

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

Members Present:

Nancy Heinzen, Val Newell, Ted Putney, Mike Waldenmaier, Caleb Wistar

Staff Members Present:

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

Chair Report:

- A. **Approval of November 10, 2008 Meeting Record:** Mr. Leslie announced a few of the members were not able to attend tonight's meeting. He asked the members if they had any comments or corrections on the draft November 10, 2008 meeting record that was circulated. A few clarifications to the record were reported and Mr. Leslie indicated he would make the appropriate changes and post to the Town's web site. The members voted to approve the meeting record.
- B. **2009 CACC Meeting Schedule:** Members reviewed the proposed 2009 meeting schedule. Mr. Leslie stated he would reserve Town Hall Room 101 at 7PM for the Committee's 2009 meetings on the following dates:

January 12, 2009
February 09, 2009
March 09, 2009
April 13, 2009
May 11, 2009
June 08, 2009
July 13, 2009
August 10, 2009
September 14, 2009
October 19, 2009
November 09, 2009
December 14, 2009

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

A. Review/Discuss: Needs, Opportunities and Recommendations

Mr. Leslie stated the goal of Phase 1 of the open space planning effort is to identify needs and opportunities and determine future actions to conserve open space in Bethlehem. Mr. Leslie stated the purpose of tonight's meeting is to review some ideas that have emerged from the public and CACC meetings as potential recommendations. Melissa Barry from Behan Planning Associates provided a presentation on the needs, opportunities, and potential recommendations as they relate to Phase 1 of the Plan. (A copy of the presentation is attached to this meeting report). The presentation outlined an emerging green infrastructure approach that could include four major actions:

- Green Infrastructure in Development
- Connections to Nature
- Land Conservation
- Green Infrastructure Financing

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Following a summary of these actions, Ms. Barry presented fifteen potential 'ideas' that could be formed into recommendations and placed under a specific action. They included:

- Amenity Zoning
- Update Town Code (better site design)
- Pathways Committee
- Landowner Forum
- Strengthen Town Code (trespassing, dumping, and other illegal activities)
- Term Conservation Easement
- Ecological Assessment
- Tree Planting in Public ROW
- Green Infrastructure Vision Map
- Green Infrastructure Education
- Land Feature Rating Criteria
- Survey Residents
- Tax Sharing
- Green with Grey
- Leverage Investment

CACC members discussed the fifteen 'ideas'. During the discussion of better site design there was a suggestion to review successful conservation subdivision regulations from other municipalities in the Capital District. There was also a suggestion that if adjacent properties are proposed for development at the same time, their stormwater management should be designed concurrently. This could provide green space benefits to the community. The cost savings that result from better site design was also mentioned.

The Town's proposed Bethlehem 20/20 survey was discussed. This survey is proposed to be sent out in the 1st quarter of 2009, and members felt a handful of questions that gauge community interest in purchasing land or easements for conservation purposes would be useful. There was discussion regarding the \$25 to \$50 per \$100,000 assessed value that residents indicated they would be willing to pay for conservation purposes during the comprehensive plan community survey. Members suggested reviewing the total town assessment to identify the amount of funds this would yield for the Town's purchase of land (for conservation purposes).

Members suggested the "connections to nature" action should be changed to "connections to nature and other places".

The Committee's comments are to be incorporated into the fifteen items and developed into draft recommendations, which would be sent out to members on Friday (Dec. 12). A copy of the presentation would also be sent to members. The Committee was asked to review the recommendations, and begin to think about prioritization and responsibility (i.e. CACC, DEDP, other Town department or committee). At the January CACC meeting the Committee will discuss their ideas for prioritization and responsibility.

B. Report Outline

A draft report outline was circulated to the Committee. The main sections of the outline include an Introduction, Existing Conditions, Issues and Goals, Needs, Opportunities and Recommendations, and Recommendation Priorities. Members indicated the Plan that is in development is not an Open Space plan and perhaps the name should be changed to reflect the green infrastructure approach. Mr. Leslie suggested the title "Green Infrastructure Framework".

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C. Update on Agriculture and Farmland Plan

The Agriculture and Farmland Committee developed draft goals for the Plan at their meeting on November 17. The draft goals are as follows:

- Assist and support in resolving issues causing adverse impacts on agriculture and farmland.
- Support economic opportunities for farms and businesses that complement agriculture.
- Encourage flexible town policies and regulations that are supportive of agriculture.
- Give farmers a voice; include members of the agricultural community on town boards and committees.
- Provide voluntary incentives for landowners to continue agricultural activities.
- Encourage educational opportunities to enable the public to better understand the benefits of and need for agriculture.

At its next meeting on January 26, the Agriculture and Farmland Committee will discuss current land use documents and local policies for consistency with the draft goals. They will also discuss the tools for agriculture and farmland protection that could achieve the draft goals.

Other Business:

Mr. Leslie announced that the Town has scheduled a public meeting on December 9 at 7PM at Elm Avenue Park to discuss the passive recreation development of Simmons Road Park.

Ms. Heinzen announced that the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy will hold a workshop regarding "Transfer of Development Rights" at the Slingerlands Community United Methodist Church on December 11 at 4PM.

Public Comment:

Public comments included the following:

- In response to the discussion of street trees in Town right-of-way, an attendee stated the Town of Bethlehem is becoming too much like the City of Albany.

Adjourn

Next Meeting:

January 12, 2008 at 7:00 PM