



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 May 29, 2024
8:00am-9:00am

Delmar-Bethlehem EMS Building, 2nd floor
114 Adams Street Delmar, NY 12054

In Attendance: Bobby Lukasiewicz, Stuart Lyman, Zan Mckenna, David Vigoda, Dale Richter, Mark Warford, Kristen Yourno, Tom Seymour

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 May 15, 2024 by email and requested feedback.**

The committee discussed the circulated drafted summary and suggested that 2 statements from the draft be removed from the summary in the interest of clarity for the public.

The committee also discussed the development of concepts for the StoryMap and how the survey was designed to gauge community interest in future land uses and a tool that the Committee could use. Pending the revisions discussed, the summary was approved unanimously.

Discussion:

- The committee discussed working with Dirt Capital or other investment firms in a potential partnership opportunity, also educating investors about farming, and the potential of putting bids out to farmers for land purchase.
- Investment firms such as Dirt Capital represent clients who want to invest in regenerative farming and facilitating land access for farmers.
- The committee expressed the desire to implement restrictions on the land in connection with any potential sale of farmland (i.e. protecting the land with agricultural conservation easements).
- Options to sell large acres of land or break up the land into smaller parcels was discussed. There was interest in learning about desired acreage size of young farmers (say 3- 5 acres, rather than 10-20 acres).

- Rob and Lauren noted any monies received from sale of land would go back into the Farms and Forest Fund.
- The committee discussed the future use of the land after it is sold and any restrictions we could enforce without the obligation to maintain the land.
- It was noted that IF the Town decided to sell any of the farmland, the Town intends to put an agricultural easement in place to prohibit non-farm related development in perpetuity. The Town would then sell the land for the agricultural value, not the full market value, making it more affordable for farmers.

The Committee viewed a revised project location map, which reflects new identification of the previous focus areas. The new identification reflects visioning goals as follows: **A= Agriculture, R=Recreation, E=Education**. Numbers will reflect the locations of the town owned land.

The following area(s) recommendations were discussed:

A8: Sale options, Ag investors (e.g. Dirt Capital, Lynwood, Iroquois Valley), Farmers working together-shared infrastructure (legacy farms), not for profit, maximizing access to the land. And/or the New Your State Ag and Markets–FPIG grant.

R5: recreation, also agriculture option (with easement for recreation access)

The committee plans to make multiple recommendations for Town to consider/pursue– the vision.

Next Steps:

Options to sell or keep Clapper Road historic house and house in the rear:

- A homestead area around the residence could be carved out from the 122 acre parcel.
- Lauren will talk to town historian for possible deed restrictions on property.

Lauren will invite Dirt Capital and American Farmland Trust to attend the next HFAC meeting to provide more information on viable long term options and explore a model that would allow the Town to sell the land, gaining revenue, and still be able to facilitate viable farmland access for the next generation of farmers.

Public Comment:

Resident Steve Peterson:

- The project website should be kept current with the latest meeting summaries. Keeping the project website current would help to make the Committee’s work readily available to the public.
- Re-occurring Town board audio issues.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:00am