

**TOWN OF BETHLEHEM**  
**BETHLEHEM 20/20 ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**December 19, 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, Keith Bennett, James Blendell, Joanne Cunningham, Lisa Evans, Cathy Griffin, Susan Hager, Jim Lytle, John Piechnik, Ted Putney, Pam Robbins, Patty Salkin, Brian Stenson, Bob Ward,

**Members Absent:**

Mort Borzykowski, John Clarkson, Steve Coffey, Peter Conway, Terry Hannigan, Dick Kotlow, Bob Verstandig, Jr., Ann Wendth, Christo Zemerling

**Town Staff Members Present:**

Supervisor Cunningham, George Leveille, Suzanne Traylor

1) **Co-Chair Report:**

- **November 21, 2008 Meeting Record:** The draft meeting record was approved without further amendment.
- **Follow-up on action items:** Staff still gathering data about survey response rates from comparable community surveys
- **Taxpayer Worksheet Exercise:** Co-Chair Egan reminded the committee members to turn in their worksheets and indicated that the results would be disclosed at the conclusion of the meeting
- **Revised Schedule:** Staff circulated and described the revised committee schedule highlighting that a two committee meetings would be held during February and that the community survey launch date was scheduled for mid-March
- **Other:** No other business was reported.

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

Sub-committee chair Pam Robbins indicated that there had not been a sub-committee meeting since her report at the November meeting and that the sub-committee would be meeting in early January 2009 to focus on the key questions to be included in the survey.

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

Sub-committee chair John Piechnik provided a brief report on the third meeting of the communications sub-committee, which was held on December 4. The following are highlights of his report:

- The committee revised its preliminary schedule based on the revised schedule that was presented earlier in this meeting
- An update of the proposed schedule for public outreach was provided
- A list of speaking volunteers has been developed as well as a list of potential organizations and groups that could be addressed

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- The focus of the committee's efforts in January 2009 will be the taping of public television segments to table-set the 20/20 initiative and the upcoming Town survey
- The next sub-committee meeting has been set for Friday, January 9, 2009 at 8:00 AM in Town Hall

4) **Facilitated SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) Discussion, George Leveille**

George Leveille facilitated the SWOT session and the following were the results of that session:

**a. Strengths:**

- Adoption of comprehensive plan
- Quality of Town residents, excellent human resources
- High quality volunteerism and volunteer services
- High quality schools
- High quality Town services and personnel
- Responsiveness and accessibility of the Town government
- Appealing market for investment

**b. Weaknesses and Threats:**

- Aging infrastructure and population
- Fear of change
- Depleting fund balance
- Dependence on residential tax base
- High overall tax rates
- Unfunded mandates
- Current economic environment
- Competitiveness to grow non-commercial tax base
- Complacency of public, lack of understanding of issues
- Lack of unity/consensus on priorities
- Lack of diversity
- Aging of Town facilities
- Limited financial resources
- Limits of Town jurisdiction due to multiple taxing jurisdictions
- Volunteer emergency services
- Ability to maintain high level of services
- Changing Town demographics, greater dependency upon government
- Use of property taxes to fund government operations
- Lack of community philanthropy
- Redundant public services
- Lack of high quality sites for non-residential development
- Lack of Town capital plan
- Lack of long-term fiscal planning
- Recognition that the Town's piece of the tax pie is limited
- History of reactive behavior

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- Town law is outdated
- Too many elected representatives
- Current term and form of Town Supervisor position, should be professionalized

**c. Opportunities:**

- Structural reforms to Town government
- Shared and/or consolidated services
- Coordination and cooperation with other taxing jurisdictions
- Seek foundation funding
- Increase non-residential tax base
- Current economic conditions provide good timing for bold thinking
- Explore new non-property tax revenues including user fees and grants
- Potential for economic stimulus aid

**d. Action Items & Recommendations:**

- Get going on communications program to table-set 20/20 recommendations
- Consider four year term for Town Supervisor
- Expand cross jurisdictional interaction/cooperation and consider opportunities for inter-municipal consolidation
- Generate sense of community across the community
- Table-set implementation by illustrating long-term needs & financial implications (anecdotal situation analysis, might scare residents)
- Be a model community (move to vision?)

**e. Vision Statement Elements**

- Efficient & effective
- Investment in “green” growth
- Cutting edge technology
- Dynamic
- Total utilization
- Responsive
- New and improved form
- Supports industrial/business base
- Asset based management
- Collaborative relationships
- Sound financial plan
- Highly competitive market for non-residential investment
- Informed and involved citizenry
- Effective transportation links
- High quality, modern facilities
- Model community at forefront of continuous improvement

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5) **Results of Taxpayer Worksheet Exercise**

George Leveille reported the results of the taxpayer worksheet exercise. The following is the list of public expenditures and the percentage of total real property tax dollars that would be allocated to each program or service:

▪ Albany County	15%
▪ Ambulance District	3%
▪ Fire District	4%
▪ Library	3%
▪ School District	36%
▪ TOB General Admin	10%
▪ TOB Highway	9%
▪ TOB Parks & Recreation	4%
▪ TOB Police & Justice	6%
▪ TOB Public Works	9%
▪ Other	1% (conservation, social services other than senior services)

6) **Action Items**

- a. Plan for the January 23 meeting to be taped and photographed as part of the public outreach effort.

**Next Meeting:**

Friday, January 23, 2009, Elsmere Fire Station, 7:30 – 9:15 AM

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

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