

**TOWN OF BETHLEHEM RESOLUTION DECLARING A CLIMATE EMERGENCY,
COMMITTING TO POLICIES OPPOSING FOSSIL FUEL EXPANSION,
ACCELERATING THE CLEAN ENERGY TRANSITION, AND ENDORSING THE
CALL FOR A GLOBAL FOSSIL FUEL NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY**

WHEREAS, the scientific consensus is clear that human activities are primarily responsible for accelerating global climate change, and that the climate crisis now represents one of the preeminent threats to global civilization; and

WHEREAS, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report Summary for Policymakers from February 2022 notes that, “reducing GHG emissions across the full energy sector requires major transitions, including a substantial reduction in overall fossil fuel use, the deployment of low-emission energy sources, switching to alternative energy carriers, and energy efficiency and conservation. The continued installation of unabated fossil fuel infrastructure will ‘lock-in’ GHG emissions”; and

WHEREAS, the US Department of Defense, and military and national security experts, have identified climate change as a national security threat which is already seriously impeding military operations, testing and training, and a “threat multiplier,” a phenomenon that can worsen other sources of instability and conflict, such as food insecurity, competition for natural resources and ethnic tensions; and

WHEREAS, New York State enacted the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act in 2019 which mandates a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from all sources by 85 percent over 1990 levels by the year 2050 (with an interim target of 40 percent by 2030), a target of 70 percent renewables by 2030, and 100 percent zero emission generation by 2040 with the goal of transitioning New York State off of fossil fuels by 2050; and

WHEREAS, Bethlehem (in a 2021 town resolution) and New York State (in a 2021 state referendum) passed an Environmental Rights Amendment, in which 70 percent of Bethlehem voters expressed support, guaranteeing all residents the right to clean air, clean water, and a healthful environment; and

WHEREAS, Albany County made a Climate Emergency Proclamation in 2021, and is now also calling for a global Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty in conjunction with municipalities across the country and the world; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Bethlehem is impacted by the health and safety risks of fossil fuel expansion, particularly for those residents who also face socioeconomic and health inequities,

including low-income families, youth, seniors, those experiencing mental and physical disabilities, people of color, and people with pre-existing health conditions; and

WHEREAS, future generations of Bethlehem residents have the most to lose from a lack of immediate action to stop fossil fuel expansion as they face major and lifelong health, ecological, social, and economic impacts from prolonged and cumulative effects of climate change; and

WHEREAS, the economic opportunities presented by a clean energy transition far outweigh the opportunities in an economy supported by expanding fossil fuel use and extraction; and

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, making the community more walkable and bikeable, and protecting our green spaces, streams, wetlands, and other natural infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, the Town's 2022 Comprehensive Plan states, as a community value, that "We value being on the forefront of sustainability by addressing climate change through renewable energy, energy efficiency, a just transition off fossil fuels, electrification, waste reduction and prevention of greenhouse gas emissions"; and

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

WHEREAS, Bethlehem is now home to the first offshore wind tower manufacturing plant in the United States as well as other clean energy business growth, and has therefore demonstrated a commitment to a just energy transition and to ambitious investments that are needed to create jobs, decarbonize our economy, and reduce future climate change; and

WHEREAS, a new global initiative is underway calling for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty that would end new fossil fuel exploration and expansion, phase out existing production in line with the global commitment to limit warming to 1.5°C, and accelerate equitable transition plans; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town of Bethlehem declares that a climate and ecological emergency threatens our entire town, region, state, nation, and future generations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Town of Bethlehem opposes the rollback of climate policy at any level of government, and therefore pledges to meet its proportionate greenhouse gas reductions under the New York State Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) and the Paris Climate Agreement and additionally to address climate mitigation strategies outlined in the New York State Community Risk and Resiliency Act (CRRA) of 2014; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Town of Bethlehem endorses the call for a global Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty that will end new fossil fuel exploration and expansion, phase out existing production in line with the global commitment to limit warming to 1.5°C, and accelerate equitable transition plans, and urges our state and federal government to follow our lead; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Town of Bethlehem intends to implement local policies ending fossil fuel expansion and promoting electrification because of the inherent dangers to the public's health and safety in extraction, transport, storage, and combustion of fossil fuels; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Town of Bethlehem's elected officials and employees will look for ways to prevent fossil fuel infrastructure expansion and promote electrification and a clean energy future in order to protect public health and safety.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the Town of Bethlehem's County, State, and Federal Elected Representatives.

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

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

The foregoing Resolution was adopted on