



Bethlehem's Conservation Easement Exemption Program

Environmental conservation is happening in Bethlehem!

As you may have heard, Bethlehem's new **Conservation Easement Exemption Program (CEE)** is well on its way to preserving natural open spaces in our town through voluntary private landowner participation. We are delighted to report that several of your conservation-minded neighbors are interested in preserving their private land consisting of open space in our town that includes important ecological areas, such as forests, wetlands, streams, and a section of wooded riverbank along the Hudson River.

These Bethlehem property owners wish to keep their land out of development for a certain period of time, or in perpetuity, so that their land will continue to provide important open space benefits to the town. These benefits include protecting wildlife habitat and water quality, flood protection, as well as protecting the community character and scenic views in our town. In exchange for their conservation commitment, these residents will receive a percentage reduction in their annual local taxes – **helping them to save nature while saving money.**

Bethlehem's Conservation Easement Exemption Program is intended to serve as a financial incentive tool to help interested private landowners conserve their open space lands through a program that will ultimately benefit both the landowner (percentage tax relief) and the town (conserving beneficial open space). This cooperative program invites willing private landowners, with five acres or more, to apply to conserve their land in partnership with the town, with a Conservation Easement.

Financial incentives for conserving land:

The program can provide a significant financial incentive for interested open space landowners by offering a **property tax exemption of 50% to 90%**, depending on the chosen conservation time commitment. Property owners applying for the exemption choose to commit to a Conservation Easement for a minimum of 15 years and up to perpetuity.

The tax exemption currently applies to Town and Bethlehem Central school taxes, as well as Albany County taxes.

Term (yrs.)	Exemption
15 – 29	50%
30 – 49	75%
50 – 75	85%
Perpetual	90%

How to apply to the CEE program:

Landowner applications for the program are accepted on a rolling basis throughout the year. Interested landowners with five acres or more of undeveloped land in the town are encouraged to discuss land conservation opportunities with Rob Leslie, Director of Planning at 518-439-4955 x 1157, rl Leslie@townofbethlehem.org. Also, find our Conservation Easement Exemption Program Booklet, Frequently Asked Questions, and Landowner Application at: www.townofbethlehem.org (click on *Open Space Planning* tab and scroll down for an *electronic application form*).

Thank you! Implementing this new conservation tool is a cooperative effort; thank you to all landowners who collectively help to make this environmental conservation program a success. Thank you also to the five voluntary members of the **Conservation Easement Review Board**, who provide support and expertise in

program implementation: *Maureen Cunningham, Stuart Lyman, Joseph Castiglione, John Sherman, and Joseph Martens (Chairperson).*

