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TOWN OF BETHLEHEM

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

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MEETING SUMMARY

May 15, 2024

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

In Attendance: Bobby Lukasiewicz, Stuart Lyman, Zan Mckenna, Gabby Sant'Angelo, Tom Seymour David Vigoda, Dale Richter, Tom Seymour, Mark Warford

Staff: Lauren Chiyoko Axford, Open Space Coordinator; Rob Leslie, Director of Planning; Kathleen Reid, Administrative Assistant

Meeting Commenced: 8:00am

Approval of Past meeting summary:

- Lauren circulated the draft meeting summary from April 17, 2024 by email and requested feedback.
- The committee reviewed the draft meeting summary and had no comments.
- The meeting summary was approved unanimously.

Review of Existing Conditions of Area 2:

Lauren reviewed the existing conditions that Thaler, Reilly Wilson Architecture (TRW) and CHA provided.

Existing Conditions – Focus Area 2

- Intersection: Wemple Road and NYS 9W, Glenmont
- Acreage: 5 acres (not an official boundary, just for discussions sake, includes original farmstead site)
- Frontage: 550' (Wemple); 360' 9W
- Services: public water only
- Current Zoning: ME (Mixed Economic Development)
- Soils: Silt Loam (prime farmland)
- Current Use: Vacant

- Unique Features: contains barn and silo from Heaths Shady Lawn Dairy farm, iconic landmark and of local historical value. Contains a windbreak of healthy, mature Sugar Maples, several very large Silver Maples and a huge Horse Chestnut. The hill above the farmstead provides a 360 degree vista of surrounding farmland.
- Viable entrance/exits from both Route 9W and Wemple Road.

A revised Flow Chart and Focus Area Map was provided.

A very brief recap of Thaler Reilly Wilson (TRW)'s presentation was given: yes, it is possible to stabilize the barn, to prevent it from further deteriorating for several years. Stabilization of the barn will provide time for the HFAC to finalize its vision, for partners to be convened and funding to be secured. The intent is to finalize a full barn restoration/re-use plan within 24 to 36 months.

According to TRW, the silo, all barn areas, and the store are considered historic as they were all integral parts of the site during the farm's era of significant: 1920-1965.

While Town staff oversees the barn stabilization effort, the HHFAC will continue talking about the vision.

We are on track with the HHFAC's 12 month visioning process and exploring partnership opportunities, and funding streams. Lauren noted potential partnerships she is working with for post-stabilization funding.

The committee discussed public perception, the main hole in the barn roof, and the importance of closing it up as soon as possible. Lauren re-iterated that the technical recommendation from TRW (an architectural firm whose expertise is in historic barn restoration), from both a structural and cost-effective perspective, is to approach stabilization from the ground up (as detailed in their report and presentation given on March 20, 2024).

Additional conversations with the project's team of architects and engineers, have indicated that cutting corners on the stabilization plans could significantly increase risks to worker safety and the structural integrity of the barn, leading to increased expenses and liability, over the long term.

Acknowledging the public concern for the hole in the roof, Lauren additionally consulted with the Building Department Division, Justin Harbinger, Code Enforcement, for his expert opinion on the quality of the wood and whether the time required for the foundation-up approach would lead to exponential deterioration in the short term related to the hole in the roof. In his opinion was, that due the construction period (1880), the lumber used at that time was much denser than lumber sold today due to the maturity of forest products then versus now. He concurred that the foundation-up approach is the right approach, outlining the same rationale provided by TRW architects, CHA engineers and Town engineers.

There were technical difficulties with the Town's audio equipment at the May 8, 2024 Town Board meeting. Lauren noted the slide presentation is on the website for viewing at [Town Board Meeting 5/8/2024](#)

Considerations/Discussion:

- Amend sign on silo – suggestion to say planning is in progress?
- Provide signage with more detail on vision.
- The Community Vision Feedback Survey showed the following 87 percent of respondents agreed that the barn and silo should be restored if possible.
The following shows the percentages of uses desired:
- 47 % of respondents favoring a farm store featuring local goods
- 68 % of respondents favoring an indoor/outdoor community space (classroom, meeting and gathering space)
- 47% respondents favoring a farm to table café or restaurant
- 68% regenerative agriculture demonstration area

Example: Albany Shaker Heritage Site: “Level 1” Restoration and adaptive re-use

- The Albany Shaker Historic Society has a barn that was restored with only the basics.
- Has electric to the barn with no plumbing or bathroom
- Interior protected from elements, building can be secured
- Minimal interior partitioning
- Options for a private farm use community use or a combination use
- Event rental and use: weddings, parties, craft markets, field trips, storage, etc

Post-stabilization Opportunities/Discussion:

- Square footage of area for various uses – is there enough space?
- Need utilities for events
- Concern about potential farm store in competition with existing farm stand in the area
- Legitimacy of creating access points for local food in a free market system...
- Access point for local food would not be a town run farm store (private enterprise)
- Point of sale for farmers using the surrounding farmland and beyond
- Additional products as people like a one-stop shop
- Regarding hosting a farmers market at the site:
- Zan (young farmer), conveyed that it is a HUGE investment of time, energy and \$\$ for farmers to sell at farmers markets, and therefore need maximum foot traffic for a viable business enterprise
- Mark (President of the Delmar Farmers Market, VP of BCMS), concurred that the site is not ideal for those reasons, in addition to the lack of adequate parking area.
- 1840's Barn in rally good shape, in need of stabilization to prevent further deterioration especially on the south end near store addition
- 1880's Barn Roof in immediate need of patching a minimum to prevent further deterioration. Interior structural work needed

Potential Community Uses/Committee Discussion Topics:

- Reviewing survey and graphs is there enough space in the area ideas to accommodate a combination of all ideas?
- Not enough parking for a Farmers Market
- We did not plan on adding area, nothing new just restoring
- Maybe rebuild gable of store to show where old bldg. was
- Aesthetic updates?
- Look at square footage of each space for what use is good for each section
- For public use need bathroom facilities (i.e. sewer and water)
- Pop Up space? – changeable and adaptable space
- Would it be several partners with the barn?
- We want to reserve space for education and agricultural use and look at partners and ask the requirements. Example: Albany Cornell Cooperative Extension - what do you need for classroom space?
- Going forward what's in the future of agriculture not what happened in the past
- Though how can we acknowledge the past?
- Residents want to see the historic piece of the property
- Main reason they want to see something happen with the barn and it be preserved in perpetuity
- HHFAC wants town residents to be proud of the final outcome it
- There is inconsistency between stabilization of the building and comment from graph ideas
- We need discussion on how to get two ends together to work together with not for profit organization – we as a committee need to connect the dots and show how it is perceived from the community.
- Staff is working on this, with a refined vision from the HHFAC, we can start to have less conceptual, more logistical discussions with potential partners.
- David mentioned a historic barn in North Hampton that would be good to learn about
- What people want is less concentration with agriculture and more of an entertainment venue for use
- If we want to protect land we need to put agricultural easements on land to keep and is a funding mechanism for town
- Work with land trust
- If land is designated as town property and perpetuity exists we don't have to worry about future development
- If town owns it in the future why is in the interest for the town to encumber its own town legally
- Highly recommended to place perpetual agricultural easements on the ag land- otherwise they will always be potentially vulnerable to development (like beyond our lifetimes)- this is conveyed from Mark Kind, ED of the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy
- Lauren re-read the role and scope of the HHFAC from the 6/28/23 town board meeting
- HHFAC members provide community insight as representative of the community

- This is our 12 month scope. Having a well-defined vision will help with partnerships
- POS for farmers on heath Farm land
- Oversaturation of farmers markets

Next Steps/Other Business:

- Next meeting the committee will review previous land use comments, including land use around the barn.
- The Town was awarded \$50K from The Nature Conservancy's Climate Resilience Grant Award Project.
- The grant funds will be used to produce the Final Vision Plan, conduct a series of educational workshops, engage in reciprocal partnerships for Vision Plan Draft review, and will help to leverage additional grant funding for implementation of the HFAC Vision Plan implementation.
- **The next meeting will be on May 29, 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

Public Comment:

Unknown Speaker:

- Residents are concerned the structures are so far gone to spend money restoring when the money can go towards other programs in town where it is needed more.
- People are not impressed with restoring barn
- Questioning why this meeting is all about the barn, thought it was about the land.

Some HFAC members provided a very brief recap of the previous meetings, where we discussed everything except for the barn (aside from our 3/20/24 presentation from TRW), also highlighting that this specific meeting agenda, listed "Focus Area 2- the Barn/Silo and surrounding area" as its primary agenda item.

Gabby spoke very briefly about accessing funding through historic register nomination, a process in which she is currently in for the 3 residences on Pine Hollow Road in Slingerlands (www.pinehollowarboretum.org)

Lauren strongly encouraged the public attendees and the HFAC members to encourage people to access all project info from the project website in order to access accurate information. She also reiterated that if there are questions in the community about any aspect of the project, she is happy to discuss.

Some discussion ensued about the concern about being able to find farmers for the land. The HFAC was encouraged to not be overly concerned about finding farmer as Town Staff has been

creating inroads with local farmer networks of farmers seeking land in the Upper Hudson Valley, Capital Region. Also, the land is actively farmed at the moment.

Stuart said the Town should consider hold land as an opportunity base as what to be done for agriculture in future.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:00am