

*David VanLuven*  
Town Supervisor

*Robert Leslie, AICP*  
Director of Planning

**TOWN OF BETHLEHEM**  
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TO: David VanLuven, Supervisor  
Town Board Members

FROM: Nate Owens, AICP

**RE: Request from Senior Planner for the Town Board to authorize the Supervisor to sign the grant agreement for the recently awarded NYSDEC Urban and Community Forestry Grant**

DATE: February 8, 2019

**Project Summary**

NYSDEC's Urban and Community Forestry Grants Program helps communities develop and implement comprehensive tree planting, management, maintenance, and education to create healthy forests while enhancing quality of life for residents. The award from NYSDEC of \$35,000 will allow the Town to hire a professional consultant to complete (a) a street tree inventory and (b) a community forest management plan (Project).

1. The **street tree inventory** will identify trees and their characteristics within the Town right-of-way in selected parts of town (see attached map) and assess potential risks to their health. The inventory will record specific tree characteristics including species, diameter, location, and condition. The inventory will also identify potential tree planting locations (gaps where trees may be needed). For reference purposes the inventory would be conducted generally 10 feet to 13 feet from the edge of pavement.
2. The consultant will work with the town to notify property owners along streets in the project area about the inventory prior to the survey beginning.
3. The **community forest management plan** will establish a vision for the community forest within the project area, identify strategies for the care of these trees, and outline potential actions to address risks to them.

This information will also be valuable for the existing Street Tree Planting Program, which has resulted in the planting of 60 trees over the last 5 years.

\*Note the grant award requires no monetary match contribution by the Town. Town Planning Staff will manage the project.

**Background/Need**

Bethlehem's main roadways were once heavily tree-lined, but over time some trees have been removed by the Town, County, and State and not replanted. A community's street tree canopy provide physical and mental health benefits, positive impacts on property values, improved salability of homes, shade and beautification, positive impacts on water quality and storm water management, mitigation of urban

heat island effects, and carbon dioxide storage. Given these benefits, it is important for the Town to identify and implement strategies for maintaining and enhancing our community forest in partnership with private landowners.

This project is consistent with goals and recommendations of the Town's:

- 2005 Comprehensive Plan
- 2009 Complete Streets Resolution
- 2009 Climate Smart Community Pledge
- 2011 Sustainable Bethlehem Initiative
- 2013 Comprehensive Plan Assessment Committee Report to Town Board
- [2014 Street Tree Program Resolution](#)

### **Process Overview**

1. The Town will solicit for and appoint members to an Advisory Committee that will provide guidance to town staff and the selected consultant.
2. Town staff and the Advisory Committee will prepare a request for proposals to conduct the street tree inventory and prepare the community forest management plan.
3. Town staff and the Advisory Committee will review proposals and recommend a professional consultant for approval by the Town Board.
4. We will hold a project Kick-Off (ideally in late April) to help publicize the project and showcase the Town's commitment to maintaining and enhancing our community forest.
5. Additional outreach and education efforts will be conducted through social media, e-newsletters, seasonal brochures, and a display board located either at the Bethlehem Public Library or at the Delmar Farmer's Market.

The project study area (see attached map) is broken into two areas. The primary study area is located along major roadways including Delaware Ave, Kenwood Ave, Elsmere Ave, and Feura Bush Rd, etc. If grant funds remain after the primary area has been inventoried, the consultant will inventory the secondary area within Olde Delmar. Town staff and the Advisory Committee will identify a tertiary area to inventory if funds remain after that.

After the community forest management plan has been prepared, a community meeting will be held to present the results of the inventory and to review the management plan. The term of the grant contract is through December 2020, although the project may be completed earlier. A more refined schedule will be provided to the Board once a consultant is selected.

### **Next Steps/Timeframe**

- Solicit for candidates and select Advisory Committee members – February/March 2019
- Appoint selected candidates to the Advisory Committee – March 2019
- Issue a Request for Proposals for the inventory and plan –April 2019
- Select the professional consultant – April/May 2019

Please contact me at x1155 if you have any questions or concerns.

Attachments

Cc: R. Leslie, R. Nagengast