 23 meeting will include discussion of potential interviewees list and potential questions to ask interviewees regarding agriculture and farming in Bethlehem
- Agriculture and Farmland Study Advisory Committee webpage created to provide information regarding SAC tasks and project documents and update

Mr. Waldenmaier suggested speaking with large landowners before AFT conducts their interviews.

**B. Discussion of Results from the Open Space Plan Public Meeting Group Exercises**

Mr. Leslie thanked all CACC members for their participation and assistance at the Open Space Plan Public Meeting. He indicated that approximately 80 residents attended the meeting and the goal and purpose of the meeting was to listen and learn what the community had to say about open space. Mr. Leslie informed the Committee that the goal of tonight’s meeting is to receive feedback regarding the results of the group exercises (Groups 1 – 6). Each member received a copy of the individual group results and a groups summary document. Mr. Leslie stated that the summary was completed based on a review/scan for common terms among the six groups, not a scientific process.

**TOWN OF BETHLEHEM**  
**CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON CONSERVATION (CACC)**  
**June 9, 2008 Meeting Record**

- **Review Guiding Principles**

Mr. Leslie indicated that there was no clear consensus among the six groups to add or remove a guiding principle. Ms. Liebschutz suggested that there was opportunity for participants to comment but nothing that rose to a level for revisions. CACC members expressed a similar sentiment that there were no significant comments regarding the guiding principles at the Open Space public meeting.

It was determined to keep the guiding principles as they currently stand.

- **Review Draft Definitions**

Mr. Leslie stated that the terms we heard at the Open Space Meeting were consistent with the terms used in the New York State Open Space Conservation Plan and the New York State Local Open Space Planning Guide definition. Based on this assessment, Mr. Leslie modified the New York State definition to include additional terms heard at the Open Space Meeting for Bethlehem's definition. The Committee determined that the **Draft Open Space Definition** is a good working definition, and is stated as follows:

"Land that is not intensively developed for residential, commercial, industrial or institutional use. It serves many purposes, whether it is publicly or privately owned. It includes agricultural and forest land, community gardens, undeveloped shorelines, undeveloped lands that provide scenic value, public/private parks and recreation fields, walking and bicycling pathways or corridors, and nature/wildlife areas. It also includes water bodies such as rivers and streams. Its occurrence enhances the community character and quality of life for the Town of Bethlehem."

In addition, a definition for protected open space was provided to create a distinction between resources the community views as open space and lands that are specifically protected for open space. The **Draft Protected Open Space Definition** is as follows:

"Open space that includes some form of agreed-upon restriction from development between a willing landowner and a public entity (such as the town) or quasi-public entity (such as a land trust). The restrictions would include but not be limited to conservation easements and land deeded for environmental resources or park/recreational purposes or similar protected uses. Public access is not necessarily required for an open space to be protected."

There was discussion regarding the need for the inclusion of the term "necessarily" in the last sentence of the definition for protected open space. It was decided the term "necessarily" should be removed.

Ms. Daniels indicated that the protected open space definition should include a statement that reflects regulatory restrictions such as those required by the zoning ordinance (i.e. stream setbacks, steep slope setbacks, state and federal wetland regulations, etc). Based on this, the "agreed upon" restriction statement would not necessarily reflect all regulatory restrictions, which are requirements and no optional. Mr. Van Luven and Mr. Wistar suggested that the definition without a regulatory reference indicates a preservation of open space, instead of protection.

The Committee determined that they agreed with the draft open space definition. However, it was decided that discussion of the draft protected open space definition would be tabled for a future meeting.

**TOWN OF BETHLEHEM**  
**CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON CONSERVATION (CACC)**  
**June 9, 2008 Meeting Record**

- **Review Issues/needs to identify focus groups and topic workshops**

Mr. Leslie discussed the goal of conducting the issues/needs exercise, which was to identify topics for future focus groups or topic meetings. Several ideas of potential focus group sets were identified and include the following (note the different bullet types reflect various focus group ideas that were raised):

- |  |                              |                     |
|--|------------------------------|---------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Funding focus group/taxes/economic issues | ● Trespass/encroachment      | ○ Property Rights   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wetlands/Wildlife habitat                 | ● Funding/taxes              | ○ Funding           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Connectivity/corridors                    | ● Recreation/bike/walk paths | ○ Protection Themes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Farmland                                  | ● Wildlife/wetlands          |                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Scenic viewsheds                          | ● Viewsheds                  |                     |

It was suggested that the focus groups perform as planning groups rather than utilized for identifying issues. Mr. Leslie reminded members that they are still in Phase 1 of the Plan and that goals and objectives of each topic group need to be identified. Ms. Liebschutz suggested creating subcommittees for the focus groups.

- **Review Vision Statement Terms**

Members agreed it was too early in the planning process to develop a vision statement based on the terms provided during the vision statement exercise at the Open Space public meeting. It was determined as the planning process progresses a vision statement would be drafted.

**C. Discussion of Large Landowner Meeting:**

Mr. Leslie indicated that the goal/purpose of the large landowner meeting remains unclear to the DEDP. Mr. Waldenmaier stated that the idea is to put out a feeler for how many willing landowners there are and to present the tools to them. He suggested a presentation from Indian Ladder Farms. Mike DiPaolo suggested there might be someone who has real case study examples and can make a presentation on tools and barriers. Ms. Heinzen suggested a Planner from another municipality that currently has an open space plan and funding program. She suggested the Town of Warwick.

Mr. Leslie suggested a scenario exercise, where a realistic example of a landowner's options for protection or development of their land is presented, followed by discussion of the potential tools that could be available to the landowner. This idea is intended to use the scenarios as an interactive exercise to educate landowners on the tools.

It was determined the goal of the large landowner meeting is to educate landowners about the various tools that are available.

**Other Business:**

Mr. DiPaolo provided a brief summary of the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy's meeting on May 22, which included a presentation by the Town of Clifton Park regarding their trails program.

**Public Comment:**

Nancy Neff suggested the large landowner meeting could include a speaker with experience who can present the pros and cons of the various tools. She mentioned that it was a good idea to differentiate between open space and protected open space.

**TOWN OF BETHLEHEM**  
**CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON CONSERVATION (CACC)**  
**June 9, 2008 Meeting Record**

John Smolinsky suggested there needed to be some form of presentation at the large landowner meeting that included goals or objectives of the Plan in order to receive constructive feedback.

Ken Neff suggested the Committee should speak "landowner speak" to improve communication with large landowners.

Linda Jaskinski suggested that the landowner meeting should include someone who has been through the process. She mentioned that landowners should be asked what incentives would accommodate them.

**Adjourn**

**Next Meeting:**

July 14, 2008 at 7:00 PM