



# Broome County Environmental Management Council

Debra A. Preston, County Executive

**Broome County Environmental Management Council (EMC)**  
**Notes from meeting held on Wednesday, October 10th, 2012 at 4:30pm**  
**Exhibit Room, Broome County Library**  
**185 Court Street, Binghamton, NY**

**Present:**

**MAL:** Bill Heaviside, Karen Ciatyk, Chris Burger, Marley Urdanick, Tony Lubzanski, Shelbi DuBord, Dylan Horvath

**CAC Reps:** Andre LaClair (Fenton) and Cindy Westerman (Vestal)

**Staff:** Beth Egitto

**Associate Members:** Adam Flint, Julia Hoover

**Others:** Frank Evangelisti (BC Planning) and Tom Evans (STERPDB)

1. The meeting was **convened at 4:30 pm.**
2. **Special Presentation: Broome County Comprehensive Plan - Frank Evangelisti and Beth Lucas, Broome County Planning**

Broome County has announced the development of its first countywide comprehensive plan since 1963. The plan will be developed over the course of a year, and will include ample opportunity for input by county residents. At this stage in the process the Planning Department is reaching out to the public and stakeholder groups to get an idea of how they see the County today and what the vision should be for the future. The presentation focused on a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) and visioning exercise in order to obtain feedback. See the attached notes for the discussion. The Planning Department also has created a survey to obtain feedback from the general public, available at <http://broomeplan.questionpro.com>.

Following the presentation there was a brief discussion about the Comprehensive Planning process. Frank indicated that by doing the plan in house there is a higher community investment, written specific to our area by staff that works locally. EMC members noted that it will be important to publicize the plan after it's completion and that the recommendations be carried through despite any future administrative changes.

### **3. Announcements /Privilege of the floor/ Items of Interest**

- As a follow up to the meeting from September from Diane Cohen from Finger Lakes ReUse, Shelbi indicated that Diane is looking into the possibility of developing another center in Broome County. She requested that anyone interested in participating or being kept in the loop submit their email.
- Beth reminded everyone that the Riverbank Clean-Up is being held on Saturday, October 20<sup>th</sup>. The EMC team will be led by Tim Wolcott, a former member-at-large. However, only one EMC member has signed up at this time. Beth circulated a sign up sheet.
- A public workshop is being this evening at the Chenango Town Hall for the Regional Sustainability Plan being developed for the Southern Tier Region through the Cleaner Greener Communities program. The meetings are aiming to get input for the prioritization of the long-term implementation plan and short-term actions proposed for the region.
- A notice was released stating that the invasive Emerald Ash Borer has been confirmed in Tioga County. It was found in a trap bringing the total to 13 counties where the EAB has been found.

### **4. Committee and CAC Updates**

- Natural Resources Committee – The group discussed NYS bill A1415 authorizing municipalities to provide a real property tax exemption for improvements to real property meeting certification standards for green buildings. There is some concern that increased tax bills due to higher assessments associated with these upgrades would diminish the benefit of the tax break and that this would discourage people from taking advantage of this opportunity. The group would like to consider a letter writing campaign regarding this issue. Although there is some concern that bringing it to the forefront will only make municipalities aware of an opportunity for revenue, when they may have been unaware in the first place. The topic will be discussed further at the next committee meeting.
- Vestal CAC – The CAC finished its report on the impact of hydrofracking in the Town. It was received well by the Town Board but has not been adopted. There was also some discussion about flooding impacts and dredging.
- Fenton CAC – The CAC continues working on objectives and goals of the Town’s Open Space Plan. The group began work on identifying sites for inclusion in Julian Shepherds Unique Natural Areas Inventory. However, they didn’t feel they had enough expertise regarding species identification. They have been in contact with Julian and have invited him to come discuss this at an upcoming meeting.

## **5. Membership and Administrative Items**

- Beth circulated a nomination ballot for the executive committee, along with a form for work plan and speaker ideas for 2013. She also distributed a list of items from the 2012 work plan. She requested that members think about these items and submit the forms to her at the November meeting. Voting will take place at the December meeting.
- 6.** The meeting was **adjourned at 6:15 pm**. The next meeting will be held on **November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2012 @ 4:30pm**.

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**October 10, 2012**

**SWOT Analysis**

**Strengths**

- People who have lived here a long time love the community and want to keep it that way. This is coming out a lot in the fracking debate
- Great parks, playgrounds and other amenities for families that are accessible and free or cheap
- No long commutes and the associated pressures on life
- Beautiful landscapes, comparable to other more noted areas such as the south of France
- Growing local business community, but relatively speaking not as high as other areas (partially a weakness)
- A large volunteer base
- The community is “right-sized” – enough people for real amenities but not so large that you have the large expenses and commuting times as larger cities.
- Rail provided opportunities for the future.
- Good public transportation/bus system
- Substantial archeological resources – Roberson/Public Archaeological Facility
- Many historic homes, but need to prevent them from getting so dilapidated that they can’t be saved.
- The Universities are continually growing
- Community provides for seniors – Senior centers/BC Transit
- Easy to get to other places – Finger Lakes, NYC, Poconos, Syracuse, etc.
- Affordable
- Good health system
- River systems provide beautiful topography and abundant clean water

**Weaknesses**

- Low energy level in the community
- There is a sense that local attitudes remain inflexible with resistance to change.
- Lack of leadership. “Old boys network”, lack of new ideas.
- River system is underutilized.
- Flooding impacts impact ability to maximize the use of rivers as an asset.
- Difficulty retaining youth/young families
- Low participation rates in the government/low activism, especially among young people
- Community lives in the past, things a big company is going to come rescue the local economy.
- Rail transport to other regions would make the area more accessible to bring people in.

- Albany
- Flood impacted areas are still sitting empty.
- Taxes
- Political inside deals - State aid isn't distributed widely and goes to the same big names.
- Fatalism – participation that public input isn't meaningful, even if it is just a perception it is a barrier, but in cases where it is reality it is worse
- Old housing and commercial building stock, many located on Brownfields
- Communities seem unwilling to cooperate and work together.

### **Opportunities**

- Binghamton Zoo – It is a nice place with a rich history but needs work and expansion to compete with other areas to become a real asset
- Large existing building stock
- Continue to reenergize downtowns
- Community planning – Use stories of best practices from other areas to implement them locally, capitalizing on their successes – generate economic activity and promote an improved quality of life
- Promote the removal of old, blighted buildings to improve community aesthetic, while providing work for local businesses. Building materials can be recycled for use in other construction projects. Programs to do this will remove vacant properties and reinvigorate neighborhoods.
- While larger technology corporations have reduced their presence locally, several small fragmented companies remain, retaining that expertise locally. The communities and universities can work to encourage that this type of expertise is fostered and remains here.
- The simulation/innovation theme is something that should be capitalized on as a local identity. Carousel Capitol is nice, but doesn't have as large of an appeal and impact.
- Planning for urban villages – local business promotion to ensure money is spent here instead of elsewhere keeping it in the local economy.
- Regional Sustainability Plan in development creates an opportunity to promote more sustainable programs and policies.

### **Threats**

- Potential impacts of gas drilling.
- Policies implemented by New York State with no assistance.
- The area is very flood prone.
- The area is struggling economically making it vulnerable to outside influences that offer short term economic gains.
- Being a transportation hub makes the area vulnerable to the influx of crime, drugs and prostitution.
- Climate change may lead to larger and more frequent flooding events.

- Energy price and energy availability – plants closing downstate may cause a drain on upstate resources.
- A lack of urgency about threats facing the community – energy, climate, economy, etc.

### **Visioning Exercise**

- Attractive
- Leader
- Resilient
- Productive
- Diverse
- Creative
- Think Tank
- Vibrant