

David VanLuven
Town Supervisor

Robert Leslie
Director of Planning

TOWN OF BETHLEHEM
Albany County - New York
445 DELAWARE AVENUE
DELMAR, NEW YORK 12054



HISTORIC HEATH FARM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Lauren Chiyoko Axford, Open Space Coordinator
laxford@townofbethlehem.org
(518) 439-4955 x1106

Meeting Summary

Wednesday February 14th 2024

8:00am-9:00am

Delmar-Bethlehem EMS Building
114 Adams Street Delmar, NY 12054

In Attendance:

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

Staff: Lauren Chiyoko Axford, Open Space Coordinator; Rob Leslie, Director of Planning

Meeting commenced: 8:00am

Meeting Summary 1/31/2024:

- Lauren circulated the draft meeting summary from 1/31/24 by email and requested any feedback prior to approval of the summary.
- A suggestion was received that the summary be corrected to show that Focus Area 4 but it fact does have some frontage and access to 9W.
- Lauren clarified that the Focus Area boundaries are not property lines, and have been delineated for discussion purposes based on land characteristics and existing Tax ID parcel boundaries. The HFAC recommendations and Vision Plan can include altered boundaries if necessary.
- The meeting summary from 1/31/2024 was then unanimously approved.
- The committee engaged in some discussion about other barns in the Town of Bethlehem.
- Additionally, there was a bit of a philosophical discourse about the concern of government (in this case the Town) competing with local, established farmers, and thereby creating an unfair playing field.
- The committee began to discuss equity as it relates to farmland access, noting that established farmers already have resources in the form of land, equipment, generational wealth, etc.
- It was suggested that the Town is in the unique position to actually “level the playing field” somewhat by offering land access opportunities to farmers that are experiencing significant entry barrier to getting started in farming.
- The committee revisited its specific task of gathering information to make informed recommendations about the possibilities the Heath Farm offers. Thus, the committee

moved on to continue the discussion of existing conditions and opportunities/needs for each of the focus areas.

Existing Conditions & Opportunities/Needs: Rob continued to lead the committee through a discussion of current existing conditions of each Focus Area and opportunities that are present, in order from the most straightforward, simple Focus Areas, to the more complex. Lauren took notes directly into the power point presentation.

**Please note that the boundary lines for each focus area is not set in stone. As the HFAC proceeds to form its recommendations, these boundaries may change to facilitate access, or logical layout of proposed uses.*

Focus Area #6B

Location: 253 Clapper Road and 28 Heath Drive, Selkirk

- Acreage: 3.2 acres*; 1 acre*
- Frontage: 533' total (253' and 280')
- Services: public water, private sewer
- Current Zoning: ME (Mixed Economic Development)
- Soils: UnB silt loam (prime farmland) and fine sand loams (prime if drained); note, there are also DEC designated wetlands in these areas
- Current use: residences - vacant, surrounding land - agriculture
- Unique feature: 253 Clapper Road has some historic architectural elements and historic value.

Lauren noted that both residential structures were converted to 2-unit residences and a number of outbuildings that used to be present have been removed. The members discussed the Heath Farm poultry operation which was housed at this site.

There was some discussion about concerns about the impacts of the previous poultry operations on both this Focus Area and #6A. Rob shared that there was a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment performed by engineering firm CHA prior to the land acquisition. The Phase I did not indicate a need for a more in-depth Phase II study.

Based on a visual inspection, and information from the appraisal report, neither of the residences are occupancy-ready. There would likely be a significant amount of renovation and some mitigation required before they could be deemed habitable.

Lauren will see if she can find any aerial photos that show the former poultry facility.

Focus Area #6A

- Location: Clapper Road and Weisheit Road, Selkirk
- Acreage: 106 +/- acres (Clapper); 22.3 acres and 8.27 acres (Weisheit)
- Frontage: 2500' Clapper; 1800' (Weisheit)

- Services:
- Clapper: public water
- Weisheit: private water, private sewer
- Current Zoning: ME (Mixed Economic Development)
- Soils: very fine to fine sandy loams (prime farmland soils) , some silty clay (prime if drained); please note there are some federal designated wetlands in these wetter areas.
- Current use: residences - vacant, surrounding land - agriculture
- Unique feature: 253 Clapper Road has some historic architectural elements and historic value. Both structures were converted to 2-unit residences.

The following ideas were discussed among the committee members:

- Ensuring there is some connectivity with Van Rensselaer Preserve for future (adjust boundary line of focus area, or include easement for access).
- Pros/cons of retaining ownership and leasing or to sell.
- How do we do that? Should it be based on the land size and land characteristics, or what is most supportive to new/established farmers?

3 additional suggestions for Area 6A included: installing tile drainage to improve soil conditions for farming, to encourage the cultivation of of moisture loving crops in farm saturated areas with appropriate crops (i.e. rice), sell for private farm operations.

Other Business: n/a

Public Comment: none

- The next meeting will be on March 20, 2024 8:00am at the Delmar-Bethlehem EMS Building, 2nd floor located at 114 Adams Street in 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 9:03am