

TOWN OF BETHLEHEM
CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON CONSERVATION (CACC)
September 8, 2008 Meeting Record

Members Present:

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

Staff Members Present:

Jeff Lipnicky, Rob Leslie, Debbie Kitchen
John Behan, Melissa Barry (Behan Planning Associates)

Chair Report:

Ms. Liebschutz announced the resignation of Mike DiPaolo and indicated that there are two vacant positions on the Committee.

- A. **Approval of June 14, 2008 Meeting Record:** Ms. Liebschutz asked the members if they had any comments or corrections on the draft July 14, 2008 meeting record that was circulated. Hearing none, the members voted to approve the meeting record. Two members abstained from voting since they were not present at the July meeting. Mr. Leslie indicated the approved meeting record would be posted on the Town's web site

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

A. Update on Agricultural and Farmland Study Advisory Committee

Mr. Leslie provided a summary of the agenda that was discussed at the July 21 Agriculture and Farmland Study Advisory Committee (SAC), which included the following information:

- Interviews of individuals involved in agriculture and farming completed by American Farmland Trust (AFT)
- AFT to prepare summary of interviews
- Committee conducted a SWOT (Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, and Threats) exercise for agriculture and farming in Bethlehem. Strengths included proximity to markets and customer demand for locally grown food. Weaknesses included development pressure encroachment on agricultural land, and lack of younger generation interest and support services. Opportunities included equine farms, linking the older and younger generation, and education of farming in schools. Threats included property and school taxes and changing demographics towards older population.
- Next meeting scheduled for September 15
 - Discuss agriculture interviews and statistics
 - Overview of agriculture and farmland protection tools

B. Review Agenda for Large Landowner Meeting

Behan Planning provided an update on the Large Landowner meeting, which is scheduled for October 6, 2008 at 7:30PM in the Town Hall Auditorium. Landowners owning 7+ acres will receive an invitation letter. Approximately 300 invitation letters will be mailed. Ms. Barry indicated the agenda for the meeting was developed based on input from the Committee and the results of AFT's interviews. AFT and Behan Planning collaborated to identify issues and concerns from the interviews, which included respect for property, affordability of large acreages of land, and land management/use options. The meeting will include a presentation on potential tools/options that could help to address the issues and concerns of landowners. At the meeting the concept of land planning will be presented and there will be an opportunity for group discussion on the issues and tools. The Committee suggested the invitation letter should also include an agenda.

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C. Review Draft Existing Condition Maps

Mr. Leslie presented the draft existing conditions maps to the Committee. The maps included the following: Recreation and Pathways, Natural Systems, and Agriculture and Farmland.

The Recreation and Pathways map illustrates those lands that provide opportunities for recreation (passive and active). They include public recreation, private recreation, conservation, and education lands. The map also includes identification of sidewalks, multi-use paths and bicycle lanes in Town. There was discussion on adding potential bicycle routes or safe walking routes to the map. The Committee was reminded that the purpose of the map is to show existing conditions not recommendations. Suggestions for edits to the map included data sources, preparer name, date, boat and kayak launch sites, Hudson River Water Trail location, and fishing access points on Town land along the Onesquethaw Creek.

The Natural Systems map illustrates the following natural features: floodplain boundary, streams and water bodies, wetlands, and steep slopes. Other information includes boundaries of the Onesquethaw-Coeymans Biodiversity Assessment Study Area, stream buffer boundary, conservation/parkland areas and rare plant important areas. The information utilized on the map is public available data. Ms. Barry indicated that the purpose of showing these features on the map is that they serve as indicators for the potential to provide habitats for plants and animal species. The resources provide many services to our community including clean air, clean water and flood protection.

The Agriculture and Farmland Map was prepared based on input from the Agriculture and Farmland Study Advisory Committee. The map is intended to illustrate areas that are involved in farming and agriculture activities. Data layers on the map include agricultural assessment properties, Agricultural District properties, and agriculture classification based on the NYS Office of Real Property land use classification. A map (Soils Map) showing statewide importance and prime farmland soils was also presented. Mr. Leslie explained that when utilized properly these soil groups are capable of producing high yield crops. There was discussion on the soils illustrated on the Soils Map and a similar map prepared by the Albany County Soil and Water Conservation District. Mr. Leslie stated he would investigate the difference between the two maps.

Other Business: None

Public Comment:

Public comments included the following:

- Large landowners should receive agenda with their invitation letter.
- If wildlife corridors are to be discussed, the term should be defined.
- The Funding and Tools Report should be made available to the public through the libraries in the Bethlehem Central, Ravena-Coeymans-Selkirk, and Guilderland School Districts.

Adjourn

Next Meeting:

November 10, 2008 at 7:00 PM