

*David VanLuven  
Town Supervisor*

*Robert Leslie  
Director of Planning*

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



**...STORIC HEATH FARM ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

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

**Meeting Agenda**  
Wednesday April 17, 2024

8:00am-9:00am  
Delmar-Bethlehem EMS Building, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor  
114 Adams Street Delmar, NY 12054

**In Attendance:** 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, Robert Leslie, Director of Planning, Kathleen Reid, Administrative Assistant

**Meeting commenced: 8:00am**

**Approval of past meeting summary:**

- Lauren circulated the draft meeting summary from 3/20/2024 by email and requested feedback.
- The committee reviewed the draft vision statement and meeting summary.
- A motion to approve the meeting summary was unanimously approved

**Recap of HFAC Discussion to Date- Flowchart (see attached):**

- Lauren recapped the group discussions to date and provided a flow chart with a color coded visual framework which identified the focus areas, potential uses discussed
- Based on the concepts captured in previous HFAC discussions, and discussions with potential partnering organizations, there are potential partners listed who have shared goals and have expressed interest in the HFFI.

**Potential Partnering Organizations:**

- Albany Co. Cornell Cooperative Extension
- Albany Co. Sol & Water Conservation Dist.
- Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust & Network

- American Farmland Trust
- Hudson Valley Young Farmers Coalition
- Dirt Capital, LLC.
- Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy
- Capital Roots
- Albany VA Stratton Medical Center

*\*Please note: this is only a partial list of those potential partners whose goals are aligned into the concepts captured in previous HFAC discussions noted in the attached outline.*

The intent of framework is to visualize what we've been working on/discussing and where we are going.

The committee provided the following feedback:

- Needs to be a box to reflect historical (barn) – “historical” need to be a part of the framework.
- Lauren told the group that the NYS Museum has interest in this project for education potential that has not yet been captured
- Under 4<sup>th</sup> bullet Rob-historic item is high focused on the barn
- Lauren noted that the project name is Historic Heath Farm Initiative and the committee is the Historic Heath Farm Advisory Committee. Suggested to include Area Four
- Vision Plan will provide the Town Board a menu with some guidance (recommendations) from this committee
- Veteran population - should we list on the top with the education or recreational should we put a bullet point?
- Lauren clarified that the framework doesn't yet show the intended audience of community members served (but that is an important layer that we will talk about)
- Suggestion was made to re-number or re-identify focus areas to match discussion captured in framework outline.
- Would require a new map and story map is already created, however, the “new map” will be part of the Vision Plan and Lauren will draft a working copy of the map for the next meeting.
- Rob – maybe change to letters
- Bobby will send some suggested abbreviations for each area
- Rob clarified for HFAC that stabilization of the barn is not the scope of the committee it is the town activity that going forward. HFAC's role is really to create the land use vision and that will inform any plans beyond stabilization of the barn. Staff will keep HFAC up to date on stabilization progress.
- Focus Area 1 was previously an apple orchard the trees were cleared when it was developed into a plaza.
- Survey responses for focus Area 1 were displayed (See Community Vision StoryMap Report at [www.historicheathfarm.com](http://www.historicheathfarm.com))

**Focus Area Discussion:**

The HFAC continued to discuss existing conditions and opportunities, starting where the previous meeting left off. Lauren went over Existing conditions of focus Area 1 as follows:

#### Existing Conditions – Focus Area 1

- Intersection: Wemple Road and NYS 9W, Glenmont
- Acreage: 90 acres total
- Frontage: 2924' (Wemple); 500' 9W
- Services:
  - 9W: public water only
  - Wemple Road (west of 9W) - public water and sewer
  - Wemple Road (east of 9W) – none
- Current Zoning: ME (Mixed Economic Development District)
- Soils: Fine sandy loam, (prime farmland and soils of statewide importance)
- Current Use: agriculture
- Unique Feature: prime soils, visibility, some services, located on BPN Priority Network Road
- Referring to entire area of focus Area 1 - section has better soil properties than Clapper Road
- Lauren displayed prime soil map with shading for prime soils
- Rob and Lauren confirmed that the Town has not soil tested for nutrients and organic matter
- Stanton Farms likely has been soil testing for cropping purposes
- Can we hire someone to do soil testing?
- The consultants might include soil testing in plan – see if soil tests already exist.
- Agricultural quality of soil – NYS uses agricultural for threshold of soil for grants????
- Lauren mentioned that for NYS-farmland Implementation Grants yes, you need to have a certain threshold of prime farmland soils or soils of statewide importance. Focus area 1 does meet this criteria, however there are other criteria as well.
- Visibility is high because of the also bike/pedestrian roadway and proximity of soccer facility.
- Can active agriculture in proximity to a bike path or walking trail work? (tractor and farm equipment access, pedestrian safety, realities of farming, etc.)

#### Opportunities:

- Urban orchard project – apple season 9-15 trees is an interesting project
- Education/ historic/agri-tourism value option for apples on small scale for historic reflection component
- Cider production
- Pesticides - recognize that many apple orchards uses pesticides
- Possible to produce without spraying? Yes! Permaculture practices, and the need to Shift consumer perspective through education and awareness: “ugly fruit still tastes good”, or value added products where aesthetics don’t matter
- Historic component in chart – argument can/cannot be made with organic agriculture

- Historically apples agricultural been a part of our historic history
- Apple Production/uses
- Small orchard as a landscape feature, educational use
- Provide different ways to combine the organic and history focus “hybrid” and blend both between both sides historically and educational component
- Bee keeping- for pollination of orchard and neighboring crops, honey production, educational opportunities
- Explore opening up land to great opportunities
- Shaker Heritage agricultural an old orchard
- Maple syrup ex: at five rivers showed how it historically went and made a gallon of maple syrup
- Mature sugar maples by barn would generate a lot of sap
- Educational component: ex: how to tap a tree – can be an educational event
- Need an interest from family level for education agricultural uses
- Possible for potential farmers
- Open pavilion might work
- What infrastructure can the town provide?
- Potential for commercial farming to be across the street from the barn, what would benefit that farmer to have at the barn?

#### Considerations:

- Access-farming needs access
- Provide sidewalk to 9W from Wemple
- How to get access to field if sidewalk is there? Farming with sidewalk & buffer?
- Sidewalk is fine until farming equipment needs access to the land
- Ideas for types of agriculture that coexists well with pedestrians (i.e. smaller equipment, smaller scale systems)
- Create a lending hub agricultural with equipment access
- Agricultural properties are exempted for sidewalk regulations
- Landowner necessary does not have to confirm to regulations
- Consider vehicles crossing and public access
- Wet meadow to the north of the barn is not part of 2024 ag lease agreement. Mostly native plant species, with a small contained patch of *Phragmites australis* (Common Reedgrass, a common invasive species found in wet areas)
- Approved solar development on parcel adjacent to Area 2 to the North, along I-87
- Water availability?
- Will Town provide water for agricultural use?

#### Potential community uses:

- Crop produce and other types of agricultural use

- Suggestion for portion of heath barn education area, surrounding land and other side of road were bulk agricultural exists should be for market use/ do not lock out possibly of farming the land
- Historically is where community garden where Heath rented out for community use
- Lauren advised there is delineated wet land (area not in production this year)
- Suggestion to move barn to tail part to provide space for a common garden (Moving barn and silo in opposition to historical context)
- Delineating the barn for recommendation
- Heath Barn and surrounding components are for community use put pieces across the street
- Can be contiguous all land across the street is exempt for delineated park area
- The more educated the consumers are agricultural makes the job easier for the farmer.

#### Discussion Topics:

- A suggestion to move the barn to tail part of the property to provide space for a common garden was made
- Options to sell property? Options to lease?
- Easements to ensure protection of farmland/open space in perpetuity
- Tractor access/allow for farm functions with buffers
- Parking access
- Bike & Pedestrian Committee- would they provide comments
- SW corner of Wemple - 11 acres (recommendation to keep with barn)?
- Challenges for next generation farmers, opportunities to lessen these challenges
- Ways to engage and improve connection and understanding/education between farms and the general public
- Considerations include sustainable farming practices (climate resiliency)
- Pair agricultural activities with entertainment/education (agri-tourism)

#### Next Steps/Other Business:

The next meeting will be on May 15, 2024, 8:00am at the Bethlehem EMS Building, 114 Adams Place, Delmar NY 12054

Project updates, meeting materials and all other project information is available on the Historic Heath Farm website at: [www.historicheathfarm.com](http://www.historicheathfarm.com)

**Public Comment:** none

**Meeting Adjourned at 9am**