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Architecture
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Minutes of Meeting

Project:	Town of Bethlehem Comp Plan Kick-Off Meeting (via Zoom)
Project No:	SWBR 20601.00
Date:	September 10, 2020

Participants
Town CPUC Members: Tom Coffey, Bill Ketzer, Dania Flores Georgia Fishburn, Bryan Gyory, Rad Anderson, Paul Beyer, Jeremy Snyder, Anne Benware,
Town Officials: David VanLuven, Supervisor, Rob Leslie, Director of Economic Development, Karen Shaw, Open Space Committee, Nate Owens, Sr. Planner
SWBR Consultant Team: Bill Price, Don Naetzker, Tanya Zwahlen, Nancy Raca, Charvi Gupta, Kevin Dwarka, Brittany Murphy, Frank Armento
Public: (see attached registration spreadsheet)

Meeting started at 6:00 pm with opening statement by Rob Leslie about the Comprehensive Plan Update and how it will establish a town vision for the next 15 years; identifying the Comprehensive Plan Update Committee (CPUC) and selected consultant team to prepare the plan. Rob also presented the meeting logistics and opportunity for the public to comment.

Rob introduced Bill Price of SWBR, who will serve as the project manager for the comp plan update.

Bill shared screen with a presentation (available as separate document). Slides included:

- **Project team**
- **Team Roles**
- **Project Scope of Services**
- **Project Schedule**
- **Community Engagement**

Tanya Zwahlen, AICP, Principal of **Highland Planning** discussed the community engagement approach for the project. Preparation of the public engagement plan is the first step in the process. The CPUC members were asked to identify town residents, landowners, business owners and other stakeholders for eight pre-engagement interviews. The draft community engagement plan will be shared with the CPUC at the October meeting for review and approval. Tanya briefly described the PublicInput.com software system, proposed engagement techniques and public meetings.

- **Branding**

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Bill Price discussed 'branding' the comprehensive plan update with a name and / or tag line. The intent of branding is to generate interest and excitement about this very important planning process and link it to the community's vision. Several ideas were presented. The brand and related graphics / images will be used in social media postings, print materials and final plan documents. Members of the CPUC will be charged with developing a final recommendation to the CPUC and consultant team on or before September 17th. CPUC members volunteering for the sub committee include; Tom Coffey, Rad Anderson, Georgia Fishburn, Ann Benware, and Bill Ketzer.

- **Communications & Decision Making**

All correspondence from the Town to the SWBR team will be through Rob Leslie and/or designated town staff. All correspondence from the SWBR team to the Town will be through Bill Price. Project documents will be transferred through Newforma file sharing and data storage software. Information to the public will be transmitted through PublicInput.com.

Bill Price discussed decision making throughout the process of the comp plan update. The agreement defines the agreed upon scope of services. When the plan reaches the point of recommendations, implementation strategies and priorities, there may be disagreement. At that point, majority consensus will take precedence. Once decisions are made at various points in the planning process, they will be documented and the team (Town and SWBR team) will proceed to the next phase.

- **Comprehensive Plan Update Committee (CPUC) Member Observations**

Bryan Gyory – Landscape architect with NYS Environmental Facilities Corp, planning board member. Requested meeting materials be submitted prior to meetings so that CPUC can review. Requested that the Planning Board is engaged. Recommend integrating green infrastructure practices in comp plan update. Recommended articles in '**Our Towne Bethlehem**' as way to communicate.

Rad Anderson – Concerned about growth without management and the Town's growing senior population. Professional career in planning, now retired. Would like to see diversified tax base (currently reliant on residential) and vibrant business community, incorporate emergency management, and preparedness be included in the planning process. Mentioned Bethlehem Senior Projects, Inc. (not for profit) to engage. Recommended articles in **Penny Saver** and **Times Union** as way to reach residents. Agreed to be on Branding subcommittee.

Tom Coffey – North Bethlehem resident. Hamlet is outlier and step child compared to other town hamlets. Agrees that Rob and Bill should be gatekeepers of information. Most people move to Bethlehem for school district, which will continue. Sees a lot of investment in the neighborhoods by families with children, views as positive sign. Agreed to be on Branding subcommittee.

Dania Flores – Selkirk resident. Recommended speaking with Lou Picarazzi the unofficial mayor of Selkirk; knows many people and the history of the hamlet area. Transportation is issue for residents that don't have vehicles. Make pedestrian improvements in all areas, install stop signs that light up, meet with 3 school districts to understand current enrollment and future plans. Stated concern that family members are not continuing in farming. Mentioned CDTA –public transit discussions, park-n-ride and affordable housing. This puts pressure on selling property for development.

Paul Beyer – Director of NYS Smart Growth program. Most interested in incorporating smart growth standards, sustainability and the community engagement process during this time (Covid-19) focusing on bottom-up strategy vs. top-down.

Jeremy Snyder – Bethlehem Tomorrow, concerned with incorporating sustainability practices and matrix, climate change mitigation, open space preservation and growth management. Recommended that Highland Planning interview Patti Beeler, co-founder Bethlehem Tomorrow, recommends speaking with local farmers and landowners as well as local business owners (25-40 age group).

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Bill Ketzer – Multiple affiliations within the Town, has agriculture background, currently working with legislature on animal rights policy. Owns 6-acre parcel in Elsmere. Has knowledge of multiple groups with social media access ports to share comp plan update materials with. Concerned with open space preservation and historic preservation (town wide and Slingerlands Family Vault). Agreed to be on Branding subcommittee.

Anne Benware – Serves on Town Bike / Ped committee, former transportation planner with Capital District Transportation Committee (MPO). Recommends engaging parents with school aged children; lots of energy and good ideas to include. Recommends all stakeholders to be involved in the process with a focus on broad community engagement, possibly reaching all residents via local newspaper; police, town planning office, elected officials. Anne believes that senior services offer good transportation but that public transportation needs improvement. Agreed to be on Branding subcommittee.

Georgia Fishburn – Slingerlands resident for 20 years. Committed to historic preservation in Slingerlands and across the town. Agrees with concern of transportation to rural areas, listening to farmers, CPUC must represent all residents and geographic areas of the town, focus on three school districts as a way to reach out to parents. Mentioned 'Chalk the Walk' on September 26th as engagement event. Also, the Farmer's Market as pop-up event. Recommended CPUC meetings be alternated monthly as way to engage more people. Agreed to be on Branding subcommittee.

Supervisor David VanLuven – Update required because town is growing. We need to identify characteristics we love and bring everyone into the discussion. Town is an attractive place to live and there is a shortage of inventory of existing homes so new building continues. Bethlehem will be fair and equitable to all groups. On September 9th the Town Board adopted a resolution on equity and inclusion which should be reviewed by the CPUC and residents.

Rob Leslie – Affordable housing should be considered for ownership and rental.

Bill Price – In addition to equity, inclusion and affordable housing, we have to discuss the issues associated with 'density'. Typically, low density single use district zoning and residential sprawl 'cause' the traffic and other impacts perceived to be created by density. This will be a focus of the planning effort.

Rob opened the discussion to members of the public who registered.

Joann Vogel – Resident of Selkirk for 4 years. Professional architect, formerly worked in Columbus, Ohio. Very interested in the comp plan update process and would like to stay involved.

Joe Murphy – Delmar resident, representative of Bethlehem Indivisible. Stated concern with lack of diversity in town and affordability, need affirmative outreach to people previously excluded from the process. Town is next to City of Albany where there are neighborhoods of concentrated poverty. Need to reach outside of Bethlehem community to find potential future residents.

Paul Beyer - Concurred with Joe and outreach should include younger people who aspire to live in Bethlehem.

Patricia Beeler – 20-year town resident, Bethlehem Tomorrow. Advocate for new urbanism and sustainability principles, open space preservation and agritourism

David VanLuven and Rob Leslie – Wrap up comments.

- Branding should include 'One Bethlehem' or word 'together'.
- Mark Kelly should be considered pre-engagement stakeholder
- CPUC members are town ambassadors and should be the town representative attending 'Chalk the Walk', local fire district fish fries and other community events as part of the engagement effort.
- The CPUC should consider using 'Base Camp' or 'SLACK' platform for communications.

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Rob read aloud a 'chat' comment from Brandon Stabler regarding Vista Technology about interest in participating in the Comp Plan Update.

Rob stated the next meeting of the CPUC will be September 17th without the SWBR consultant team.

The meeting ended at approximately 8:10 pm.

The foregoing constitutes our understanding of matters discussed and conclusions reached. If there are any errors or omissions in the basic discussion, please notify SWBR in writing.

By: William Price, SWBR

Distribution: Attendees