

RE. # 2021-19

TOWN OF BETHLEHEM RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE RIGHT TO CLEAN AIR, CLEAN WATER, AND A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

WHEREAS, the right of New Yorkers to clean air, clean water, and a healthy environment is not currently given any protection in the New York State Constitution;

WHEREAS, a healthy climate and environment are fundamental to sustaining our quality of life and a vibrant economy;

WHEREAS, New York State has a long history of environmental protection and leadership to protect public health and the environment;

WHEREAS, while environmental laws are designed to manage pollution, clean-up and remediate contamination, and conserve natural resources, these laws do not support the notion that clean air, clean water, and a healthy environment are fundamental, inalienable rights;

WHEREAS, there are still a multitude of issues threatening New York's air, water, and natural resources, such as our current climate emergency, contaminants in our drinking water supplies, overdevelopment of our land; and air pollution;

WHEREAS, by recognizing environmental rights as individual rights that belong to all people, government must ensure their actions and decisions protect these rights *equitably for all people*;

WHEREAS, the Town of Bethlehem has long demonstrated and pledges to continue to make measurable positive change towards becoming more sustainable and energy efficient, transitioning away from fossil fuels, and protecting our green spaces, streams, wetlands, and other natural resources;

WHEREAS, the Town's recent environmental and sustainability initiatives include creating a Farms & Forests Fund, constructing a solar farm, expanding the Town Compost Facility, installing LED lights throughout Town Hall, installing electric-vehicle infrastructure on municipal properties, protecting and expanding our parklands, and making walking and cycling safer and more accessible throughout our community;

WHEREAS, in recognition that an Environment Rights Bill ([A.2064/S.2072](#)) was passed by the New York State Legislature in 2019, subsequently passed in the Legislature in 2021 ([A.1368/S.528](#)), which, if passed by voters in a statewide referendum on the general election ballot in November 2021, adds an environmental amendment to the New York State Constitution stating simply that, *Each person shall have a right to clean air and water, and a healthful environment*;

WHEREAS, other governmental bodies around the nation have recognized the right of its residents to clean air, clean water, and a healthy environment, and [several](#) counties, cities, towns

and villages in New York State have also supported the addition of Environmental Rights to the New York State Constitution, including [Albany County](#);

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town of Bethlehem, in acknowledging that residents will vote by statewide referendum in November 2021 on the addition of Environmental Rights to the New York State Constitution, hereby *recognizes the right to clean air, clean water, and a healthy environment for all of our residents*; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the Town of Bethlehem's State Legislative Delegation.

On a motion by Councilmember Foster, seconded by Councilmember Becker and approved with the following vote:

AYES: Supervisor VanLuven, Councilmember Becker, Councilmember Coffey,
Councilmember Cunningham, Councilmember Foster

NOES: none

ABSENT: none

The foregoing Resolution was adopted on April 28, 2021.