

TOWN OF BETHLEHEM
CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON CONSERVATION (CACC)
March 12, 2009 Meeting Record

Members Present:

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

Staff Members Present:

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

Chair Report:

- A. **Approval of February 9, 2009 Meeting Record:** Mr. Leslie asked the members if they had any comments or corrections on the draft February 9, 2009 meeting record that was circulated. Mr. VanLuven suggested that a statement he made at the February meeting should be included in the meeting record. The statement he provided is as follows: "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". The Committee agreed to include this in the record and Mr. Leslie indicated he would make the edits to the meeting record and post to the Town's web site.
- B. **Other**
- Ms. Liebschutz reminded the Committee that the appointments of five members are scheduled to terminate in April. These members were appointed to a three year term in 2006. Mr. Leslie and Ms. Kitchen will identify the members and request that they submit a letter or email indicating their interest or non-interest in reappointment to the CACC. It is anticipated the reappointments would be scheduled for the first Town Board meeting in April.

Mr. Behan informed the Committee that he had several examples of the recommendations that are proposed as part of the Committees efforts and if time is available he would like to present them. It was determined that Committee would work through the agenda and see where they stand at 9PM.

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

A. Review Discuss Recommendation Prioritization Sheet

The Committee reviewed the draft Green Infrastructure Framework Recommendation Prioritization Table and had the following comments:

SHORT TERM

- Recommendation 3: Pathways Committee
 - The Committee agreed that this was a short term item. Currently, the Town Board is establishing the Committee.
- Recommendation 7: Strengthen Town Code to address trespassing
 - The Committee agreed that this was a short term item. It was suggested that this should be implemented with a subcommittee of CACC members and representative from the Police and Building Department should be included. Mr. Waldenmaier, Ms. Newell, Mr. Friedman, and Ms. Heinzen volunteered to sit on the subcommittee.
- Recommendation 14: Survey residents
 - The Committee agreed that this was a short term item and that the CACC should help to develop the survey. The purpose of the survey is to find out what resources are important to the community and how much residents are willing to invest in these resources.

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MEDIUM TERM

- The committee reviewed the draft medium term recommendations, listed as Recommendations #1, #2, #8, #9, #11, #12, #15. Some members felt Recommendations #1, #2, #8, #9 were interrelated. Mr. Leslie stated that the table's responsibility column indicates who is responsible to take the lead on implementation. Ms. Heinzen expressed concern that there could be a bias if responsibility is with the Town staff; for example, how would one determine which recommendation to focus on first. Mr. Leslie stated that amongst the medium term items, term conservation easements may be the tool to focus on first since the agricultural and farmland committee and landowner public meeting have identified interest. Mr. Waldenmaier and Ms. Newell stated term conservation easement should be focused on first.
- The committee determined that recommendation #12: Green Infrastructure Vision cannot be done without Recommendation #13: Land feature rating criteria. Recommendation #12 will be changed to a short term item.
- Mr. Putney stated that the Bethlehem 20/20 committee anticipates completing their report in June 2009. Based on this information, Recommendation #15 will be changed to a short term item.

LONG TERM

- The Committee discussed recommendations #4, #5, #6, #10, #16 that were identified as long term implementation items. The Committee agreed that recommendations #4, #5, #6, #10 are long term items. There was discussion regarding the applicability of recommendation #16 as a long term item, in that it is more of an ongoing item. The Committee determined that an "ongoing" category should be added to the table. Recommendation #16 will be changed to an ongoing item.

The DEDP would update the implementation table based on CACC recommendations.

B. Review/Discuss Draft Green Infrastructure Report

Mr. Leslie asked that members keep their comments to a broad and conceptual nature. Specific grammar and/or spelling comments were requested to be emailed to the DEDP.

The Committee suggested that the Report's introduction section as it relates to the economic downturn and conservation concerns be removed. The introduction should simply state the purpose of the Report. The conclusion section was also discussed and it was suggested the conclusion should discuss next steps. Ms. Newell stated the conclusion should state that the intent of the Report is not to restrict land but to identify/develop opportunities. Ms. Liebshutz and Ms. Heinzen expressed concern that the conclusion implies the community does not want an open space plan. They indicated this is something they did not hear at the public meetings.

Ms. Newell and Mr. Waldenmaier expressed concern with the continued use of the term green infrastructure. They did not think this was something large landowners would support and would be uncomfortable with the term. There would be confusion in describing how the CACC transitioned from an open space initiative to a green infrastructure one. Mr. Waldenmaier suggested the Agriculture and Farmland Committee should have the opportunity to comment on the Report since agriculture is discussed.

Ms. Heinzen distributed a document prepared by the Center for Watershed Protection and USEPA, which provides definitions for green infrastructure on a regional and site specific scale. She indicated that incorporating green infrastructure into the Report discussion may afford the Town opportunities for state and federal grants. She also provided a green infrastructure schedule of webcast presentations sponsored by the USEPA.

There was discussion regarding the open space planning process section. Some members requested that more information regarding CACCs history and work products to be included in the document. Mr. Van Luven indicated he felt the recommendations were vague and not specific

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enough. He felt the document underscores that there is no interest in doing anything unless there is a willing landowner.

The Committee decided to submit their comments to the DEDP. The DEDP would review the comments and determine how to best incorporate them into the Report.

Public Comment:

Public comments included the following:

- MHLC willing to assist the Town as best they can.
- Packaging of the report should have something for everyone in the Town.
- Recommendations are a good set of topics for the Committee to work on.
- Large landowners would not support the term green infrastructure.
- Suggestion of titling the report: Needs, Issues and Recommendations regarding Open Space.
- Concern that green infrastructure is not clearly described to the public. Green infrastructure is typically utilized on a small scale and large scale level.

Next Meeting:

April 13, 2009 at 7:00 PM