

**TOWN OF BETHLEHEM**  
**BETHLEHEM 20/20 ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**April 24, 2009 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, John Clarkson, Joanne Cunningham, Cathy Griffin, Lisa Evans, Terry Hannigan, Susan Hager, Dick Kotlow, John Piechnik, Ted Putney, Pam Robbins, Patty Salkin, Brian Stenson, Bob Ward, Christo Zemerling

**Members Absent:**

Keith Bennett, Mort Borzykowski, Steve Coffey, Peter Conway, Jim Lytle, Bob Verstandig, Jr.,

**Town Staff Members Present:**

Supervisor Cunningham, George Leveille, Suzanne Traylor

1) **Co-Chair Report**

- **March 20, 2009 Meeting Record:** The draft meeting record was approved without further amendment.
- **Follow-up on action items:** Co-Chair Egan reported that the action items from March 20 had been addressed and would be discussed with associated agenda items during the meeting.
- **Other:** No other business was reported.

2) **Report of the Communications Sub-Committee**

Sub-committee chair John Piechnik reported that the committee had met on a couple of occasions since the last meeting. He indicated that the schedule of presentations was being finalized with the assistance of the Supervisor's office. He spoke briefly about the May 13 meeting agenda, which would be discussed in more detail later in the committee meeting. He also indicated that he would be following up with members who had volunteered to participate in presentations to confirm their participation.

3) **Report of the Community Survey Committee**

Sub-committee chair Pam Robbins reported that 1,500 surveys had been mailed to a random sample of Town residents. While her office was continuing to tabulate the results, the response rate appears to be in the range of 22%, which provides a meaningful sample. She reviewed a draft analysis of the survey results with the full committee that included the following highlights:

- All of the open ended comments still needed to be coded for analysis
- Respondent characteristics:
  - 57% of the respondents lived in Elsmere or Delmar
  - Lived in the Town an average of 29 years

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- 75% were 50 or older
- 75% felt that the quality of life in Bethlehem is better than other Capital Regions areas
- Police responsiveness, snow and ice removal and reliable water and sewer services are seen as the most important services and Town communication services as the least important
- Most Town services were viewed as being effectively provided; certain services including brush and curbside pick-up, snow and ice removal, parks and senior services were seen as exceeding expectations; certain services including pedestrian and bicycle facilities were seen as being below expectations
- Seeking new outside revenue sources was seen as the most popular method of paying for enhanced or new services and increasing the tax levy was seen as the least popular method
- The majority of respondents want to keep programs and services at current levels
- With regard to Town investment alternatives, investing in Town infrastructure was seen as the most desirable by a large margin
- With regard to paying for needed public improvements, charging user fees for non-essential programs and services and well planned economic development were seen as most desirable
- With regard to consolidation and sharing of services, there was strong support for taking such measures so long as there were demonstrated financial or service benefits for Town residents

Ms. Robbins indicated that the sub-committee would be meeting to complete the survey and analysis prior to the May 13 public meeting. The Co-Chairs, Supervisor Cunningham and the members thanked Ms. Robbins for her tremendous work on the community survey.

4) **Recommendations and Final Report Update**

George Leveille circulated and reviewed the revised draft recommendations report with the committee. Many comments and suggestions were made that will be incorporated into the revised draft report. Among the highlights of the discussion were the following:

- Provide clarity regarding definition of key words like “diversity” and “revenue sharing agreements”
- Refer to suggestions made by the Local Government Effectiveness Commission
- Consider incentive zoning as a tool to help implement infrastructure improvements
- Enhance the focus on modernizing Town government
- The importance of the Town taking a leadership role in fostering cooperation among taxing jurisdictions
- Compare the recommendations to the guiding principles to make sure that all are considered in the recommendations

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- Encourage other taxing jurisdictions to engage in similar citizen based initiatives like 20/20

Several committee members volunteered to submit wording for some of the suggestions made at the meeting. Mr. Leveille indicated that he would consider reorganizing the recommendations in more of a priority order and consider recommendations regarding implementation. He also circulated an outline of the final report for the committee's consideration and welcomed further comments in this regard

5) **Agenda for May 13 Public Meeting**

George Leveille suggested that the report format developed by the Communications sub-committee be used for the public meeting presentation. There was general agreement on this approach. He indicated that the basic presentation was completed but for slides summarizing the community survey findings. He estimated that the final presentation report would be completed by Friday May 8 and circulated to the committee members. John Piechnik agreed to organize committee members to assist in making the presentation and indicated that the same presentation format would be used for presentations to other taxing jurisdictions. Mr. Leveille indicated that the public meeting was scheduled to begin at 7:00 PM immediately following the regular Town Board meeting.

**Action Items**

- a. Kim Ryan will send a link to the "See through New York" web site to the committee members.
- b. Staff was asked to see if the list of IMac comparable communities was available for the committee's review.

**Next Meeting:**

Friday, May 29, 2009, Elsmere Fire Station, 7:30 – 9:15 AM

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

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