

**Town of Bethlehem
Comprehensive Plan Update**

Committee Meeting #4
June 17, 2020, 6pm
Via Zoom Meeting Platform



Meeting Summary

Committee Member Attendees: Jeremy Snyder, Bill Ketzer, Rad Anderson, Georgia Fishburn, Giles Wagoner, Tom Coffey, Brian Gyory, Anne Benware, Kathleen Mannix, Paul Beyer, Adrienne Mazeau

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

I. Welcome/Introduction:

Rob Leslie thanked everyone for their patience during the process of vetting consultants and getting to the stage of hiring one. The Town is now ready to start the process of the Plan Update with a consultant and the awareness that we must deal with the present conditions that the COVID-19 pandemic puts us under for meetings and outreach, the economic impacts of COVID and the social justice conversation that residents want to include in the process.

II. Consultant Selection/Subcommittee Recommendation:

Rob summarized his June 7th memo to the Committee which explained the process that the sub-committee went through to choose the consultant team of SWBR/Highland Planning/Fisher Associates/ Kevin Dwarka LLC. He asked if there were any questions or comments from the CPUC tonight.

Members had the following comments:

- Liked the fact that a local firm was chosen, a firm from New York with previous experience working in the Capital Region.
- The consultant appears to have a good skill set
- Local experience is good, but liked that they also had experience beyond our area
- Why was one of the consultant original team members swapped out? Answer: The RFP included the option for the Town to choose the combination of team members, so that is what the sub-committee did, another consultant team had a member that stood out, so we put them together with the overall team that was chosen.
- One member commented that he was familiar with municipalities in western NY where SWBR had worked and heard good things about them.

A motion was made to accept the sub-committee's decision to hire SWBR team including Kevin Dwarka LLC, it was seconded and unanimously approved.

Rob said he would reach out to SWBR to prepare a contract and scope.

- What will be the start date? Answer: mid July hopefully, but we have to go to the Town Board with a contract that needs to be reviewed beforehand.
- What will our involvement be? Answer: The consultant initially wants you to help with community engagement plan and wants your feedback for community engagement.

- Will they develop a more definitive scope of the work? Answer: Yes, needed to have this meeting to get approval of a consultant before getting to a detailed scope of work.
- Suggestion that committee give comments on that scope once we have it.
- Concern that more comments back to SWBR on the scope will mean more time needed before we get to the Town Board.
- Suggestion that committee do it by email, give comments on final scope developed.

III. Committee Discussion:

Rob opened the meeting to Committee discussion on other topics. The Committee made the following comments:

- What about the moratorium suggestion? Is Town Board going to do that?
- The Planning Board is still seeing projects, it is not slowing down
- What do other members think?
- Depends on what projects are proposed if they are new then a moratorium should apply.
- In the previous moratorium for the comprehensive plan of 2005 some projects were allowed to move forward, if they had received SEQR approval
- Bethlehem Tomorrow had a signed petition, there has been no change, people still support it
- What is the impact of a moratorium? What are the economic impacts?
- In the previous moratorium for the Comp Plan commercial projects were allowed to move forward, residential projects were held back until the end of the moratorium
- Staff could put together a list of projects and status, it could reflect land uses
- An Appeals process is included in any moratorium, there are options if committee wants to discuss further
- Why do we need a moratorium?
- What if rules are changing with a new Comp Plan, projects would have to comply with new rules under a new Comp Plan
- What is the timeline? Developments will be stalled
- Usually one year for a Comp Plan, then need phase 2 of developing code changes
- Do we want to put development on hold for 1.5 years?
- A change of direction will come out of the new Comp Plan so developments will have to revise plans
- When does a moratorium start? Can't go on forever, have to time it correctly.
- We need the economics of it
- Towns can do limited moratoriums
- What if developers rush in with applications?
- Ask the consultant for their experience with moratoriums?
- Don't want a blanket moratorium, don't want to pause Vista development.
- Can't think of many residents who are against it
- Who has the authority of the moratorium?
- Town Board with input from staff, Town Attorney and this Committee
- The limited moratorium sounds like a good idea.

Next Steps

- Sub-committee wants to comment on the final scope submitted by the consultant
- Goal of staff is to get to Town Board meeting on 7/7, 7/21 – possibly August

Adjourn

Next Meeting September 10, 2020