



Volume I Issue 10

Town of Bethlehem e-Newsletter

November 2007

445 Delaware Avenue, Delmar, NY 12054
518.439.4955

www.townofbethlehem.org

Town Board

Jack Cunningham, Supervisor
Dan Plummer, Board Member
Sam Messina, Board Member
Kyle Kotary, Board Member
Joann Dawson, Board Member

November Meeting Schedule

All meetings are held at the Town Hall unless otherwise indicated

**Move Clocks Back One Hour - Check
Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detectors**
Sunday, November 4

Zoning Board of Appeals
Wednesday, November 7, 7:00 p.m.

Waterfront Advisory Committee
Wednesday, November 7, 7:00 p.m.

Planning Board
Tuesday, November 13, 7:00 p.m.

Town Board
Wednesday, November 14, 6:00 p.m.

Development Planning Committee
Thursday, November 15, 10:00 a.m.

CACC
Monday, November 19, 7:30 p.m.

Industrial Development Agency
Tuesday, November 20, 8:00 a.m.

Planning Board
Tuesday, November 20, 7:00 p.m.

Zoning Board of Appeals
Wednesday, November 21, 7:00 p.m.

Town Board
Wednesday, November 28, 6:00 p.m.

For agendas, please see:

www.townofbethlehem.org/pages/agenda/agenda.asp

This year, Daylight Savings Time began earlier than usual and, this month, it will end later than usual. Please remember to not only turn your clocks BACK one hour on Sunday morning, November 4, but also to replace the batteries in your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Right along those lines, as the cold weather approaches, please be aware of potential hazards, some not so obvious, this could bring. The Bethlehem Emergency Management Office has important information regarding carbon monoxide hazards later in this newsletter. Also, the Town's web site has links to other web sites that provide weather and road conditions (including construction and real-time traffic cameras) at www.townofbethlehem.org/pages/links/roadWeather.asp.

There will be a Health Fair at Town Hall on Friday, November 16. This event is open to all residents, all ages are welcome! Included will be a flu shot clinic and health screenings. The Bellevue Hospital Mobile Mammography coach will also be here along with a number of community organizations available to answer your questions on such items as Veterans' benefits, hospice care, prescription coverage for the elderly and more. [Click here for a printable flyer](#) with more information.

The 35th Annual Equinox Thanksgiving Day Community Dinner will be held on Thursday, November 22 at the First Presbyterian Church located at 362 State Street in Albany. I am proud to say, our [Senior Services Department](#) is offering home delivery to senior town residents unable to attend but who wish to receive a meal. For more information, please contact Senior Services at 439-4955, extension 1176 - reservations must be made by November 16th.



The Town's Fall Pick-up Program, more commonly referred to as Leaf Collection, has begun. From mid-October through mid-November, the Highway Department collects fallen leaves, grass clippings, and tree branches (four feet or less). Leaves must be placed in reusable containers or paper bags (sold at Town Hall, the Highway Department, Elm Avenue Park and the Rupert Road Transfer Station) or piled neatly along the sides of the road, not so high or so wide as to obstruct roadways or line of sight and not in the roadway itself. Placing debris into the roadway constitutes a violation of the Vehicle and Traffic law as well as creates a hazardous situation for pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular traffic. Please make sure that storm sewer inlets are also kept clean of leaves and branches to ensure proper drainage. To help give residents a general idea of when to expect leaf collection in their area of Town, a tentative pick-up schedule is posted on our web site and is updated daily, please see "Tentative Leaf Pickup Schedule" on the [Highway Department's web page](#). Please note that weather conditions play a major role in the adherence to the schedule.

I had the privilege of swearing in Gerald Young as a Town of Bethlehem Police Officer on October 15th. Gerald Young comes to the Bethlehem Police Department with over eleven years of Law Enforcement experience, the last seven of which were with the City of Troy Police Department. In addition to the more standard police disciplines, Officer Young has had assignments as an Evidence Technician, Field Training Officer, and Mobile Command Center Operator. Officer Young also served three years as an investigator with the Rensselaer County Drug Task Force.



In addition to the NYS DOT Roundabout presentation in February and two presentations given by the Region 1 Director of Transportation Planning in September and October, we posted an aerial map of the Route 85 work on our web site in May which can be seen at www.townofbethlehem.org/pages/EcoDevPlan/edpPlanning.asp#HamletStudies and provided links to the NYS DOT web site in previous e-Newsletters (<https://www.nysdot.gov/portal/page/portal/main/roundabouts>). We hope this information has helped in informing you of the progress of this work as well as what to expect when it is finished. As the completion of the new roundabouts gets closer, I'd like to remind you that we have information that may ease drivers' concerns about these new traffic patterns. The booklet, "A Citizen's Guide to Roundabouts", is available in the Senior Services Office at the Town Hall and we have color-coded diagrams of the [Cherry Avenue/New Scotland Road](#) and [Blessing Road](#) roundabouts available on our web site. Please note, the roundabouts in town are located on State roads and are not maintained by the town.

Happy Thanksgiving!

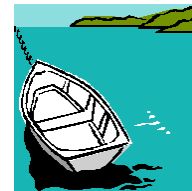
CACC Corner



In an effort to provide information about the Citizens Advisory Committee on Conservation (CACC) to Town residents, news of our activities will now appear in the monthly e-Newsletter in a series called "CACC Corner". Currently, we are providing articles that discuss open space protection funding opportunities and tools that are applicable to the Town of Bethlehem. The articles are derived from the CACC's, "Open Space Protection Programs – Funding and Tools Report to the Town Board", prepared in October 2006 and can be found at the bottom of the following web page:

<http://www.townofbethlehem.org/pages/AdvisoryComs/advCACC.asp>

Drafting and refining the report was a careful and methodical process driven by many exchanges of ideas and facts; and therefore, each topic article will appear as originated in the Report. This month the Corner continues to discuss Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) and Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement (PACE).



PURCHASE OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS (PDR) & PURCHASE OF AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION EASEMENTS (PACE)- PART B

Donated agricultural conservation easements that meet Internal Revenue Code section 170 (h) criteria are treated as charitable gifts. Donors can deduct the value of the easement up to 30 percent of their adjusted gross income in the year of the gift. Corporations are limited to a 10-percent deduction. Easement donations in excess of the annual limit can be applied toward federal income taxes for the next five years, subject to the same stipulations.

Individuals interested in tax reduction information should contact a tax professional to advise them specifically. Generally speaking, New York state tax codes direct local tax assessors to consider the restrictions imposed by a conservation easement. This provision generally lowers property taxes on restricted parcels if the land is not already enrolled in a differential assessment program (and, sometimes, even if it is already enrolled). Differential assessment programs direct local tax assessors to assess land at its value for agriculture or forestry, rather than its "highest and best" use, which is generally for residential, commercial or industrial development. The donation or sale of an agricultural conservation easement usually reduces the value of land for estate tax purposes. To the extent that the restricted value is lower than fair market value, the estate will be subject to a lower tax. In some cases, an easement can reduce the value of an estate below the level that is taxable, effectively eliminating any estate tax liability. However, as federal estate tax thresholds increase, there may be less incentive from an estate tax perspective.

Recent changes to federal estate tax law, enacted as part of the Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001, expanded an estate tax incentive for landowners to grant conservation easements. The new law removes geographic limitations for donated conservation easements eligible for estate tax benefits under Section 2031(c) of the tax code. Executors can elect to exclude forty percent (40%) of the value of land subject to a donated qualified conservation easement from the taxable estate. This exclusion is limited to \$500,000. The full benefit offered by the new law is available for easements that reduce the fair market value of a property by at least thirty percent (30%). Smaller deductions are available for easements that reduce property value by less than thirty percent (30%). By reducing non-farm development land values, conservation easements may help farmers and ranchers transfer their operations to the next generation.

New York State landowners whose land is restricted by a donated conservation easement also receive an annual, refundable state income tax credit equal to 25% of the combined town, county, and school taxes paid on the land during the previous tax year.

The Conservation Easement Tax Credit recognizes the ongoing public benefits provided by privately owned land that is permanently protected by a conservation easement. It helps landowners bear the annual costs of providing these public benefits by offering a state income tax credit for an equivalent portion of the property taxes paid on the protected land.

New York land trusts report that the lack of property tax relief is the single greatest barrier to easement donations. The Conservation Easement Tax Credit lowers that barrier. The Conservation Easement Tax Credit is the first program of its kind in the nation, providing not only tax relief, but also an incentive for landowners to annually recognize and abide by the terms of their easements.

The Conservation Easement Tax Credit's greatest impact will be on landowners such as farmers and retirees who have modest incomes and are unlikely to benefit significantly from existing tax deductions. It will provide them with an incentive to make a gift of perpetually conserved land that they otherwise could not afford to make. However, this is not true of farmers who make the majority of their income from farming, as they get a school tax credit from NYS for the full amount of school taxes paid.

Advantages to Town of PDR/PACE/Tax Credits:

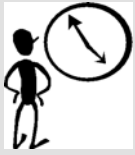
1. Flexible, and can be tailored to meet the needs of individual farmers and unique properties.
2. Results in no revenue loss to municipalities or schools – if the assessment doesn't change.

Disadvantages to Town of PDR/PACE/Tax Credits:

1. Monitoring and enforcing conservation easements requires a serious commitment on the part of the easement holder, as it requires an investment of time and resources.
2. Demand for programs outstrips availability of funds.
3. PDR/PACE process can be time consuming.
4. May result in revenue loss to municipalities or schools if assessment is lowered and there is not a concomitant reduction in the cost of public services attributable to the property.

Note to Reader: The discussion of these tools has been separated into two parts so as to maintain the text as it originated in the Funding Report. Part A (as provided in this issue) defines and discusses the procedures, while Part B, which will be provided in the November e-Newsletter issue, discusses the tax and financial matters of this tool.

CACC Corner is an ongoing series of articles by the Citizens Advisory Committee on Conservation (CACC) discussing its recent activities. Look here each month for a new conservation topic of interest.



REMINDER: Daylight Savings Time ends on **Sunday, November 4 at 2:00 a.m.** Move your clocks **BACK** one hour. This is also a great time to test and change the batteries in your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.

News from BEMO
Bethlehem Emergency Management Office

The following is a press release issued by the State Emergency Management Office (SEMO). For a link to the SEMO web site along with other vital hazard information, please visit the town's Emergency Management Office's web page at <http://www.townofbethlehem.org/pages/depServices/emergencyMan.asp>.

NEW YORKERS WARNED OF DANGERS OF CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING

Citizens urged to "Be Prepared" for challenges of winter months ahead

As colder weather becomes the norm in the Northeast, John R. Gibb, Director of the New York State Emergency Management Office (SEMO), today encouraged New Yorkers to make sure their home heating systems are working to ensure their safety throughout the winter heating season to avoid the perils of carbon monoxide poisoning.

"Carbon monoxide poisoning is a silent, deadly killer that claims about 1,000 lives each year in the United States," Gibb said. "There are some simple common sense steps New Yorkers should take to protect themselves and loved ones over the coming winter months."

The Director issued this advice to combat carbon monoxide poisoning as part of SEMO's annual winter preparedness message in advance of New York State's observance of Winter Weather Awareness Week, which runs from Sunday, October 28, through November 3.

Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless gas that can be produced by such common items as home heating systems, obstructed chimneys and automotive exhaust. The gas can also be produced by poorly vented generators, kerosene heaters, gas grills and other cooking and heating items when used improperly during the winter months.

"Have a professional check out the furnace, woodstove and chimney to ensure that they are in good working order," Gibb advised. "Make sure the flue is clear. Never run generators indoors and open a window slightly when using a kerosene heater."

He also said that people should never use charcoal to cook indoors and never use a gas oven to heat the residence.

"Most importantly, make sure that you have carbon monoxide, smoke and heat detectors properly installed in your home and test the batteries," he said. The Director pointed out that the changing of the clocks on November 4 for the end of Daylight Saving Time is the perfect occasion to put new batteries in both smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.

The SEMO Director also urged New Yorkers to have their motor vehicles thoroughly inspected before the start of the winter driving season, including their exhaust systems. "As the weather turns colder, never run a motor vehicle in a closed garage," he said.

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include sleepiness, headaches and dizziness. Gibb said that if you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning, ventilate the area and get to a hospital.

Referring to the Western New York ice storm and the lake-effect snows in Central New York that occurred last winter, Gibb reminded New Yorkers that winter storms can come at any time and not to wait for the official start of winter on December 22.

"That's why it makes sense to prepare ourselves, our homes and our vehicles for winter now," he said. "And that includes changing our mindset that we need to slow down on the road and drive according to the weather conditions."

Gibb urged citizens to develop an emergency plan for home and at work, know who to call and where to go in case of emergency, prepare a portable cache of emergency supplies, and "winterize" their vehicles.

He advised citizens to be aware of local weather conditions by listening to local television and radio stations or the NOAA Weather Radio and then plan activities accordingly.

"Motorists should drive with extreme care during the winter," Gibb said. "When severe weather is forecast, stay at home unless you absolutely have to drive. If you must go out, plan your stops, clean the vehicle completely of snow and ice, and always match your speed to road conditions."

Finally, he emphasized that winter is especially challenging for the elderly and physically disabled. "Keep an eye on your neighbor and be prepared to lend a helping hand," he said. "With a bit of planning and by using some common sense, this winter will be safer and more enjoyable for everyone."

For more information on how individuals can be better prepared for emergencies and for winter safety tips, visit the SEMO website at www.semo.state.ny.us.



Did You Know?



To comply with the New York State Fire Prevention and Building Codes, **all new and existing residential and commercial buildings are required to display a legible street number that is visible from the street or road fronting the property.** For private residences that sit back off the road where the home is not visible, they may be attached to a post or mailbox at the road's edge. For commercial buildings, the numbers may be mounted to the building or to a permanently installed freestanding sign. These numbers shall be of a contrasting color from the background on which they are mounted. Each number must be a minimum of four inches in height and one-half inch in width but the larger the better. The numbers should be installed where they are not blocked by shrubbery, trees, snow, holiday decorations or other obstructions. It is also beneficial if they are installed near light fixtures so the numbers can be illuminated after dark.

Senior Services News

Friday, November 16 - Community Health Fair - All Ages Welcome! This will be held in the auditorium at Town Hall, 445 Delaware Avenue in Delmar from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Please [click here for a printable flyer](#) with more information.

Thursday, November 30 - Senior Legal Services Program at Town Hall. The Senior Legal Services Program provides legal services for residents of Albany County who are 60 years of age or older. The program is funded by the Albany County Department for Aging and is staffed through the Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York, Inc. **There is no cost for this program** but appointments are needed and can be made by calling Bethlehem Senior Services at 439-4955, extension 1176. This is an ongoing program so please be sure to pick up a copy of the newsletter every two months in the Senior Services Department or [view/print on-line](#).

Please note the changes in the transportation schedule due to holidays in November and December! There will be transportation for voting only, on the morning of Tuesday, November 6th. There will be no transportation on Monday, November 12th, Thursday, November 22nd, Friday, November 23rd and December 24th, 2007 through and including January 1st, 2008.

To see all of the interesting activities, events, programs and services provided by Town's Senior Services department, pick up a copy of the bi-monthly Senior Services newsletter at the Senior Services Department, Room 110 at the Town Hall, on Senior Services transportation vehicles or on the Town's web site at <http://www.townofbethlehem.org/pages/depServices/seniorServices.asp#Brochures>.

Not just for Seniors!

Some programs may have age restrictions, many do not (for example, Food Pantry, LawHelp/NY, volunteers, Caregiver programs), please call for specifics, 439-4955. In order to participate in any programs or to volunteer, an [Intake Form](#) MUST be filled out first. Intake forms are available in the Senior Services office or [on the Town's web site](#).

Telephone/E-mail Directory Added to Town Web Site

As part of an ongoing effort to help make Town Government more open and accessible to residents, the Town's web site has been updated to include a Telephone/E-mail Directory. Two directories are available from the [Contact Us](#) page, a Directory by Department and an Alphabetical Directory by Town personnel name. The directories include staff members' name, job title and phone number. Clicking on the name will provide a direct link to the staff member's e-mail address (if available).



Town Offices are Closed on Monday, November 12

Thursday, November 22 and Friday, November 23



Parks and Recreation Department News

SCREAMS – Guptils Roller Skating

Students Craving Really Exciting Activities at the Middle School

SCREAMS will be going to Guptils Roller Rink for some Roller Skating on Friday, November 16th. Registration is for all middle school students who reside in the Town of Bethlehem or the Bethlehem School District. Flyers will be distributed at the Middle School in early November, flyers will also be available at the Park office or visit the town website, <http://www.townofbethlehem.org/pages/parks/parksPgms.asp#SCREAMS>



American Red Cross Babysitting Course

If you are age 11 or older, registration is still open for the December 1st American Red Cross babysitting course in the Town Hall Auditorium, 9:00 AM – 5:00PM. Certification is received upon completion of the course. Bring a bag lunch. Please call the Park office to register, 439-4955 opt. 3



Dog Park Tag Price Reduced

Beginning October 1 the fee for a Dog Park tag is \$15 and is valid through December 31, 2007. Tags are available at the Town Clerk's office.

Winter Lifeguard Positions Available

The Parks and Recreation Department is currently looking for lifeguards for two morning aquatic programs, Adult Water Workout and Lunchtime Lap Swim. These programs meet at the High School pool on Monday, Wednesday & Friday from 9 AM – 12 noon, Beginning January thru March. For further information please contact Jason Gallo, at 439-4955 x 1604 or email at jgallo@townofbethlehem.org.



Did You Know?



Bethlehem Police have partnered with project ChildSafe, an expansion of project HomeSafe, as part of a nationwide initiative to raise awareness about safe and responsible firearm ownership and storage. Designed to make homes with firearms safer, Bethlehem Police will be offering, at no charge, gunlocks to those who want them. Project ChildSafe is funded by a \$5 million grant from the United States Department of Justice and managed by the National Shooting Sports Foundation.

Gun locks are available at the Bethlehem Police Station, 447 Delaware Avenue, Delmar, the Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall, 445 Delaware Avenue, or by calling the Police Department Family Services Unit at 439-9973.

Those requesting gunlocks will not be asked to fill out or sign any documents. For more information on the Project ChildSafe program, please visit their website at <http://www.projectchildsafefirearms.org>

Tax Office Information

Responsibilities of Office of Receiver of Taxes



The Receiver of Taxes in the Town of Bethlehem is responsible for collection of Town and County taxes. In addition, the Receiver of Taxes must collect school taxes, water rents, sewer rents, building permit fees and other fees and charges payable to the town. The Receiver is the insurer and guarantor of all moneys, books, papers, and records that the law provides. The Receiver is responsible for mailing of 13,000 tax bills 2 times a year. Homeowners' files are constantly changed with the current bank information for new owners, refinances, paid off mortgages or name changes.

The Tax Office is happy to answer any questions. We can confirm your annual taxes, prior taxes paid, water payment questions, etc. We can also give you a projection of future taxes. This projection is an educated guess on our part; usually the actual tax rates are not available until just a few weeks before the bills are printed

In September and by October 15, the tax office collected over \$30,000,000.00 for taxes for Bethlehem, Ravena-Coeymans-Selkirk and Guilderland School District. If a bank paid your tax bill, you should have received your receipt by now. If not, please call for a reprint of the receipt. We are here to assist you. Please call with any questions, Nancy Mendick, Receiver of Taxes, 518-439-4955, extension 1177.



Did You Know?

- If you have a question that may pertain to Town government or operations, you can visit our [Frequently Asked Questions page](#) on our web site to look for quick references.



We'd like to hear from you

Let us know what you think of this newsletter. Please use the feedback form on the Town's web site, www.townofbethlehem.org/pages/about/contact.asp

[Click here for a printable version of this e-Newsletter](#)

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