

Landowner options. Community benefits.

As you may have heard, Bethlehem's **Conservation Easement Exemption Program** 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 Bethlehem's community members have chosen to conserve their private forests, fields, and farmlands, with almost 50 acres of land now voluntarily protected.

These Bethlehem property owners continue to own their land, but have committed to a Conservation Easement with the Town. In the Conservation Easement, the landowner agrees to keep their land out of development for a certain period of time (from 15 years up to forever) so that their land will continue to provide important open space benefits.

In exchange for their conservation commitment, these residents receive a reduction in their annual local taxes. Community benefits include protecting wildlife habitat, water quality, flood protection, and protecting the community character that makes our town so unique. The landowners continue to own and enjoy their land.

Helping landowners save nature while saving their tax dollars.

Financial incentives for conserving land:

Bethlehem's Conservation Easement Exemption Program is intended to serve as a financial incentive tool to help interested private landowners conserve their open space land (forests, fields, farms) through a program that ultimately benefits both the landowner (percentage tax relief—see table below) and the community as a whole (conserving natural resources and protecting community character).

This cooperative program invites interested private landowners, with 5 acres or more of undeveloped land, to apply to conserve their land in partnership with the town with a term Conservation Easement.

Table below shows potential savings:

Conservation Term (yrs.)	Tax Exemption for landowner
15 – 29	50%
30 – 49	75%
50 – 75	85%
Perpetual (forever)	90%

Bethlehem's Conservation

Easement Exemption program can provide significant financial incentives for interested farmers and 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 Albany County taxes, as well as Bethlehem Central school taxes.** (Note: other school districts in Town have the opportunity to participate, but have not yet chosen to do so).

Applications are simple (one-page!)

Need assistance? The Town's Open Space Coordinator is happy to help!

Karen Shaw: 518-439-4955 x 1106
kshaw@townofbethlehem.org



How do I apply to the CEE program?

The Conservation Easement Exemption Program is an option under the Town's larger **Farms and Forests Conservation Program**. Landowner applications for this program are accepted on an ongoing basis throughout the year. Interested landowners with 5 acres or more of farmland or open space can apply anytime by completing the Town's:

Conservation Project Landowner Application.

Available online:

www.townofbethlehem.org

Search: Conservation Project Landowner Application

Pick up at Town Hall: at the information display table on the first floor and at the second floor Planning Department office.

Questions? We're here to help!

⇒ **Rob Leslie**, Director of Planning

518-439-4955 x 1157

rleslie@townofbethlehem.org

⇒ **Karen Shaw**, Open Space Coordinator

518-439-4955 x 1106

kshaw@townofbethlehem.org

www.townofbethlehem.org

"For us, the Bethlehem Conservation Easement Exemption program was a no-brainer. We enjoy looking out our window and seeing this 11-acre forest, unencumbered by houses, street lights, driveways and cars, knowing that the land is home to countless wildlife and plant species, a pristine creek, wetlands, and tranquil solitude..."

**Your land.
Your legacy.
Your choice.**

We decided to conserve our forest in perpetuity, which gave us a 90% tax exemption on this land."

- Bethlehem CEE landowner

Thank you! Implementing this

voluntary farmland, forest, and open space conservation tool is a cooperative effort. Thank you to all farmers and landowners who collectively help to make this environmental conservation program a success for both landowners and the larger community.

Thank you also to the five voluntary members of the **Conservation Easement Review Board**, who provide support and expertise in program implementation.



Town of Bethlehem

Farms and Forests Conservation Program

Conservation Easement Exemption Program

**Local Voluntary Landowner
Conservation**

**A tax savings and
land conservation program.**

