

TOWN OF BETHLEHEM
CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON CONSERVATION (CACC)
November 10, 2008 Meeting Record

Members Present:

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

Staff Members Present:

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

Chair Report:

- A. **Approval of September 8, 2008 Meeting Record:** Ms. Liebschutz asked the members if they had any comments or corrections on the draft September 8, 2008 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

Ms. Liebschutz informed the committee that Ms. Newell would not be able to attend the meeting due to a prior engagement. Ms. Newell's comments on the October 6 and October 23 meeting summaries and draft goals were distributed to the Committee.

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

The Committee discussed the status of the Open Space Plan. Mr. Leslie stated Phase I of the Plan is currently underway, which is to identify the issues and needs associated with open space. The three public meetings held to date were intended to receive community feedback. Responses received during the public meetings have not indicated a community desire for a traditional open space plan and map.

The draft goals that were developed are based on the feedback received from the public meetings. According to Town staff, the Plan appears to be heading in the direction of making a statement on sustainability and not towards identifying land for protection. Mr. Leslie reminded the Committee that the guiding principles for open space planning recognize the importance of a bottom-up process and utilizing community input.

Committee members expressed concern on the number of goals (sixty-three) for the plan. Mr. Leslie clarified that the draft goals were only those that were numbered and the subheadings were provided for clarification of the goal (possible implementation items). This results in only 21 goals. Mr. Friedman was concerned that the Committee would get caught up in the minutia of too many goals.

Mr. Wistar stated the goals capture the responses provided at the public meetings, although they don't appear to be the basis of a typical open space plan. He felt it was important to develop criteria that would help the Town in making future decisions on open space protection.

Mr. Leslie indicated that when the planning process began the term open space was identified as a working title and that it could change based on the direction the Plan takes after the public and CACC meetings.

Mr. Putney indicated that the missing elements in drafting the goals are input from the CACC and Town planners. The Plan should not be limited to public responses and include the CACC and Town Planning Department staff.

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Mr. VanLuven expressed a desire to develop criteria that would help the Town make decisions in favor of or against the purchase of certain parcels (when the opportunity with a willing landowner arises).

Ms. Heinzen stated the goals provide good substance for the direction of the Plan, and within the topics there is an opportunity to create criteria. The Plan's recommendation should not be to develop criteria, but the criteria should be developed as part of the Plan.

A. Review Landowner Meeting Summary and Draft Goals

Mr. Leslie reviewed the summary of the October 6, 2008 public meeting with the Committee. He indicated the draft goals that were developed for land stewardship are intended to address the issues and concerns of the large landowners.

Land Stewardship

Mr. Waldenmaier stated some of the issues that have been identified by the large landowners are expressed in the goals (i.e. trespassing , etc.). However, the language should be stronger. For example, the goal should be to increase enforcement, not to explore opportunities.

There was discussion on the Town's legal ability to require ATV registration. Mr. Leslie stated the Town does not have the authority to require its own ATV licenses or registration, but it may impose additional restrictions or rules on ATV operation. Mr. Waldenmaier distributed a brochure "ATVs - Information for Owners and Operators" developed by the NYS Department of Motor Vehicles.

The Committee commented on the draft goals for land stewardship. The draft goals were updated as follows:

- Educate and inform town residents about respect for private property.
- Increase prosecution of illegal activities such as dumping of trash/ debris, trespassing, ATV use, and encroachment on private lands.
- Consider, avoid, and mitigate impacts to the extent possible to landowners when undertaking new infrastructure and development projects. Also consider retrofit of problem areas, where feasible.
- Provide information and incentives to landowners to sustain ownership of land within the town.
- Provide information to landowners on options available for land management.

B. Review Topics Meeting Summary and Draft Goals

The Committee commented on the draft goals for recreation and pathways, natural systems, and agriculture and farmland.

Recreation and Pathways

The Committee commented on the draft goals for recreation and pathways. The draft goals were updated as follows:

- Create an interconnected transportation network that is safe for non-vehicular travel to recreation areas, schools, services, and daily activities.
- Increase public understanding regarding the "share the road" concept for bicyclists, pedestrians, and motorists.
- Encourage the construction of pathways that are consistent with their surroundings and compatible with adjacent lands.
- Increase opportunities for residents to access the passive and active recreational opportunities offered by the Town's natural resources (e.g. Hudson River and Normans Kill).

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- Support the development of new pocket parks, neighborhood scale parks and community gardens where they are needed.
- Maintain existing Town park facilities.
- Monitor future growth for its impact on park needs.

Natural Systems

There was discussion on the relevance of the Town's urban forest as an item to be addressed in the Plan.

The Committee commented on the draft goals for natural systems. The draft goals were updated as follows:

- Maintain and improve the quality and quantity of the town's surface and ground waters.
- Create and preserve linkages (interconnectivity) between natural areas, working with willing landowners.
- Encourage low impact development.
- Be good stewards of our natural resources.
- Maintain and improve the town's "urban forest".

Agriculture and Farmland

The Committee determined it was best for the Agriculture and Farmland Study Advisory Committee to review and comment on the draft goals for agriculture and farmland.

Mr. Leslie stated the next steps are to refine the goals based on the Committee's feedback and begin to draft recommendations that achieve the goals.

Other Business:

Mr. Leslie provided an update on the Agriculture and Farmland Study Advisory Committee:

- Next meeting scheduled for November 17, 2008
- Committee to review and comment on draft goals from October 23, 2008 Public Meeting
- Committee to revisit draft goals developed at its October 14 meeting

Public Comment:

Public comments included the following:

- Energy and tree items do not belong in an Open Space Plan.
- Concern the Town will require permits to remove trees.
- The urban tree concept should be included in an Open Space Plan.
- The goals of the Open Space Plan do not need to replicate the Town's Comprehensive Plan.

Adjourn

Next Meeting:

December 8, 2008 at 7:00 PM