

Meeting Notes
Marbletown Landowners Association (MLA)

December 6, 2006
John Behan, Behan Planning (for internal use only)

(Note: MLA secretary agreed to send us copy of the meeting minutes.)

1. John Behan distributed: open space questionnaires (did not get any back- most attendees had already seen/filled out the questionnaire), information on the new NYS law for increased tax benefits for donation of conservation easement, info on 480a, tax break for commercial forest land owners, and copies of the agricultural rating map.
2. Landowners concerned that increased property values are leading to increasingly unaffordable real property taxes (lot of frustration voiced). Long discussion on this. Three main outcomes:
 - a. Consider looking at existing tax breaks more closely (e.g. 480 a) and getting enrolled—and if the program does not work well—working with local and state officials to redesign the law to make more attractive.
 - b. Consider additional local program, e.g., term conservation easements. (Noted that this would require local support at the tax burden shifts more toward owners of developed land.)
 - c. Continue to develop support for property tax reform—esp. for funding of schools—toward a more income or capital flow (more fitting current economy) rather than land-based approach (which fit the older, more agrarian economy which is not the current economic base of the region, state or nation.)
3. Reviewed what we had heard to date from community and resource inventory to date.
4. Questions and discussion on who were the “willing landowners”. Participants questioned why do plan (and bond) without these. Discussed Behan observation that “willing landowner” is not a fixed object but a point of view that can change over time. John noted his experience in working with landowners who, at first, may not classify themselves as “willing landowners” so much as willing to listen and talk, and, who ultimately found conservation options valuable for them and ended up working out land conservation deals for their property that they were happy with. Suggested more could be done with landowner outreach for the plan.
5. Reviewed summary maps of priorities to date.
6. In conclusion, no major problems voiced over draft priorities maps. Group would like to know when copies of maps would be available on the web and when draft plan/public meetings are coming so they can continue to be involved. John invited back to future meeting.