

TOWN OF BETHLEHEM
BETHLEHEM 20/20 ADVISORY COMMITTEE

April 11, 2008 Meeting Record

Elsmere Fire Station, Poplar Drive

7:30 – 9:15 a.m.

Members Present:

Terri Egan, Co-Chair, Kenneth Ringler, Co-Chair, Steve Baboulis, James Blendell, Mort Borzykowski, John Clarkson, Steve Coffey, Peter Conway, Lisa Evans, Cathy Griffin, Susan Hager, Terry Hannigan, Jim Lytle, Dick Kotlow, John Piechnik, Ted Putney, Pam Robbins, Patty Salkin, Brian Stenson, Suzanne Taylor, Bob Verstandig, Jr., Christo Zemerling

Members Absent:

Keith Bennett, Joanne Cunningham, Bert Trombly, Bob Ward, Ann Wendth

Town Staff Members Present:

Judi Kehoe, George Leveille, Kim Ryan, Louis Corsi, Tim Beebe, Barbara Hodom, Josh Cansler

Co-Chair Report:

1. **March 14, 2008 Meeting Record:** The Co-Chairs began the meeting by seeking member comments and questions on the draft March 14 meeting record. One additional comment was made with regard to shared municipal services and staff agreed to add appropriate language to the meeting record. Upon motion, the committee approved the draft March 14, 2008 meeting record.
2. **2004 Community Survey:** The results of the community survey that was conducted in 2004 during the comprehensive planning process were provided to the members. The members were also provided with copies of the results of a large landowner (7 acres or more) survey that was conducted right after the community survey. A brief discussion ensued.
3. **Review of Action Items:**
 - a. Meeting Start Time: The Co-Chairs pointed out that the new meeting start time of 7:30 a.m. seemed very well received by virtue of the punctual attendance at this morning's meeting.
 - b. Draft Mission Statement: The members were reminded to provide comments (to staff) on the draft mission statement and action plan submitted at the initial committee meeting. This item would be put on the agenda for discussion at an upcoming committee meeting.
 - c. Discussion Board: Staff reported back that the establishment of a secure discussion board could be accomplished. Access to the discussion board would be accomplished through a secure internet connection. The discussion board will enable the 20/20 members to share ideas and information about topics of interest to the committee. After a brief discussion, the Co-Chairs asked staff to move forward in establishing the discussion board.

Part 1 Presentation of Major Programs and Services, Police Department and Town Justice:

Police Chief Lou Corsi, Deputy Chief Tim Beebe, and Town Court Clerk Barbara Hodom presented an overview of the Town Police Department and Town Court. The presentation covered the following topics:

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- Overview of the responsibilities and mission of the Police department
- Overview of the Police Department Chain of Command
- Discussion of the Accreditation process
- Presentation of community demographic information that might impact public safety
- Discussion of trends in officer generated versus citizen generated police activity
- Presentation of 2006 crime data for Albany County communities
- Staffing trends and anticipated future needs
- Overview of existing and future facility needs
- Overview of Town Court activity and trending

A question and answer period followed the formal presentation. The following are among the questions and discussion items generated by the committee members:

- What is the basis for the projected increase in court activity? (the response was that the projections were based on trends from 1997-2007)
- Can data be provided on the types of crime activity?
- To what degree has the big box retail on RT. 9W impacted criminal activity?
- What percentage of the calls for service are crime related?
- As community demographics change, what are the likely impacts on call for services?
- What is the investment in technology?
- What is the relationship of the Police Department to other State and local police agencies? Is there a potential for greater sharing of services?
- How much of the Police budget goes to line officers versus office workers? (Judi Kehoe estimated 90%)
- Does the Town have a crime prevention plan and do we coordinate with other organizations in this regard?
- How does dispatch work? What training and quality control measures are taken? What is a typical response time?
- What types of cooperative arrangements do we have with other police agencies?
- What is the real impact of big box retail?
- Has the Town considered the use of incentive zoning as a means of negotiating support of public safety?
- Can we document a relationship between increased economic development activity and the increased need for public safety services?
- What is the racial composition of the police force? Is diversity training provided?

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Facility Needs Analysis Presentation:

Josh Cansler, Commissioner of Public Works, presented an overview of the Facilities Needs Analysis that was prepared in 2006. The presentation covered the following topics:

- Overview of the planning process, including facilities evaluated
- Town capital expenditures on workspace facilities (indicating how little has been invested in workspace improvements since the 1970's)
- Outline of existing and required space requirements for Highway, DPW, Police/Town Court, and Town Hall offices
- Overview of recommendations made by the study including the need for more DPW/Highway space immediately and the fact that existing Police and Court facilities are dramatically insufficient

A group discussion and question and answer period followed the formal presentation. The following are among the highlights of the group discussion:

- The Elsmere Fire station was an example of a community asset being “shared”. Is the Town looking into facility sharing opportunities with the school districts, fire departments, libraries, etc?
- Should the Town consider consolidation of Highway, Public Works and Parks?
- Terri Egan shared her observations as a former Town Justice of the problems with the existing court space
- Patty Salkin reported that the NYS Office of Court Administration has indicated that local courts are deficient throughout New York State
- Does the Town have a capital plan? (Judi Kehoe responded that the Town does have a capital plan but lacks funding for implementation)
- It might be worthwhile to establish a future workshop topic around the issue of coordination of capital projects among the Town's taxing jurisdictions
- Did the facilities needs analysis identify potential locations for new facilities (the answer was provided as a qualified yes as no significant real estate work was conducted, but certain sites were in fact identified)
- Were facility costs estimated? (the answer was provided as yes, along with the acknowledgement that construction costs have been rising rapidly)
- Judi Kehoe suggested that the Town has maintained but not truly reinvested in its facilities for a very long time
- During a discussion of inter-municipal cooperation, the Town was asked if there was coordination between the Town and the Town of New Scotland related to the controversial development project proposed for the intersection of State Routes 85 and 85a in New Scotland (Jack Cunningham indicated that there has been good coordination in this regard)

Action Items:

1. Provide copies of the executive summary of the facilities needs analysis to the 20/20 committee members

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2. Consider amending incentive zoning regulations to provide for public safety support.
3. Provide more detailed crime statistics
4. Continue to submit comments and suggestions on the draft mission statement
5. Establish a discussion board or list serve for the members to use for ongoing discussion

Next Meeting:

Friday, May 9, 2008, Elsmere Fire Station, 7:30 – 9:15 a.m.

Discussion Topics: Infrastructure Overview, Department of Public Works, Town Engineer, and Highway Department

To submit comments and questions, contact:

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