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MEMORANDUM

To: Supervisor Cunningham
Members of the Town Board

From: George Leveille

Subject: Request from DEDP Director for Town Board to Authorize the Commencement of Development of the Farm and Open Space Protection Program (Open Space Plan)

Date: February 7, 2008

Purpose of Memorandum: The purpose of this memorandum is to provide an update on the status of the Open Space Planning process regarding the roles of the DEDP and CACC, the selection of a preferred consultant, and request Town Board action to authorize commencement of the Open Space Plan's development.

Approach: The DEDP recommends that work on the Open Space Plan be completed by Town Staff and CACC members, where possible. In order to minimize funding for consultant services, the DEDP recognizes that Staff can undertake several of the tasks proposed in the Draft Scope of Services (see attached). At the same time, the DEDP acknowledges that guidance from a consultant with expertise in Open Space Planning is beneficial to the development of the Plan. Therefore, the consultant's efforts would consist of a mentoring role to provide guidance to the DEDP. It is recommended that the CACC serve as the Study Advisory Committee to the DEDP for the Plan.

The attached Draft Scope of Work was developed by the DEDP, with advisory assistance from the CACC, to provide the Board with the general planning elements that could be incorporated into and utilized during the development of the Open Space Plan. A more detailed work plan will be developed with the consultant that includes tasks, timeframes, and deliverables. The attached Preliminary Guiding Principles were developed by the DEDP, with advisory assistance from the CACC, to identify key values that are to be recognized during decision-making periods of the Plan's development.

Consultant Selection Process: The DEDP prepared a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to solicit qualifications and interest of consulting firms that desire to assist the Town in preparing an Open Space Plan. At the December 2007 submittal deadline, four responses were received. At that time, an RFQ evaluation committee, consisting of DEDP Director George Leveille, Town Planner Jeff Lipnicky, Senior Planner Rob Leslie, and CACC Chairman Libby Liebschutz, was established to review the qualifications of interested consulting firms, which resulted in the identification of two highly qualified firms (The Chazen Companies and Behan Planning Associates, LLC). Following interviews and communication with references of both consulting firms, Behan Planning Associates, LLC was selected by the evaluation committee as the preferred consultant due to the firm's extensive open space planning experience in the Capital Region and across New York State.

The initial phase of the consultant's work will consist of an assessment of the Town's open space issues and needs based on community input. The consultant contract for this phase will consist of work to be performed on an hourly basis and will not exceed the DEDP's budget of \$25,000.

Town Board Action: The DEDP requests for the Town Board to:

1. Authorize the Town Supervisor to enter into a contract with Behan Planning Associates, LLC (Phase 1: \$25,000)
2. Authorize the DEDP to begin work on the development of the Open Space Plan
3. Task the CACC with serving as the Study Advisory Committee to the DEDP

I will be in attendance at the February 13, 2008 Town Board meeting and will be glad to answer any questions you might have in this regard.

cc: Robert Leslie, Libby Liebschutz, Jeff Lipnicky, CACC Members

DRAFT SCOPE OF WORK
TOWN OF BETHLEHEM OPEN SPACE PROTECTION PROGRAM

A. OUTLINE OF MAJOR PLANNING TASKS

1. **Framework for Planning:** The following elements will be among those considered in developing the framework for the open space planning process.
 - Mission statement
 - Vision statement
 - Guiding principles
 - Goals and objectives
 - Issues and Opportunities
 - Needs assessment
 - Review of prior CACC tasks
 - Costs and benefits of open space protection
 - Other

2. **Inventory and Analysis:** The following are among the items that will be considered in establishing the baseline for open space planning in the Town.
 - Regulatory context
 - Municipal infrastructure
 - Soils
 - Streams and watersheds
 - Steep slopes
 - Wetlands
 - Land uses
 - View sheds
 - Agriculture and forestry
 - Recreation
 - Pedestrian and bicycle facilities
 - Conservation lands
 - Other

3. **Outline of Recommendations:** The following elements are representative of the types of recommendations that might result from the open space planning process.
 - *Glossary of Bethlehem open space terminology:* definitions and descriptions of key terminology in the plan, including the definitions of “open space” and “stakeholders”, the result of public participation in the open space planning process
 - *Stewardship Strategy:* provide educational and technical support to encourage effective land stewardship and community support
 - *Prioritization methodology:* establish criteria for prioritizing open space protection opportunities
 - *Action Plan:* establish short and long-term action plan for implementation of open space plan
 - *Financing plan:* identify methods and sources for financing implementation of the action plan

4. **Deliverables:** The following is a representative list of work products that might be produced as a result of the Town’s open space planning process.

DRAFT SCOPE OF WORK
TOWN OF BETHLEHEM OPEN SPACE PROTECTION PROGRAM

- *Criteria for evaluating and prioritizing open space protection opportunities*
- *Inventory and Analysis Report*
- *Records of public meetings*
- *Summary of Survey Findings*
- *Periodic reports to Town Board and CACC*
- *Monthly web/newsletter updates*
- *Refined and new GIS map layers*
- *Draft final technical report (the plan)*
- *Final technical report (the plan)*
- *Final “popular” report (summary of the plan)*

B. **IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE** (Overall: 18-24 months; Phase 1: 6-8 months)

C. **PLANNING BUDGET** (Overall: TBD; Phase 1: \$25,000)

D. **CONSULTING SERVICES** (Behan Planning Associates, LLC)

E. **PUBLIC MEETINGS AND PARTICIPATION:** The following are representative of the types of public outreach and participation that can be utilized to engage the public in the open space planning process.

1. Community outreach through CACC and other community/civic organizations
2. Public meetings and Focus Groups
 - > Issues Identification
 - > Program element specific focus groups
 - > Overall program focus groups
3. Survey instruments
 - > Large landowners (5+ acre minimum)
 - > Community wide
4. Direct mail to landowners
5. Personal interviews of key stakeholders including large landowners
6. Web site and e-mail communication
7. Publications
8. Other

F. **POTENTIAL PLANNING TOPICAL AREAS:** The following topical areas represent the types of major issues that will be considered during the open space planning process.

1. *Working Landscapes:* farmlands, forests, orchards, high quality agricultural soils...
2. *Recreation and Trails:* parks, sidewalks, trails, neighborhood connectivity, accessibility ...
3. *Natural systems:* stream corridors, flood plains, water resource protection, wetlands, unique geological landforms, hydrological resources, meadows, wildlife corridors and habitat, steep slopes...
4. *Cultural/Heritage systems:* historic sites, unique architecture, archeological sites, scenic landscapes and vistas, roadways...
5. *Economic/Financial:* costs and benefits of protection compared to development; identification of implementation resources; leverage of Town resources; financial incentives to encourage protection and conservation design

Town of Bethlehem Open Space Planning
October 11, 2007 (revised 11/20/07)
Final Draft Preliminary Guiding Principles regarding the Planning Process

- The process of developing an open space plan will be guided by the comprehensive plan framework for open space protection. This framework is documented in the CACC open space protection programs report published in October 2006 and is summarized in the comp plan as follows: “work with willing landowners to conserve quality open spaces throughout the Town and create a network of open lands to provide wildlife habitat and potential recreational trail corridors”.
- The open space planning process will be a “bottom up” process that emanates from public input and participation in the process rather than from a “packaged” or preconceived notion of projected outcomes.
- The open space planning process will, to the extent possible, coordinate with and consider the programs, issues and recommendations associated with other Town planning initiatives.
- The open space planning process will define the term “open space” in the context of the Town of Bethlehem’s wants, needs and priorities regarding undeveloped lands and natural resources, as well as associated amenities including, among other things, pedestrian facilities and park lands.
- The process will be led by Town staff with CACC serving as an advisory committee, and will be supplemented as appropriate by outside consultants with local and regional expertise in open space planning and farmland protection.
- In implementing an open space protection planning process, the Town will consider the guiding principles of the Comp Plan especially as they relate to environmental sustainability, fiscal responsibility, and respect of property owner’s rights.
- To the extent possible, the Town will utilize existing mapping resources as appropriate to document land features and uses and as the basis for new mapping developed in support of the open space planning process.