

**TOWN OF BETHLEHEM**  
**CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON CONSERVATION (CACC)**  
**February 2, 2009 Meeting Record**

**Members Present:**

Libby Liebschutz, Chair; Jeff Freedman, Nancy Heinzen, John Mead, Val Newell, David VanLuven  
Mike Waldenmaier, Caleb Wistar

**Staff Members Present:**

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

**Chair Report:**

A. **Approval of January 12, 2009 Meeting Record:** Mr. Leslie asked the members if they had any comments or corrections on the draft January 12, 2009 meeting record that was circulated. Ms. Newell indicated that concerns regarding the term "green infrastructure" expressed during January's public comment period were not reflected in the minutes. The Committee decided to include a public comment statement that reflected use of the term green infrastructure has a specific meaning that the CACC would be endorsing by using the term. The Committee also clarified Ms. Heinzen's statement regarding the term "better site design" to include "taking advantage of conservation opportunities" (replacing "increasing conservation land"). Mr. Leslie indicated he would make the edits to the meeting record and post to the Town's web site.

B. **Other**

There was discussion regarding the scheduled March 9 CACC meeting. The Committee rescheduled the March CACC meeting to March 12.

The Committee discussed the memo to the Town Board recommending the establishment of a Bethlehem Pathways Committee. It was suggested that a statement regarding safety, maintenance, and security issues should be addressed by the new Committee. The CACC also suggested introducing the idea of a motorized vehicle committee to address ATVs and snowmobiles in the memo. It was suggested that the CACCs information on pathways should be sent to the new committee to inform them of the issues. Mr. Leslie indicated the Supervisor desires to establish the Pathways Committee at the first Town Board meeting in February.

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

**A. Review/Discuss: Needs, Opportunities and Recommendations**

There was discussion on the term "green infrastructure" and what it meant. Ms. Barry indicated that green infrastructure has to do with interconnected resources and how they are linked together. Resources include wetlands, streams, floodplains, conservation lands, recreation lands, etc. The Committee decided to table the discussion of the term until after discussion of specific draft recommendations in the Report.

The Committee reviewed the draft Town of Bethlehem Green Infrastructure Framework: Needs Opportunities and Recommendations Report (dated 12-10-08) and had the following comments to the recommendations:

- Recommendation 9: Prioritize study areas and document ecological resources
  - The Committee suggested the inclusion of a statement that if field documentation of ecological resources is desired a landowner's permission of entry to the property would be needed.

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- Recommendation 12: Survey residents
  - It was suggested that if we are surveying residents we need to have a working definition of green infrastructure. Ms. Barry and Mr. Leslie indicated that green infrastructure has to do with interconnected resources and how they are linked together. Resources include wetlands, streams, floodplains, conservation lands, recreation lands, etc. It was requested that the Committee be provided with a definition of green infrastructure at the March meeting.
  - Mr. Leslie indicated that originally the idea was to utilize the Bethlehem 20/20 committee's survey (targeted for distribution in the Spring) for the inclusion of some questions from the CACC. At this time, there would not be enough time to include the CACC's questions on the Bethlehem 20/20 survey. It was suggested a separate survey from the CACC should be distributed at a later date.
  - Ms. Newell indicated that what she heard at the public meetings was for connectivity via pathways to activity centers. She did not believe the people who owned the green space indicated they were interested in connectivity of green infrastructure resources.
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- Recommendation 13: Green Infrastructure benefits of tax sharing
  - There was discussion regarding the necessity and understanding of this recommendation. It was suggested that the recommendation should include a statement that green infrastructure could be considered as a public benefit in the event the Town is looking to develop a tax sharing agreement among the various taxing jurisdictions (county, school, town).
- Recommendation 14: Consider green with grey
  - The Committee reviewed this recommendation and no suggestions were raised.
- Recommendation 15: Leverage Town investment
  - Mr. Wistar stated this recommendation is something the CACC should be involved in on a continuing basis due to its background and knowledge. Ms. Newell indicated that the Town needs to be conscious of tax matching dollars that would be needed. It was determined that the recommendation should be joined with recommendation 14, but also split into recommendation A: Leverage Town Investment and B: Work with Land Trusts.
- Recommendation 10: Develop a Green Infrastructure Vision Map
  - Ms. Barry discussed the idea of a green infrastructure vision map. She stated it is a map to give a general idea of where green infrastructure should be developed (i.e. trails, pathways, etc.). Its purpose is to provide the "bigger picture" perspective and future of green infrastructure in the Town. There was discussion on the usefulness of a vision map. There was mixed opinion amongst the CACC as to the usefulness of a vision map. Some CACC members expressed concern that a vision map would decrease the development value of property (and therefore a reduced purchase offer from a developer) if a map was developed. Mr. VanLuvan stated that in 20 years of working with open space issues in three Northeastern states, he has never seen a property's value decrease when shown on an open space map. He stated many land conservation organizations are hesitant to release maps that show properties they'd like to protect with willing landowners out of concern that their interest will raise property values.
  - Mr. Lipnicky indicated that the developer's perspective is to work with the Town to get a project completed. Some CACC members indicated that they thought it would be beneficial for the DEDP and Planning Board in their review of development projects. Some members expressed concern that the lack of a map would reduce the Town's eligibility in applying for grants from State and Federal agencies and not-for-profit organizations. Mr. Lipnicky suggested that a vision map would be helpful to the extent that it is endorsed by the Town Board.

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- The Committee determined that the recommendation should remain but without reference to maps. It was suggested that a vision could still be developed in written format.
- Recommendation 11: Consider the development of land feature criteria to rate preservation opportunities
  - It was suggested “Consider the development of” should be changed to “Develop”.
  - There was discussion on when the Town Board and Planning Board would utilize this criteria. Mr. Leslie indicated an example would be when a developer offers to donate land as part of a subdivision to the Town, the Planning Board could use the criteria to make a recommendation for or against the land donation. The Town Board could use the criteria if a willing landowner approaches the Town for sale of their property or development rights.

Ms. Heinzen and Mr. VanLuven suggested a recommendation on considering the development of community gardens based on input they heard from the public meetings.

**B. Review Discuss Recommendation Prioritization Sheet**

Due to time constraints the committee decided to postpone their review of the Recommendations Prioritization Table until the March 12 meeting.

**Other Business:**

Mr. Leslie indicated the recommendation section would be updated based on CACCs comments from the January and February meeting. The DEDP will distribute a draft report, which includes the updated recommendations, to the CACC in mid-February for their review, with the anticipation of comments at the March meeting.

**Public Comment:**

Public comments included the following:

- The CACC has missed what people in the community have said about open space, the community does not care about conservation.
- The survey needs to attach dollars to benefits (How much are residents willing to pay for the benefits?)
- Mr. Vadney stated he expressed his interest to the Town to be placed on the Committee since there are two open positions.
- Green infrastructure is a new term/repackaging of the term conservation.
- Green infrastructure is an attempt to deceive the community so that certain people can forward their agenda.
- Reminded the CACC that everything has a cost.
- Suggestion that the Town should develop a fund for open space and afford residents the opportunity to indicate on their tax bill if they would like to donate money to the fund
- There should be a motorized trail committee.
- Agriculture and Farmland Committee discussion have concluded that TDR is not a practical tool in Town. The CACC report and Agriculture and Farmland report should be consistent.

**Next Meeting:**

March 12, 2009 at 7:00 PM