

Commission Holds Annual Dinner

NOVEMBER 3, 2017

Approximately 90 people gathered at the Boonville VFW Post 5538 on Thursday, November 2 for the Tug Hill Commission's annual dinner. Highlights of the evening were a tribute to our late commissioner, Ken Vigus; the presentation of the Renee Beyer Stewardship Award to the Tug Hill Commission by the Lewis County Soil & Water Conservation District; a preview of a new book about Tug Hill by Nora and Tony Machia; and a review of the commission's activities and accomplishments in 2017 by executive director Katie Malinowski.



Rhonda Vigus holds Horse Shoe Hunting Club painting by Loretta Lepkowski.

Many of Ken's family and friends were able to attend the meeting and join the commission in remembrances of his

commitment to Boonville and the Tug Hill region. His wife, Rhonda Vigus, was presented with a framed, original painting by Loretta Lepkowski of Ken's Tug Hill hunting camp, the Horse Shoe Hunting Club. Rhonda was also given a Congressional Record certificate from Congresswoman Stefanik's office commemorating Ken's legacy of service as a Tug Hill Commissioner, Air Force Veteran, and professional firefighter.



Nichelle Billhardt, District Manager of the Lewis County Soil & Water

Conservation District, presented the 2017 Renee Beyer Stewardship Award to Jennifer Harvill, the commission's natural resources specialist, on behalf of the work she and the Tug Hill Commission have done to support water quality in Lewis County for many years.

Nora Machia shared a slideshow of photographs from around Tug Hill that will be used in a new book about the Tug Hill Commission and Tug Hill region, to be released in 2018. Beginning work with the Tug Hill Commission in late 2016, the Machias have spent the last year traveling the region, meeting people and learning about Tug Hill.

Commission executive director Katie Malinowski reviewed the activities and accomplishments of the commission in 2017. The entire presentation can be viewed <http://www.tughill.org/presentations/>.

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Representatives from the village and town of Boonville enjoy the evening honoring former municipal volunteer Ken Vigus.

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Loretta Lepkowski Receives Evergreen Award from TAUNY

Loretta Lepkowski, an artist from Glenfield who grew up on Tug Hill and has spent several years documenting the lives of farmers and Tug Hill venerable folks, received the 2017 Evergreen Award from Traditional Arts of Upstate New York (TAUNY) on October 22, 2017.

From TAUNY's website: "Loretta is an artist with deep roots in the rugged land of Tug Hill and a folkloristic approach to painting. Her warmth, curiosity, and enthusiasm mean she's always seeking people with interesting stories and looking for ways to share these stories with others....Through her painting and project partnerships—including work like her series on family farms and her portraits of long-established Tug Hill residents—she documents not only individual experiences but a way of life and a sense of regional identity....Loretta is deeply proud of the hardy life-style of her community, and she is generous in sharing her knowledge of it. She has contributed endless hours of volunteer time—and hard driving through the Tug Hill snow—to projects for TAUNY and other organizations that present local history and culture to the public."



Left to right: Rob Fredericks, Peter Ostrum, Loretta Lepkowski, Leif Ostrum, Janet Thompson, Robbie Fredericks, Gina Fredericks

Town of Floyd Awarded Funding for Tree Planting

The town of Floyd was recently awarded \$29,000 from an urban forestry grant, to be matched with about \$12,000 of the town's time and equipment. Commission staff worked closely with the town and made sure the application reflected the goals of the project and highlighted the town's capacity to implement the work.

Tree planting is part of a long-term process to improve the town's park amenities and access. When completed, the 73-acre park will include a 3/4-mile walking trail and fitness stations. With this funding, the town will plant 128 trees, using town staff and volunteer groups to plant trees, and provide outreach and education to the public about tree management related to urban and community forestry.

Final JLUS Meetings November 13 and 14

The Public Draft Joint Land Use Study Report will be released on the Development Authority's website November 6 for review and comment. The final set of public open houses will be held on:

- **Monday, November 13, 6 to 8 pm, Lowville Academy Elementary Cafeteria**
- **Tuesday, November 14, 6 to 8 pm, Watertown High School Cafeteria**



The open house will include a presentation at 6:30 pm both evenings on key compatibility issues raised and implementation strategies recommended, with the remaining time in open house format. Written public comments on the draft will be accepted at the open house or can be provided in writing up until the end of the comment period on November 27, 2017. Comments can be submitted through the website or also by e-mailing them to Hartley Bonisteel Schweitzer at hschweitzer@danc.org. For more information, please visit: www.danc.org/ftdrum_jlus.

Fire Protection Contracts Legislation

Legislation originally proposed by the Office of the State Comptroller (Bill number A-7089/S-5785) was recently signed into law by Governor Cuomo under chapter 294 of the Laws of 2017. The legislation amends sections 176 and 184 of the Town Law and section 4-412 of the Village Law relating to fire protection contracts between incorporated fire companies and fire districts, towns and villages respectively. The purpose of the new legislation is to increase transparency relating to the contract negotiation process between municipal units and incorporated fire companies.

The legislation requires that prior to commencing negotiations for a fire protection contract, the incorporated fire company must provide to the municipal agents a statement itemizing the estimated costs of the fire company attributable to the services provided under the contract (a list of the minimum categories of expenses is listed in the legislation). The fire company must also provide an annual report of directors (if required per section 519 of the Not for Profit Corporation Law (NFPCL)); a corporation certificate (NFPCL section 1402-f); a copy of their IRS 990 Form and a report of foreign fire insurance premium tax funds (General Municipal Law section 30a). These documents are not required when a contract is deemed renewed per sections 176 and 184 of the Town Law. For good cause shown the town or village board or board of fire commissioners may waive any and all parts of these filing requirements by the approval of a resolution to that effect.

In most cases, a free exchange of information during the negotiation process as to the cost of fire protection is the norm. However, more recently OSC has received inquiries from municipalities with difficulties in obtaining this information from the fire companies. It is expected that rather than dealing with this issue on a case-by-case basis, this legislation will provide a standard statutory process to ensure that the necessary cost information is provided at the beginning of the negotiation process. This should promote a more transparent negotiation process and result in reaching a fair and equitable price for fire protection services.

For more information or to read the bill text in full visit <http://www.osc.state.ny.us/legislation/2017-18/oscb-fpc-201718.htm>.

Focus On The COG - Special Insert

This edition features the River Area Council of Governments, the work they are doing and the major things happening in their part of Tug Hill.

New Ag & Markets Grant to Fund Animal Shelters

The NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets has received a five million dollar appropriation to fund a grant program available to municipalities and incorporated not-for-profit pounds, shelters and humane societies for the cost of capital projects. Projects may include the construction, renovation, rehabilitation, installation, acquisition, or expansion of buildings, equipment or facilities needed to secure and care for sheltered dogs and cats.

Proposals for the new NYS Companion Animal Capital Fund are due January 10, 2018 and are expected to be awarded in February with two-year contracts beginning in March, 2018. Projects serving an individual municipality will not be less than \$50,000 nor more than \$200,000, with a 50% cash match of total project cost requirement. Projects that serve two or more municipalities will receive not less than \$100,000 and not more than \$500,000, not to exceed 75% of the total project cost. More information can be found through the [Grants Opportunity Portal](#), and clicking on "Browse."

NYS vendors must submit a registration form through the Grants Gateway to establish users in the system. The process can also be started from the Grant Opportunity Portal <https://grantsgateway.ny.gov/IntelliGrants/NYSGG/module/nysgg/gportal.aspx>, under Registration, click "Request Access Now!" to view options.

For existing NYS vendors, such as most municipalities, there is only one step to identify an administrator. However, if your organization is not currently doing business with NYS, you will need to submit a Substitute W-9 Form to obtain a NYS SFS Vendor ID, in addition to the registration form for administrators. All not-for-profit organizations that intend to submit a proposal must also be pre-qualified prior to the submission of your proposal. If you have not registered (or, as a not-for-profit, prequalified), please do so immediately.

Records Management Grants Available

The New York State Archives and the New York State Local Government Records Advisory Council have announced the Local Government Records Management Improvement Fund (LGRMIF) grants for 2018-2019. **All applications must be submitted via the State Archives eGrants system by 5:00 PM on Tuesday, January 16, 2018.** Grant projects will run from July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019. The LGRMIF supports three types of projects:

- Individual projects that involve a single applicant;
- Shared services projects, involving two or more applicants;
- Demonstration projects, to develop model electronic records programs that can be replicated by other local governments. This year demonstration project grants will focus on Records-Lifecycle Management of Electronic Mail implementation projects.

New York State Archives is conducting the following webinars related to the upcoming grant season:

LGRMIF Shared Services Grant Information Session - Tuesday, November 14, 2017, 10:30 AM - 11:30 AM, www.archives.nysed.gov/workshops/schedule/lgrmif-shared-services-grant-information-session-webinar-2017-11-14

How to Write a Superior LGRMIF Grant Narrative - Wednesday, December 13, 2017, 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM, www.archives.nysed.gov/workshops/schedule/how-to-write-a-superior-lgrmif-grant-narrative-webinar-2017-12-13

To attend other NYS Archives training events in New York State, go to <http://www.archives.nysed.gov/workshops/schedule>. For historical records repositories, see Documentary Heritage & Presentation Services for New York at <http://dhpsny.org/education>.

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Village Of Barneveld Adopts Dissolution Plan

Following a well-attended public hearing on October 24th, the board of trustees in the village of Barneveld unanimously approved a plan for the dissolution of the village on December 31st, 2017.

A committee comprised of village and town officials as well as members of the public were assisted by NOCCOG and Tug Hill Commission staff in the creation of the plan, which outlines the plan for the village's affairs being turned over to the town of Trenton. As part of the dissolution, a lighting district and water district will be created to continue providing those services. The committee opted not to form a sidewalk district, but the village has expended funds previously saved for the purpose of sidewalk repairs on improvements in several areas throughout the village identified as being in poorer condition. The town will also take over processes relating to the pursuit of a sewer district.

As outlined in New York State law, as part of a voter initiated dissolution proceeding residents will have 45 days from the date of plan adoption to submit a petition for another referendum. If no petition is filed, the village will cease to operate on December 31st, becoming the second village dissolution in the town of Trenton and fourth in the Tug Hill region in recent years.

Planning Session Held

Over 70 local officials attended the evening session at JCC Monday, October 30th where Scott Chatfield discussed zoning nonconformities. He reviewed the difference between nonconforming lots, structures and uses and answered many questions related to this subject. Scott has over 40 years of land use law experience and is a regular and popular presenter at the Tug Hill Commission's annual local government conference as well as at training sessions at JCC throughout the year.



Focus On The COG

River Area Council of Governments

The River Area Council of Governments (RACOG) is the newest of the five Tug Hill council of governments (COGs), formed in 2000. It is situated at the northern side of the Tug Hill region along the Black River and is in close proximity to Fort Drum. RACOG is currently made up of two towns and three villages. The area's population based on the 2010 census is 16,974, over about 129 square miles.



The RACOG board meets as needed and is made up of two town supervisors, three village mayors, and a designated representative from each of those communities for a total of ten representatives on the board. RACOG's mission is to identify opportunities for cooperation, that will enhance the quality of life and improve service delivery in the towns of Champion and Wilna and the villages of Carthage, Deferiet, and West Carthage, through the analysis, study, and recommendations with respect to organizational and administrative barriers to economic growth and fiscal stability that might exist in and between communities.

Retiring Circuit Rider

Kathy Amyot, the circuit rider for RACOG for the past 17 years, is retiring at the end of November. Kathy has been instrumental in many successful projects in the RACOG area, including the restoration of the Buckley Building in Carthage, cleanup of the Crown Cleaners Superfund site in Wilna, and the Herrings dissolution.

Kathy's deep community knowledge and steady, thoughtful approach will be missed. Best wishes in your retirement!



Meet RACOG's Newly Hired Circuit Rider

Mickey Dietrich graduated from SUNY ESF with his Master's degree in Quantitative Methods in Forest Management (GIS Concentration) and his Bachelor's degree in the dual major program of Forest Resource Management and Environmental Biology. For the past 15 years Mickey has worked as the GIS (Geographic Information Systems) specialist for the Tug Hill Commission. Even though he is now the new RACOG circuit rider, he is still continuing with many of his essential duties as GIS specialist. Communities should not see a big difference in the GIS services that the Tug Hill Commission provides. With his term ending as president of the NYS GIS Association, he will have more time to devote to GIS for the communities within the region.



Current RACOG Projects

The town of Wilna continues to implement items relating to the dissolution of the village of Herrings, which was effective March 31, 2017. The town of Wilna assumed ownership of publically owned properties while providing more effective and efficient administrative oversight and day-to-day operations/maintenance.

The town of Champion has been working on a new comprehensive plan for the last 18 months with commission senior planner Matt Johnson. A public hearing is scheduled for November 6th to present a final draft of the town-wide comprehensive plan for final review and comment. Additionally, the village of West Carthage continues last minute discussions with town representatives to dissolve the village justice court on December 4th for more efficient and effective justice court services to village residents through the town of Champion.

Tug Hill COG Map

