

**Town of Bethlehem
Comprehensive Plan Update**



Committee Meeting #1
November 20, 2019
Delmar-Bethlehem EMS Building
6:00PM

Meeting Summary

Committee Member Attendees: Jeremy Snyder, Bill Ketzer, Rad Anderson, Jim Grady, Georgia Fishburn, Giles Wagoner, Dania Flores, Chris Edwards, Tom Coffey, Brian Gyory, Anne Benware, Adrienne Mazeau, Kathleen Mannix

Public Attendees: Linda Jasinski, Scott Lewendon, John Smolinsky, Pattie Beeler, Emily Saunders, Dan Coffey, Paul Beyer, Nancy Neff, Ken Neff, Mike Waldenmaier

Staff: Robert Leslie, Elizabeth Staubach, Leslie Lombardo, Nate Owens & Town Supervisor David VanLuven

Welcome/Introductions

Review and Discuss - What is a Comprehensive Plan? – Power Point Presentation

- Rob Leslie gave a presentation summarizing the components of a comprehensive plan, the vision from the 2005 Comprehensive Plan and the accomplishments
- Studies that came out of the 2005 Comprehensive Plan goals were summarized as well as funding opportunities that were granted to the town as a result of the guidance from the Plan (Glenmont roundabout)
- Different groups like the Bike & Pedestrian Committee use the plan to guide the work they are doing
- The Comprehensive Plan continues to keep the community moving forward to attain the goals. Projects in the town are influenced by the Plan.
- The committee plays an important role and the document is important as a guidance document for the town
- Committee's role includes sending the final Plan to the Town Board by a Resolution of the committee
- Why update the plan? Are there new goals needed?

Discussion: What do committee members want to see come out of this Comprehensive Plan Update?

- Density should be addressed, compromise is needed between current zoning & what people want (based on what is being said at Planning Board meetings they want something else)
- 2005 Plan was based on zoning, this Plan should include improvement of quality of life issues
- 2005 Plan achieved the goals set out, outreach at the forum meetings was good
 - Transportation needed to be a focus in plan
- Research into why demographics are changing, Bethlehem Central School District schools have declining enrollment

- Educational component included in plan; for example design standards go with density discussion, a way to help readers visualize what is being proposed
- Visual aids needed in plan, so people can better understand what text is saying
- Recognize that different people want different things
- The hamlet approach to the forum meetings was a good idea, when discussing the plan it should be brought to the hamlets again to find out what people there want
- The ideas about multi-family development are different than they were at the time of the 2005 plan, Look at where multifamily can end up developing, Glenmont doesn't want to receive all of it
- Historic Resources – how do we move the topic forward?
- Development is coming & we need to prepare, protect people who own land, so not forced to sell
- Underutilized riverfront, provide recreational opportunities, revitalize the waterfront
- How do we handle compromise, so that groups that want to move certain topics forward and opposing views are talked about together and not in a “silo”.

Discuss What Topics should be the Focus of Future Community Forums

Key Issues from Community Forums identified by staff were presented

(The committee was asked what type of meeting should be held to discuss these topics).

- **Transportation**
- **Getting the Development We Want**
-including the need for predictability, so residents are not surprised when projects come up in an area that is zoned for the use. How does this Comprehensive Plan Update address this issue? A community forum type meeting is needed to better discuss this topic with the public.
- **Environmental Leadership**
- **Aging Gracefully in Bethlehem**
-instead of a forum style meeting, it may be best to go to a senior services event and get attendees feedback on issues under this category.
- **Government and Schools**
-the issue of providing some flexibility with zoning in some of areas of Town was suggested.

Discussion: What are the committee's thoughts on key issues for the Updated Comprehensive Plan?

- PDD applications, the benefit to the community from the project must be strong
- Businesses; what can we do to support local businesses, work from home businesses, improvements to the internet and net neutral idea to support rural based businesses
- The 2005 plan identified steep slope and floodplain issues; this plan should address minimizing development in hazard prone areas and protecting wetlands
- Hazard mitigation should be added to the list of topics, ice storms and power outages are impacted by trees, need to pick the right species
- Hazards in the industrial zone, climate change is causing more severe conditions of rain, heat and cold
- Neighboring community development, how it impacts the town
- Emergency access in some areas is an issue, if a road is blocked how is access to an area of town impacted
 - Truck traffic on Maple Avenue; volume and speed issues

Discussion: The committee was asked to identify the meeting type that would best serve discussion of different topic areas in order to educate the public, so that residents know what the town can and cannot do in certain subject areas.

- Housing diversity should be a public forum meeting
- Connectivity within residential areas should be public forum
- Asking residents what they want for development should be a public forum meeting

The Committee was asked what the tradeoffs should be for housing issues?

- Traffic and walkability is a trade off on residential development, plan for them
- Viewscapes & streetscapes are important, they should be designed for, gateways to different districts in town are important

The Committee was asked how we address the small town feel, which was a common “like” at the community forums, and the rural landscape?

- It was noted that the town is very diverse, how do we satisfy what everyone wants? For example some people in the rural areas don't want sewer and water extended because their taxes will go up. How do we satisfy everyone's needs?

Review and Discuss Comprehensive Plan Update Process, Next Steps, and Roles

Staff presentation was given on the process:

- Roles of the committee – to be ambassadors of the plan out in the community, discuss with the public what is being talked about in committee, listen to their feedback and report back to committee
- The Planning Department will work on the logistics, the report on the demographics is being worked on now and will be brought to the committee, staff will also help to identify key issues and provide knowledge of the current code
- A consultant will be hired to do certain focused work
- Committee to schedule community forums & meetings
- Once the plan is in final format, a public hearing will need to be held and a SEQR resolution completed
- Meeting availability was discussed and agreed upon: the committee will meet on the third Wednesday of every month at 6pm in the Delmar-Bethlehem EMS Building on Adams Street.
- A committee member asked if the Bethlehem Tomorrow group could bring speakers to the committee meetings on different topics, is there interest from the committee members on that idea?
 - Hesitation on the idea was expressed, thought it would create potential bias on a topic, not a good idea for one group to sponsor speakers
 - It was suggested the committee should think about the speaker presentation idea proposed by Bethlehem Tomorrow and send their thoughts
 - The Committee may want to look ahead towards monthly calendar and decide what issues/topics are important to the Committee to then decide to invite a speaker. Decision to be made by the Committee

Public Comments

- The meetings should be lived streamed and archived, available to the public
- Traffic will come through town from surrounding areas, like Ravena and the hilltowns, can't stop traffic

- Diversity of housing issue: housing is too expensive, the planning board gives applicant's a hard time which makes it more expensive
- Opposition to Bethlehem Tomorrow group presenting at committee meetings, it should be a public meeting presentation
- There are 4 large land owners in the room tonight they have knowledge that should be used
- The committee members should speak up and also be good listeners
- One outcome of the Plan should be a definition of "community character", which is a term being used by residents at Planning Board meetings, the topic should be discussed at a community forum style meeting in the different hamlets, the definition will be useful to the Planning Board
- The last plan said more apartments were needed for youth, but what has been built is not affordable to youth, there are no jobs in town, long term decisions need to be made, property rights are important
- Plan for the future, for people to move here
- Cost of housing and taxes is a problem, youth leaving the area is a problem
- Flexibility of land use is important to farmers, the last plan said willingness of land owners would be emphasized but it is not respected, need a definition of sustainable

Next Steps

- Staff will look into how to record the committee meetings
- Committee members email addresses to be added to group email
CompPlan@townofbethlehem.org
- Staff will prepare an RFP to hire a consultant
- Committee should think about the topic areas to be discussed in community forums to provide feedback for staff
- Draft demographic & growth analysis study will be sent to the committee in December

Next Meeting: January 15, 2020 at 6pm, Delmar-Bethlehem EMS Building