

**TOWN OF BETHLEHEM**  
**BETHLEHEM 20/20 ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**November 21, 2008 Meeting Record**  
Elsmere Fire Station, Poplar Drive  
7:30 – 9:15 a.m.

**Members Present:**

Terri Egan, Co-Chair, Steve Baboulis, Keith Bennett, John Clarkson, Peter Conway, Lisa Evans, Cathy Griffin, Susan Hager, Terry Hannigan, Dick Kotlow, Jim Lytle, John Piechnik, Ted Putney, Pam Robbins, Patty Salkin, Brian Stenson, Bob Verstandig, Jr., Bob Ward,

**Members Absent:**

Kenneth Ringler, Co-Chair, James Blendell, Mort Borzykowski, Steve Coffey, Joanne Cunningham, Ann Wendth, Christo Zemerling

**Town Staff Members Present:**

Supervisor Cunningham, George Leveille, Suzanne Traylor

1) **Co-Chair Report:**

- **October 17, 2008 Meeting Record:** The draft meeting record was approved without further amendment.
- **Follow-up on action items:** The pie chart depicting the Town's budgetary expenditures was distributed to the committee as requested.
- **Other:** John Piechnik, chair of the communications sub-committee, reminded the committee that volunteers were being recruited to assist in communicating the 20/20 message to the community. He indicated that a sign-up sheet was being circulated and that the sub-committee was interested in identifying the contact person for groups and organizations that could be addressed by 20/20.

2) **Report of the Community Survey Sub-Committee:**

Sub-committee chair Pam Robbins provided a brief report on the fourth meeting of the sub-committee, which was held on November 17 at Cathy Griffin's office. The following are highlights of her report:

- the committee reviewed materials regarding the do's and don'ts of survey instruments;
- the committee reviewed examples of community surveys being used elsewhere and found some excellent models to emulate;
- the committee was concentrating on developing the key questions that would be used to test 20/20's recommendations;
- among the major issues to be addressed would be the following: tax base balance, paying now versus later, essential versus non-essential services, development preferences, and , revenue methods (taxes versus user fees);
- The next sub-committee meeting is scheduled for Monday, November 17 at 7:45 AM at ReMax Premier in Delaware Plaza.

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After a brief discussion, staff was asked to look into the response rate for some of the sample surveys that were reviewed by the committee.

3) **Report of the Communications Sub-Committee, John Piechnik:**

Sub-committee chair John Piechnik provided a brief report on the second meeting of the communications sub-committee, which was held on November 6. The following are highlights of his report:

- The committee saw its purpose as the following: providing important background information for the committee, stimulating public awareness and conversation about 20/20, and preparing the community for the planned community survey;
- An overview of the proposed communications schedule was provided; it included articles in the Bethlehem Report, the Town's e-newsletter, the Town IDA's e-bulletin, the Bethlehem Chamber's e-newsletter, and the potential for local access television programming;
- The next sub-committee meeting has been set for Thursday, December 4 at 8:00 AM in Town Hall Room 107.

4) **Report from Financial Modeling Sub-Committee, George Leveille**

George Leveille provided a brief report on the activities of the financial modeling sub-committee as an introduction to the presentation Camoin Associates. He reminded the committee of the purpose of the financial modeling exercise, which was to look at the impact of alternative growth scenarios on the Town's tax base and projected fiscal needs based on current trends.

5) **Presentation of Town of Bethlehem Tax Base Analysis, Michael N'Dolo, Camoin Associates**

Michael N'Dolo made a presentation entitled "Finding the Balance: Fiscal Balance Modeling for Vision 2020". His presentation included the following information:

- Existing fiscal conditions and trends in expenditures and revenues
- Identification of issues related to managing expenditure growth
- Discussion of potential solutions for the structural gap in the Town's operating budget
- The net impacts of different land uses on taxing jurisdictions
- The impacts of alternative growth (development) scenarios on the Town's bottom line
- The concept of a negotiated revenue sharing agreement among taxing jurisdictions
- Conclusions of the study: a) pursue prudent economic development Town-wide; b) reduce costs through efficiency and non-essential service reduction; and, 3) research the feasibility of revenue sharing.

A spirited conversation followed this presentation and included the following questions and comments:

- Consider a selective moratorium on development that exacerbates the tax base imbalance

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- Need to engage the State and Federal governments for support of needed infrastructure such as the proposed Thruway interchange
- Can the Town continue to afford the increased costs of personal services?

The conversation shifted to a broader discussion of the 20/20 initiative and included the following questions and comments:

- It's time for 20/20 to get down to business with a list of recommendations
- How do we reduce the rate of increase on Town expenditures?
- What are we asking the public to agree to? What are the choices we have to make to avoid the negative impacts of existing trends?
- We need to have structured conversation about big-picture ideas
- The Town needs a prudent economic development strategy

6) **Action Items**

1. Look into the response rates for the sample surveys that were reviewed by the community survey sub-committee.

**Next Meeting:**

Friday, December 19, 2008, Elsmere Fire Station, 7:30 – 9:15 AM

**To submit comments and questions, contact:**

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