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**Sent:** 6/11/2018 7:01:25 PM  
**To:** John Brown [brownie45959@gmail.com]; Fr. Michael Lasky [jpic@olaprovince.org]  
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**Subject:** Outcome of Saturday's Community Meeting at Mother Cabrini - Some Notes and a Tool  
**Attachments:** Shamokin Community Brainstorming Session - DG Notes 6-11-18.docx; Community Planning and Visioning Tool - Working Draft - 6-11-2018.docx

Dear Shamokin Community Stakeholders,

Thank you for the invitation to participate in your community brainstorming session this past Saturday. It was wonderful to witness how one idea generated a host of other ideas which raised the energy level and excitement among the participants. You all are off to a good start at mobilizing sectors of your community to enhance coordination and collaboration in order to improve the quality of life of your community. As we discussed, my office is working on the development of a "tool" (attached) to help communities think through some of the key elements of a plan and vision for the revitalization of their community. Although this document is still in the development stages, I understand your interest in possibly putting it to use now since you're in the midst of creating a community plan and vision. I'd be happy to review the information you develop using this document and provide you some feedback and assistance in its use.

Below (and attached) are some of the notes I took during the meeting. I look forward to seeing the more expansive notes, which I believe Brother Tim, Father Mike's summer assistant, plans to develop for the meeting.

I. Community Issues and Interests:

a. Blighted Property

- Plan to inventory the abandoned and blighted properties throughout the town
- Develop a strategy for where, when and how to clean-up/address blighted areas in town (e.g. focus on gateway to town or downtown to enhance the appeal and ability of folks to see improvements taking place, which is needed to stimulate interest and support for the work)
- Town of Mount Carmel has an online tool for identifying and documenting their blighted properties, which was developed by Bucknell students in their partnership with the town. Perhaps this tool can be easily adapted for Shamokin.

b. Farmers Market

- Town use to have a viable farmers' market, but many farmers departed since it became unprofitable (not enough sustained business)
- Other reasons for farmers' departures
  - o Not enough stores downtown to draw clientel (too many vacant storefronts)
  - o Many elderly, who were the primary customers, stopped coming since it was too difficult to travel to location due to lesser mobility
  - o Vendors were forced to set up early (by the City govt.) even though customers would not normally arrive until 9:00 AM
  - o Forced to shut down early, by 11:30 AM, thereby reducing the hours to sell.
  - o Forced to pay meters and therefore adding costs
  - o Would like to see a farmers' market return

c. Community Gardens

- Perhaps some of the clean-up blighted properties can be turned into community garden areas
- Perhaps an assessment can be conducted to:
  - i. determine blighted property locations that would be good for possible community garden locations
  - ii. interest of community to have and participate in community gardens

- iii. determine the type of food desirable to grow in the community gardens, including possibly flowers for the beautification of the downtown area.
    - iv. Food grown could possibly be sold in the town's reestablished farmers' market
  - d. Improving Access and Use of Downtown by ATV Trail Users
    - Assess the best location for trails into the town from ATV trails to identify best ways to enable ATV uses to access and use service in town
    - Determine best ways to advertise and obtain input from ATV trail users on what they'd like to see offered in the town and what would appeal to them, to lead them to come into town and use services.
    - Develop an urban plan for the town's roads and access trails to make them more accessible, appealing and useful
  - e. Outlook of Community
    - Need to be sure that we not fall victim to the philosophy "that is the way we've always done it" in order to be creative and stimulate interest and energy in helping move the community forward and improve our quality of life.
  - f. Entrepreneur Laboratory
    - Assess the viability of using the "Jones Building" to create an entrepreneur center for residents, businesses, organizations, etc. to create business, product or service ideas to be housed or evolve from Shamokin.
  - g. Youth Engagement and Involvement
    - Important to involve youth in the community revitalization effort
    - Seek to identify a few youth to invite to the next community brainstorming, planning and visioning meeting (middle school age, high school age, college age, and young adults professionals – 22 to 30 year olds)
  - h. Skating Park
    - To support some of the youths' interests, consider creating a skate park
    - Perhaps on or more of the blighted properties can be converted into a skating park.
    - Invite the interested youth to participate in the planning and design of the park, along with the fundraising efforts (and support these efforts).
    - A grant from Tony Hawk's company/philanthropic organizations may help fund this park.
  - i. Acid Mine Drainage impacts on Creeks and Streams in Shamokin
    - Some work has been done in the past to remediate some of the AMD that has polluted the creeks and streams that run through the town of Shamokin.
    - Assessment needed on what is being done, what still needs to be done, and what steps are needed to complete the remediation of AMD that affects the town of Shamokin and the streams that travel through the town.
    - Research needed on what programs and resources exist within the state and federal governments to support cleanup and remediation of AMD sites.

## 2. Collaboration with Universities

- a. Bucknell University is committed to work with the City of Shamokin
  - Ideas are being generated for the possible projects for the students to conduct during the academic year.
  - Many of the needs identified above to address community interests and concerns can serve as the foundation for some of these student projects.
- b. Shepherd High Education Consortium on Poverty, a consortium of over 30 colleges and universities throughout the United States, has expressed an interest in working with the town of Shamokin, and the various organizations and partners who are working to revitalize the community.
  - Students from the universities participate in 8 week long internships in various communities to provide assistance it addressing specific needs identified by the communities
  - The Franciscan's have committed, and have already begun, to renovate an abandoned rectory (Our Lady of Hope) in the town to serve as the housing quarters for the students over the summer.
  - Will seek organizations within the community who would be in hosting an intern for next summer.

- Shepherd Higher Education Consortium has a website with lots of tools for their internship program – [www.shepherdconsortium.org/about-internships/program-details/](http://www.shepherdconsortium.org/about-internships/program-details/)

### 3. Collaboration with Federal Agencies

- Federal agencies have been working with vulnerable and underserved communities for years, and a special emphasis on addressing the environmental, public health and other related issues of communities has been occurring through the federal government’s environmental justice program.
- Recently, federal agencies have enhanced their efforts to collaborate with faith-based organizations and leaders, given the key role they play in helping their communities address their needs, including environmental and public health needs.
- Franciscan friars invited EPA to participate in their work in Shamokin as an outgrowth of a symposium sponsored by the Franciscans on Faith-Based Engagement and Collaboration with Federal Agencies on Addressing the Needs of Vulnerable Communities, held in April 2018.
- EPA is working with various federal agencies through the Federal Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice, to assist vulnerable and underserved communities in their efforts to revitalize their communities and address their range of quality of life concerns.
- EPA’s involvement in this collaborative effort with various stakeholders in Shamokin, with the Franciscans providing some of the facilitation and organization support, serves to provide space for the Agency, along with other agencies, to identify how best to support faith-based efforts to work within vulnerable and underserved communities for their revitalization and enhancement of their quality of life.
- President Trump’s recent Executive Order, issued 5/3/18, supports this focus on faith-based/interfaith and federal interagency collaboration to assist vulnerable/underserved communities.

### 4. President Trump’s Executive Order on the Establishment of a White House Faith and Opportunity Initiative, signed on 5/3/18, which is the third iteration of Presidential EOs (Bush, Obama and now Trump), which calls for the expansion of federal agencies engagement with faith leaders/faith-based organization. Some sections which pertain to the collaborative work in Shamokin are as follows (some text is underlined to particular highlight sections relevant to the work in Shamokin):

- Section 1. Policy. Faith-based and community organizations have tremendous ability to serve individuals, families, and communities through means that are different from those of government and with capacity that often exceeds that of government. These organizations lift people up, keep families strong, and solve problems at the local level. The executive branch wants faith-based and community organizations, to the fullest opportunity permitted by law, to compete on a level playing field for grants, contracts, programs, and other Federal funding opportunities. The efforts of faith-based and community organizations are essential to revitalizing communities, and the Federal Government welcomes opportunities to partner with such organizations through innovative, measurable, and outcome-driven initiatives.
- Section 3 (a)(ii) The Initiative shall, from time to time and consistent with applicable law, consult with and seek information from experts and various faith and community leaders from outside the Federal Government, including those from State, local, and tribal governments,...
- 3(a)(iv) Executive departments and agencies (agencies) that lack a Center for Faith and Opportunity Initiative shall designate a Liaison for Faith and Opportunity Initiatives as a point of contact to coordinate with the Advisor in carrying out this order.
- 3 (b)(v) showcase innovative initiatives by faith-based and community organizations that serve and strengthen individuals, families, and communities throughout the United States;

Please let me know if you have any questions, and how I can be of further assistance.

Thank you,

Danny

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**Subject:** Re: Thoughts to prepare for Saturday's Meeting at Mother Cabrini

My apologies for not making Saturday's meeting. I did not leave my couch much for three days as I was sick with whatever type of respiratory sickness is going around. I don't like to miss out on community connections. I have yet to speak with Chief Tobias, but I assume that all went well. I will try to catch up on anything that you covered and look forward to meeting with you in the future. Please let me know of any future events.

Thank you, John J. Brown

On Thu, Jun 7, 2018 at 12:15 PM, Fr. Michael Lasky <jpic@olaprovince.org> wrote:

Dear Friends,

Peace and Goodness.

With this email I would like to advance an agenda for our meeting this coming Saturday 9 June from 9-11:30am at Mother Cabrini Parish.

There are three topics needing our attention:

1. Brainstorming of ideas for collaborative projects with Bucknell University
2. Proposed relationship with the Shepherd Higher Education Consortium
3. Conversation with Danny Gogal of the EPA and possible access to federal resources

One of the overall questions to wrestle with is: ***What is the vision of the community at large?*** As the answer to this questions begins to take shape, so too will the possibilities hoped for in the above three topics.

Concerning #1, Judy Surak of Mother Cabrini Parish is unable to attend our meeting, but she wanted to share her thoughts. Please find attached Judy's brainstorming ideas/dreams for the community.

Concerning #2, when the friars were first approached by the folk in Mt. Carmel and at Bucknell, they brought along the director of the Shepherd Higher Education Consortium. This is a partnership of universities across the country that work to alleviate poverty through student immersion service learning summer internship programs. We have been invited to be considered as a placement site (beginning in 2019) for 5-7 students

working in the area in 4 areas: Health & Wellness, Education & Youth, Legal (such as helping public defenders work on domestic violence cases), and finally Individual & Community Services.

**By the end of June we would need to be able to identify the following:**

- List of Agencies/Partner Contacts
- Existing Organizations & Management Structures for the running of a base community
- Local Support Structure for the students

To assist in our gathering our thoughts and ideas before our Saturday morning gathering, you can connect to the Consortium and explore their website through this link: <https://www.shepherdconsortium.org>

Concerning #3, Danny Gogal will be with us, and there are two document which he had forward to me for our consideration.

If you have any thoughts or questions, please do not hesitate to ask. Later this evening and all day tomorrow I will be at the Shepherd Higher Education Consortium Conference in Arlington VA. (I'm lucky that this years event is just across the river from me!)

Peace,  
Friar Michael

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