

**TOWN OF BETHLEHEM**  
**CITIZEN'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON CONSERVATION**

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**SUMMARY OF COMMENTS AT JANUARY 8 CACC WORKSHOP**

On the evening of January 8, 2007, the CACC hosted a workshop to obtain public comment on its publication **Open Space Protection Programs – Funding and Tools**. The CACC received excellent feedback from the many attendees at this workshop. CACC members recorded the comments and DEDP staff assembled and organized the comments into four topical categories. While the comments may not be recorded verbatim, the CACC believes that this summary accurately captures the spirit of the comments made at the workshop. Also, in presenting these comments, the CACC's intent is purely objective and should not be interpreted as reflecting the opinion of the CACC or of any of its members.

**Programmatic and Operational Issues:**

- What would be the purpose of an Open Space Plan?
- Can an open space plan include remedies to environmental damage caused by previous development (such as stream bed erosion)?
- What happens when land conserved through the purchase of development rights (PDR) is no longer used for an agricultural purpose?
- Why not use water and sewer district expansion decisions as a basis for leaving land undeveloped?
- What is the definition of open space?
- How will the Town manage the issues involved in ownership of conserved land?
- Can the Town use the rezoning of a large property to obtain community benefits?
- Interested in protection of lands adjacent to Five Rivers
- Development pressure around Five Rivers is a concern, there should be a buffer area
- Interested in development of an open space plan especially with regard to lands near Five Rivers
- Interested in preserving a wildlife corridor near Normanside CC and other deer corridors
- Several property owners along the Hudson River indicated their interest in having their land conserved, will add to Town's character
- Interested in development of Town open space plan, want to see something firm

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- The Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy (MHLC) is interested in partnering with the Town
- Interested in participating in Town open space protection program
- Town should buy development rights to preserve farm land
- Town should develop a group of legal documents to make it easier for land owners to move forward; legal work can be expensive and an obstacle to landowners
- If parkland can cross utility lines, consider this in which determining which lands should be protected
- The town is losing open space quickly, we may be moving too slowly
- Have observed loss of land and clear cutting of trees to make way for residential development
- Concerned about the loss of wildlife corridors especially near North St.
- Concern that this will take too long and all land will be gone by the time a plan is done
- Planning Board needs to prevent the clear cutting of land
- Willing landowners should be totally voluntary, not pressured into participation
- Concern about trespassing and dumping on private property
- Who will hold easements and what types of restrictions will landowners be subject to?
- Open space plan must be unique to the Town, not a cookie cutter taken from somewhere else

**Fiscal Issues:**

- How much would the cost of an open space bond be to a senior citizen?
- How can the Town afford to acquire open space?
- A consequence of having an open space plan will be that property values will increase
- Tax increases are a concern
- Bond issue will provide a firm source of funding for open space protection.
- Concern about taking property off the tax rolls
- Where will funding come from if the Town is already operating under deficit spending?

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- Residents cannot afford more taxes
- In memoriam donations might be another funding source that could be mentioned in the study
- Creating a source of funds for open space stewardship is very important
- Tax dollars should not be used to buy property, and use of grants might give control to the State or Federal government
- Is Town using tax dollars for best purposes when it acquires Colonial Acres golf course equipment?
- Disagrees with idea that residential development contributes to tax burden of residents
- Funding should be in place before grandiose projects are identified
- Concern about cost of upkeep to Town owned conserved land
- Is Colonial Acres being acquired with a Town bond issue?

**Rights of Property Owners (Willing Landowners):**

- Use of a map or inventory might cause economic harm to a land owner, better to have criteria and established parameters for the types of lands that are most important for the Town to conserve
- Lands of conservation interest map is a violation of property rights and privacy and is about control not conservation
- What is the Town doing to prevent the use of eminent domain?
- Concern about the use of eminent domain for open space purposes
- What has Town Board decided with regard to the use of eminent domain?
- Real estate transfer taxes negatively impact landowners

**General Comments:**

- What was the significance of selecting 7 acres as a basis for the meeting mailing?
- How does one get a list of the members of the CACC?
- The CACC needs more representation from South Bethlehem
- Why doesn't the report include Agricultural Districts?