

Appendix A

May 15, 2008 Public Meeting Summary



TOWN OF BETHLEHEM, NY
Economic Development & Planning

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS FROM MAY 15 OPEN SPACE PUBLIC MEETING

On the evening of May 15, 2008, the Department of Economic Development and Planning (DEDP) in association with the Citizens Advisory Committee on Conservation (CACC) hosted a public meeting to identify the needs and issues of the community regarding Open Space. The meeting provided an opportunity for the community to review guiding principles, define open space, and establish a vision.

The DEDP and CACC received excellent feedback from the many attendees at this workshop. CACC members recorded the comments and DEDP staff assembled and organized the comments into several topical categories. While the comments may not be recorded verbatim, the DEDP believes that this summary accurately captures the spirit of the comments made at the workshop. Also, in presenting these comments, the intent is purely objective and should not be interpreted as reflecting the opinion of the DEDP and CACC or of any of its members.

Facilitators first reviewed the Open Space Guiding Principles with participants and then asked them to define “open space” for the Town of Bethlehem. Responses were compiled as follows:

Terms for Definition of Open Space

- Publicly owned
- Privately owned where public is welcome
- Undeveloped – devoid of significant or intensive man-made structures or activity
- Visual appreciation
- Green space
- Farmland
- Wildlife/natural habitat/native species
- Network or connections
- Trail corridors
- Parks/recreation (soccer field/golf course)
- Water bodies – Lakes/streams/rivers
- Community gardens
- Provides community character and quality of life

Participants were next asked to identify the major issues and needs for the Town of Bethlehem in regards to open space preservation. After the exercise, participants in each group were shown a comprehensive list of all the issues and needs generated during the group’s discussion and given three dots. They were then asked to place their dots next to the issues they felt most strongly about. The following is a tabulation of those results.

Property Rights

- Trespassing on private lands [11 dots]
- Encroachment on private lands [5 dots]
- Adverse possession of private lands [0 dots]
- Liability of allowing access [4 dots]
- Respect property rights [11 dots]
- “Majority of people with minority resources making decisions for people with majority resources” [8 dots]
- Government imposing its will on people [5 dots]
- Farmers can’t afford to keep farming [0 dots]
- Preservation/conservation is restriction/stops economic growth [0 dots]

Identified to help maintain open spaces

- Economic incentives for land owners [6 dots]
- Flexible tax structure or relief for farmers/landowners [7 dots]
- Flexibility to take advantage of opportunities that keep land open [6 dots]
- Inventory of potential tools for protection [0 dots]
- Manage storm water runoff to protect undeveloped lands [1 dot]

General

- Lost opportunities/too late/urgency/development pressure/need a plan in place [7 dots]
- Funding/how to pay/community shares the cost [16 dots]
- Budget [0 dots]
- Balance between residents [0 dots]
- Balance between growth and parks [1 dot]
- Balance between Open Space and tax base [1 dot]
- Balance fiscal responsibility with Open Space wants [2 dots]
- Smart growth planning [2 dots]
- Timeframe needed [6 dots]
- Better planning of development to include contiguous open space [0 dots]
- Regional approach/neighboring communities [2 dots]
- Support local farmers and businesses/future value of farmland
- Fair treatment [2 dots]
- Don’t focus solely on large landowners [1 dot]
- Taxes/Too many taxing entities [3 dots]

Ideas for Analysis

- Review distribution, proximity to population [0 dots]

- Priorities, identify needs by geographic sectors [1 dot]
- Identify areas for protection [1 dot]
- Examine existing undeveloped parkland [1 dot]
- Identify what we have (i.e. soils, species, plants, animals) [1 dot]
- Find available green space and protect it from unwanted development [4 dots]

General Topics/Themes for protection

- Natural resources (geologic) [4 dots]
- Wetlands/Species/wildlife habitat corridors [7 dots]
- Scenic viewsheds (visual quality) [6 dots]
- Parks/recreation [0 dots]
- Connectivity (biking paths and walking paths) Rail Trail [8 dots]
- Expand size of current lands (value in critical mass)/Buffer Five Rivers [3 dots]
- Farmland/Agritourism [7 dots]

Finally, facilitators asked participants to generate terms and ideas for a vision statement of open space in the Town of Bethlehem over the next 25 years.

Topics/Themes

- Pedestrians-Sidewalks-Walkable
- Bicyclists-Bike Paths-Connected
- Public Transit- alternate modes of transportation (non-vehicular)
- River valleys
- Network of natural/wildlife spaces
- Pocket parks
- Farmland and agriculture

Action Terms

- Protect
- Preserve
- Respect
- Manage

Description Words

- Green
- Blue
- Quiet
- Peaceful
- Pastoral
- Bucolic
- Vibrant
- Livable
- Sustainable
- Variety

Other

- Opportunity for economic development
- Options are flexible
- Diversity of uses
- Large areas of protected, undeveloped land
- Collaborative community building
- Balanced tax base
- Fair/unbiased management and enforcement of Plan

Appendix B

October 6, 2008 Public Meeting Summary



OCTOBER 6, 2008 PUBLIC MEETING
SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

On the evening of October 6, 2008, the Department of Economic Development (DEDP) and Planning in association with the Citizens Advisory Committee on Conservation (CACC) hosted a public meeting to educate Bethlehem landowners with parcels greater than 7 acres on farmland and open space tools. The Town's consulting team of American Farmland Trust and Behan Planning Associates provided an overview of the various tools and facilitated four group discussions to identify concerns of the landowners and gauge interest in the tools.

The DEDP and CACC received excellent feedback from the sixty attendees at this meeting. The facilitators (American Farmland Trust and Behan Planning Associates) recorded the comments and DEDP staff assembled and organized the comments into several topical categories. While the comments may not be recorded verbatim, the DEDP believes that this summary accurately captures the spirit of the comments made at the meeting. Also, in presenting these comments, the intent is purely objective and should not be interpreted as reflecting the opinion of the DEDP and CACC or of any of its members.

Solutions/Interest in Tools:

- Education of landowners or program benefits is needed
- Address lack of trust in town government
- Incentive Zoning
- Term easements are a good start
- Assistance with land posting requirements
- Landowners might benefit by being matched with renters to qualify for agriculture assessment
- Tax abatement in exchange for term easements
- Right to Farm law should be accompanied by requirement to use best practices
- Landowner/farmer representation on planning and/or zoning board
- Residential zoned property allowed to have some small low-impact agriculture
- Town/County could require written permission to drive ATV – registration
- Town enforcement of laws for illegal trespassing and dumping
- Organization of large landowners to get better communication
- Town officials need to become more familiar with rural part of Town
- Assessment – fairness – inconsistency for people who have a lot of land
- Needs of non-agricultural landowners may not be addressed by current programs



Concerns Regarding Tools:

- Right to Farm law that creates another group to interact with Town not helpful because don't need more bureaucracy
- Smaller, "hobby" farms currently not eligible for agriculture assessments and run into zoning problems
- Tools will raise taxes for conservation purposes
- Right to Farm law would be a problem and is not needed
- Incentive Zoning – developer will just pass the cost on to the buyer
- Layers of regulations not desired
- Don't want to be penalized
- Open Space preservation hurts people who bought open land for investment

Programmatic/Operational:

- Long history of land ownership by one family becoming difficult to hold onto it
- Lack of respect and trust
- Would like to see areas for denser development to take pressure off rural land – mix of land uses
- Land on river with no heirs and would like to keep it green. How can Town develop options to do so?
- Next generation would like to keep the family land undeveloped.
- Like how Town is now – mix of uses. Equitable way to keep it that way.
- Opportunity between interested community and interested landowners
- Liability for public access – who is held liable?
- Who will pay to maintain trails?
- What can we really afford to do (priorities – infrastructure)
- Issue with non-profits and reduced taxes putting tax burden on others
- Losing Freedom – vocal minority wants open space
- Protect cemetery from misuse
- Trails need to be monitored and maintained

Rights of Property Owners (Willing Landowners):

- Initiating trail program – Town must take responsibility for when it is abused – Attractive Nuisance
- Respect for private property – keep trespassers off private land
- Problem with the town requiring other people coming onto my property
- Encroachment and trespassing
- Don't want government telling me what to do
- Open Space preservation will make trespassing on private property worse – liability

Appendix C

October 23, 2008 Public Meeting Summary



GOAL DEVELOPMENT
SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

On the evening of October 23, 2008, the Department of Economic Development (DEDP) and Planning in association with the Citizens Advisory Committee on Conservation (CACC) hosted a public meeting for the Open Space Plan. At the May 2008 public orientation meeting, residents identified Recreation and Pathways, Natural Systems, and Agriculture and Farming as topic areas to be addressed in the Plan. This meeting presented an overview of the existing conditions of these topics, and provided an opportunity for community discussion and development of the Plan's goals for these topics.

The DEDP and CACC received excellent feedback from the sixty attendees at this meeting. Attendees were randomly separated into three groups. The facilitators (Behan Planning Associates, American Farmland Trust, and DEDP) represented each of the three topics and rotated amongst the three groups to discuss potential goals. The facilitators recorded the comments and prepared a summary of the goals based on attendee feedback.

Natural Systems

Facilitators: Jeff Lipnicky and Melissa Barry

- Water resource protection
- Stormwater Management
- "Urban Forests" Trees, small, micro-scale
- Connected open space
- Respect what we have before taking on more
- "Green" development

Agriculture and Farmland

Facilitators: John Behan and Laurie Ten Eyck

- Allow hobby farms in residential zones
- Community Farm in Town
 - Network of Community Farms
- Town help CSA's get started
 - Combine conservation subdivision with CSA
- Educate community on agriculture
- Create way for people to buy locally grown food
- Farm – School Program
 - Kids gets local food & educate them about agriculture and local farms
- Maintain ratio between farmland and development (develop here – preserve there)
- Enforce no trespassing laws
- Lower taxes on agriculture land
- Have a Town Agriculture coordinator
 - Farmer education
 - Grant writing



Recreation and Pathways

Facilitators: Mike Morelli and Rob Leslie

- Develop a viable – priority network (safe) for non-vehicular traffic that facilitates access to parks, services, and daily activities
- Education for all users (bicyclists, pedestrians, and motorists) on “rules of the road”
- Define pathways and subcategories (e.g. sidewalks, trails, multi-use paths, bicycle lanes, shared roadways)
- Provide pathways consistent with their surroundings and compatible with adjacent landowners
- Mitigate impacts of pathways and trails on adjacent property owners
- Provide non-vehicular access to the Hudson River
- Connect neighborhoods to Town parks

Appendix D

July 1, 2009 Draft Report Presentation Meeting Summary

**Recommendations on Open Space Needs and Opportunities
July 1, 2009 Public Meeting
Summary of Public Comments**

On the evening of July 1, 2009, the Department of Economic Development and Planning (DEDP), in association with the Citizens Advisory Committee on Conservation (CACC), hosted a public meeting to present the Draft “Recommendations on Open Space Needs and Opportunities Report” to the community. Approximately 40 attendees (15 of which included CACC members, Town Board members, and Town staff) viewed a presentation by the DEDP, which provided an overview of the Report’s goals, recommendations and open space planning process. Listed below is a summary of the comments (verbal and written) that were provided during the question and comment period of the public meeting.

Comment A

- CACC should take stronger stand on development of an Open Space Plan
- Open Space Plan would provide clarity to landowners/developers
- Trespass issue should not be in the hands of an advisory committee – Town Board should be involved
- Community garden recommendation should also include discussion of community supported agriculture (CSA)

Comment B

- Town should develop and implement an Open Space Plan
- Trespass/encroachment issue and respect for private property is a problem
- Current police response not adequate (need for greater police response)

Comment C

- Disappointed that there is no recommendation for dedicated funding source
- Funding for leveraging additional monies/grants is critical for success
- No mention of redevelopment opportunities/reusing areas that were developed at one time

Comment D

- Strong open space program increases property values

Comment E

- Attendees at the public meetings are not representative of the community as a whole
- Attendees represent special interest groups
- Recommendation for Survey – wording of survey should be prepared carefully
- Conservation subdivision doesn’t work because it is not the preference of the average homebuyer

Comment F

- After many years of planning we have seen no development of an Open Space plan
- The Town should think about financing to buy open space now
- Cooperatively work with developers to implement conservation easements, at the same time try to understand how the existing Town Code could be improved
- Enhance communications between existing Committees so that Open Space goals are considered as a routine part of Town decision making

Recommendations on Open Space Needs and Opportunities
July 1, 2009 Public Meeting
Summary of Public Comments

Comment G

- Encouraged by recommendations in the Report
- Town should have an Open Space Plan
- Would like to see an implementation schedule

Comment H

- Advocate/preference of private land ownership
- Concern that a conservancy does not pay taxes
- Establish a fund that taxpayers could voluntarily contribute to help buy land
- Residents who want the open space should have an opportunity to choose to pay for it (“check box” on tax bill)

Comment I

- Clarify why the Town developed a Report rather than a Plan
- Large landowners have been heard by the Town and their interests are represented in the Report

Comment J

- Several attendees stated the Town needs a more concrete Open Space Plan
- Clarify what people mean by a traditional open space plan
- Are conservation groups advocating for an Open Space Plan or dedicated funding source?

Comment K

- Plan does not need to be a traditional plan (does not mean mapping)
- Need to prioritize characteristics of what is important (value) to the Town

Comment L

- Traditional plan does not mean that there needs to be map
- Need criteria and funding
- MHLC has criteria but funding is the main obstacle to their efforts
- Criteria would help determine what is worth preserving
- Landowners need to be compensated for the market value of their land

Comment M

- Funding should not go to private not-for-profit groups
- Who will care for the land after it is purchased?
- Report is well-balanced

Comment N

- Education is important and should be a short term goal

Comment O

- Current Report is reasonable compromise between those who want an Open Space Plan and those who don't want one

Recommendations on Open Space Needs and Opportunities
July 1, 2009 Public Meeting
Summary of Public Comments

- Zoning needs to be revised to make it easier to keep land open

Comment P

- Balance open space desires with the economics/affordability and caring for open space
- Balance needs vs. wants vs. costs
- Report is a good balance of both sides

Comment Q

- Good Report
- Green infrastructure, tree planting elements and low impact development recommendations are very encouraging

Appendix E

Recreation, Conservation, Education Lands Tables

Table E-1: Town of Bethlehem Public Recreation

	Elm Avenue Park	Henry Hudson Park	Maple Ridge Park	South Bethlehem Park	North Bethlehem Park	Selkirk Park	Firefighters Memorial Park	Town Hall	Colonial Acres	Veterans Memorial Park
Area (acres)	221.50	63.35	7.00	10.84	22.70	4.1	4.14	1.0	32.00	0.14
Swimming Pool	YES									
Pavilion	YES	YES	YES							
Tennis Courts	YES					YES				
Basketball Courts	YES		YES	YES	YES	YES				
Baseball Fields	YES									
Softball Fields	YES	YES		YES		YES				
Soccer Fields	YES			YES						
Lacrosse Fields	YES									
Playground	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES		YES		
Volleyball Courts	YES	YES								
Golf Course									YES	
Gazebo	YES	YES								
Boat Launch		YES								
Fishing		YES		YES						
Horseshoe Pit	YES	YES								
Shuffleboard	YES	YES								
Picnic Area	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES				
Grassy Play Area	YES	YES	YES	YES		YES	YES	YES		
Trails	YES		YES		YES					
Dog Park	YES									
Restrooms	YES	YES								
Portable Toilet	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES			YES	

Source: Town of Bethlehem Parks Department and Assessor's Office

Table E-2: Private Recreation in Town of Bethlehem

Private Recreation Lands	Owner	Area (acres)
Normanside Country Club	Normanside Corporation	278.37
Tri-Village Little League	Tri-Village Little League Inc	8.45
Bethlehem Soccer Club	Bethlehem Soccer Club Inc	27.00
YMCA	YMCA	19.90
Colonial Acres Swimming Pool	Colonial-Glenmont Inc	0.88
Kenholm Gardens Swimming Pool	Kenholm Pool Association	2.34
Woodgate Swimming Pool	Woodgate Homeowners Assoc.	1.20
Chadwick Square Park	Chadwick Square Park Assoc. Inc.	4.00
Albany County Pistol Club	Albany County Pistol Club Inc	0.34
Hidden Meadows Golf Course	Hidden Meadows Golf Course, Inc.	50.59
TOTAL		393.07

Table E-3: Conservation Lands in Town of Bethlehem

Conservation Lands	Owner	Area (acres)
Normanskill Preserve	MHLC	46.00
Pine Hollow Arboretum	Dr. John Abbuhl	32.11
Swift Preserve	MHLC	21.65
Phillipinkill Preserve	MHLC	19.84
Schiffendecker Farm Preserve	MHLC	38.80
Bioreserve (private)	Dennis O'Leary	68.10
Van Rensselaer Forest Wildlife Preserve [^] (private)	First Reformed Church of Bethlehem	88.21
Onesquethaw Creek Preserve	MHLC	15.80
Hollyhock Hollow Preserve	Audubon Society of NY	129.91
Fiver Rivers State Environmental Education Center	New York State	35.30
Scenic Hudson Lands (southeastern area of Town)	Scenic Hudson	260.20
SUNY Cortland Brauer Field Station (private)	SUNY Cortland	32.70
TOTAL		788.62

[^]Deed restriction on land protects from future development.

Note: Pine Hollow Arboretum, Bioreserve, SUNY Cortland Brauer Field Station are identified as conservation use by their respective landowner, currently not legally protected from future development thru easements or deed restrictions.

Table E-4: Town of Bethlehem Education Lands

Education Lands	Owner	Area (acres)
Slingerlands Elementary School	Bethlehem Central School District	14.47
Elsmere Elementary School	Bethlehem Central School District	6.52
Glenmont Elementary School	Bethlehem Central School District	17.83
Hamagrael Elementary School	Bethlehem Central School District	16.22
Becker Elementary School	Ravena-Coeymans-Selkirk School District	54.24
Bethlehem Middle School	Bethlehem Central School District	26.49
Eagle Elementary School	Bethlehem Central School District	20.49
Bethlehem High School	Bethlehem Central School District	134.20
TOTAL		290.46