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## TOWN OF BETHLEHEM

Albany County - New York  
445 DELAWARE AVENUE  
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### HISTORIC HEATH FARM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Lauren Chiyoko Axford, Open Space Coordinator  
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### Meeting Summary Wednesday January 10, 2024 8:00am-9:00am Town Hall Room 101A/B

#### **In Attendance:**

HFAC: Bobbie Lukasiewicz, Stuart Lyman, Zan McKenna, Dale Richter, Gabby Sant'Angelo, Tom Seymour, David Vigoda, Mark Warford, Kristen Yourno

Staff: Lauren Chiyoko Axford, Open Space Coordinator

Meeting commenced: 8:00am

- The January 10, 2024 Meeting Summary was unanimously approved.
- Lauren started the meeting reviewing the Boards responses to the “visioning homework which was previously circulated among the members via email.
- All statements drafted by the committee members focused on the topics on agriculture, the environment and community development.
- Several individuals also used the term “responsible” (i.e. educationally responsible, environmentally responsible, economically responsible, culturally responsible).
- After considering overlapping themes and sentiments from the submitted statements, a ***working draft of a vision statement*** was proposed:

“The Historic Heath Farm Initiative will create viable opportunities for equitable and sustainable agricultural, recreational, and educational pursuits in the Town of Bethlehem.

- The barn restoration could result in multiple potential uses the Town can be proud of for generations.
- A variety of land stewardship options could provide ownership and leasing opportunities for the next generation of farmers.
- Town residents could enjoy active recreational opportunities that will contribute to individual land community wellbeing, as well as passive recreational opportunities to connect with nature”
- The working draft vision statement provides a framework for the committees task and will be refined as the HFAC continues to gather information on existing conditions and opportunities.
- Lauren then reviewed the results of the Community Vision StoryMap feedback survey which is available for viewing at [www.historicheathfarm.org](http://www.historicheathfarm.org):
  - The “story map” feedback survey was based on 118 responses mostly from people over the age of 65.

- Lauren re-iterated for the committee members, that the concepts proposed in the StoryMap were concepts that were crafted through a year and half worth of meetings and discussions with individuals and organizations with technical expertise. These organizations include, but are not limited to: the American Farmland Trust- NY Region, Cornell Cooperative Extension- Albany County, NYS Dept. Ag & Markets, National Young Farmers Coalition, VA Stratton Hospital, etc.) For a full listing, please see slideshow from Kick-off Meeting on 11/29/2023.
- A discussion was had on the role of the committee members, as representatives of various stakeholder groups in the Town. It was also mentioned that the Vision Plan draft will go through a period of public review, once the committee has streamlined the many possibilities into a feasible, implementable plan.
- Review of survey comments for focus areas 1-6 and discussion on the following issues:
  - Should the town enroll the focus areas in an Albany county agricultural district
  - Should the town protect the parcel with agricultural easements that would ensure the land will be available for farm in in perpetuity
  - Should the town retain ownership to create land access opportunities for the next generation of farmers
  - Sell the parcel at the agricultural value for private farm operation
  - Should the Town undertake a combination of approaches
  - Participants overall impression of the project and demographic information was provided at the end.
- The committee reviewed Focus areas characteristics and their potentials for entertainment and educational purposes.
- A discussion ensued on the following topics:
  - Purchase the land and for educational/entertainment or agricultural use
  - Identified needs/recommendations within the different groups.
  - Transparency within the Project website
  - Networking in town with large landowners and identify farmers
  - Partnering with community groups
  - Develop a vision draft to go to public and the town board for approval
  - Working towards future site visits to include the public
  - Land Characteristics/types and the benefits and risks of enrolling in an agricultural district with town ownership
  - Challenges for next generation farmers
  - Ways to engage and improve connection and understanding/education between farms and the general public
  - Considerations include non-conventional farming as well as agricultural activities with entertainment.
- Site visits- date to be determined
- There was no public comment.

- The next meeting will be on January 31, 2024, 8:00am at the Bethlehem EMS Building, 114 Adams Place, Delmar
- Informational updates, meeting materials and all project information is available on the Historic Heath Farm website at: <http://www.historicheathfarm.com>

Meeting Adjourned at 8:59am