

TOWN OF BETHLEHEM
BETHLEHEM 20/20 ADVISORY COMMITTEE
July 11, 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, Mort Borzykowski, John Clarkson, Steve Coffey, Joanne Cunningham, Lisa Evans, Cathy Griffin, Susan Hager, Terry Hannigan, Jim Lytle, John Piechnik, Ted Putney, Bob Verstandig, Jr., Christo Zemerling

Members Absent:

Peter Conway, Dick Kotlow, Pam Robbins, Patty Salkin, Brian Stenson, Suzanne Traylor, Bob Ward, Ann Wendth

Town Staff Members Present:

Supervisor Cunningham, Judi Kehoe, George Leveille, Kim Ryan, Gregg Sagendorph, Howard Hyer, Josh Cansler, Erik Deyoe,

1. **Co-Chair Report:**

- a. **June 13, 2008 Meeting Record:** The draft meeting record was approved without amendment.
- b. **Update on May Action Items:**
 - **NYS Commission on Local Government Efficiencies and Competitiveness:** Commission Executive Director and 20/20 member John Clarkson distributed a summary report of the Commission’s findings to the committee members.
 - **Finalize 20/20 Mission Statement:** The committee accepted the mission statement as complete.

2. **Presentation and Group Discussion; Financial Modeling Overview:** Rob Camoin and Michael N’Dolo of Camoin Associates made a power point presentation entitled “Finding the Balance: The Importance of Fiscal; Balance Considerations in Community Planning.” The following are highlights of the presentation and ensuing discussion:

- a. Using fiscal model as a tool for the planning process; not often used in NY so Bethlehem is ahead of the curve
- b. Currently, the town is at the “understanding future trends” stage
- c. Distinguishing between economic impacts (jobs, etc) and fiscal impacts (what impacts the local tax base, etc)
- d. 20/20 committee is making decisions that impact the future of the town’s fiscal status
- e. Case studies of communities around the country that are in a similar position: New Albany, OH and Montgomery, NY
- f. They will be doing trending, baseline establishment, looking at three different development scenarios and the impacts of each on fiscal status; Scenarios will look at

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high, medium, low rates of growth and land use scenarios (creating ratio of costs-to-benefits for each type of potential land use)

- g. The Town staff will be working to identify where infrastructure exists, where open parcels are, what historic trends are, etc to create realistic development scenarios
- h. Model will assist committee in assessing services and needs, prioritizing what to invest in, understanding the demographic realities of the town, and in finding an acceptable level of taxation
- i. Need to keep in mind what residents are willing to pay in order to maintain the quality of life that Bethlehem has - currently there is an approximate 80/20 (residential/farm to commercial/industrial) ration of assessed value, which probably needs to be better balanced
- j. The aging of the baby boomers and the implications this has for the housing market
- k. How does the community reconcile what might be competing goals of compact design and retail expansion?
- l. It is important to leverage existing resources; the Town has plenty of assets to build upon but better Thruway access is needed
- m. Need to maintain communications with the school districts; a presentation of the financial modeling might be worthwhile

3. **Group Discussion:**

- a. **Highway, Engineering and Public Works** The continuation of this discussion, which began at the June committee meeting, was prompted by the following question:

“What are the opportunities and constraints related to shared services and departmental cooperation/consolidation?”

A lengthy group discussion covered a variety of topics and ideas including, among other things, the following:

- What are the realities?
- Is the existing Highway site capable of handling combined operations? (Gregg S. responded no, materials could not be stored on site)
- Rt. 32 would be a good centralized location for the combined facility
- There are opportunities for consolidation but there are also some very specialized areas such as plant operations; labor and administration are opportunity areas
- Snow removal is an opportunity area that should be considered
- Are there high impact things that can be done?
- How important is the issue of elected versus non-elected Highway Superintendent? What are the major obstacles?

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- Are there issues to share with school districts?
 - It would be useful to benchmark data to prove capacity needs
 - Can information that the Town gathered regarding its competitive set be revisited?
 - The impression is that the Town is already fairly efficient and that we need to look at demand and establish a method for prioritization. Where is the biggest bang for the buck? Need a town-wide capital plan.
 - Have there been any conclusions reached about consolidation either internally or externally?
 - Where are the most productive areas to consider?
 - There is concern about consolidation that only serves to shift the burden from one taxing jurisdiction to another without achieving real cost benefits.
 - There is a need to benchmark against ourselves
- b. Committee Action Plan:** The discussion segued into a conversation about how the committee should approach issues like departmental consolidation. The co-chairs led a discussion about the outcomes of the 20/20 effort. Recommendations can't get stuck in the nitty gritty, they need to be on a more general level. The committee needs to sift through the information and create an action plan. The goal might be to create guiding principles so that the Town understands key community values when making an important decision. Staff was asked to develop an action plan that could be the basis for discussion at the August meeting. Committee needs to start looking at things a little more strategically

Action Items:

1. **August Meeting Date Change:** The August meeting date was moved from Friday, August 15 to Friday, August 22.
2. Staff to prepare and circulate a detailed action plan and revised schedule for completion of the 20/20 initiative
3. Staff will research competitive set information developed by the Town during the IMac initiative that was undertaken a couple of years ago.

Next Meeting:

Friday, August 22, 2008, Elsmere Fire Station, 7:30 – 9:15 a.m.

To submit comments and questions, contact:

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