



Tug Hill Times

Tug Hill Times is published semimonthly by the Tug Hill Commission for its board members, staff and associates, and the local representatives of the region's communities.

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COMMUNITY MEETING DECEMBER 6TH FOR AVA/STEBEN/WESTERN RESIDENTS

An open community meeting will be held on Monday, December 6th from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Western Town Hall, 9204 Main Street, Western, to provide local planning efforts with information about these three towns. The meeting is being sponsored by the Northern Oneida County Council of Governments (NOCCOG), and the other partners in the Adirondack-Tug Hill Wildlife Connectivity project, who include the Tug Hill Commission, Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust, the Nature Conservancy, and the Wildlife Conservation Society.

Participants will be asked to draw circles on a map around places they care about and say why they appreciate them. This community input will be used to produce a general map showing places that are valued. This will be very helpful for future planning efforts by the towns, and it will be used by the partners in the wildlife project, to understand what areas of Steuben, Western, and Ava, are important to residents. The hope is that residents and others who work or recreate in those three towns will come out to provide their unique perspective on what they value in those communities. This can point to places most appropriate to keep as they are or places most appropriate for development.

Refreshments will be served and there will also be door prizes. If you have questions, please contact Gerry Ritter, NOCCOG, (315) 392-2260 or Katie Malinowski, Tug Hill Commission, (315) 785-2380.

MEETING HELD ON IDEAS FOR REUSING WILLIAMSTOWN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

A public meeting was held on November 29th to discuss ideas for a new use for the Williamstown Elementary School, which closed in 2008. Fifteen to twenty residents, community leaders, and interested parties gathered in the Williamstown Community Center on Monday evening. Their ideas for reuse of the vacant Elementary School included senior housing, Community College satellite campus, small business rental space, new post office site, and relocation of the library. Ideas for the acreage associated with the school property, such as housing development, were also discussed.

In addition to assisting the residents of Williamstown with formulating a vision for the vacant school property, this meeting is part of a larger effort to develop a strategy to reuse three elementary schools in the APW school district that will be closed by 2012. Commission staff have been working with Williamstown as well as the village and town of Parish and the town of Albion to develop a strategy for reuse of the three school properties, each of which has unique assets and challenges. A similar meeting was held at the Parish Elementary School in July.

2010 JEFFERSON COUNTY WATER QUALITY COORDINATING COMMITTEE ANNUAL AWARDS PRESENTED

The Jefferson County Water Quality Coordinating Committee honored three local professionals for their dedication and outstanding commitment to protecting water quality in Jefferson County. Brian Gaffney, chief operator at the city of

**To contact the
Commission:**

**Phone toll free
within the region:
1-888-785-2380
or e-mail:
tughill@tughill.org**

**Our website:
www.tughill.org**

Watertown Water Treatment Plant; Bill Seifried, general manager of the Development Authority of the North Country's Solid Waste Management Facility; and, Alex Forte, recently retired as resident engineer from the NYS Department of Transportation, were all recognized with their awards in November. Mr. Gaffney and Mr. Seifried were both presented their plaques from the WQCC at a luncheon, while Mr. Forte, who was on vacation with family at the time, will be honored at a later date. The agencies these gentlemen represent have tremendous responsibilities in their duties to protect our water for drinking and a whole host of environmental benefits. The Jefferson County WQCC visited all three of these facilities recently and learned a great deal about their individual duties and how they serve to benefit county residents.

BIOMASS FACILITY TOUR DECEMBER 10TH

For communities, organizations or businesses considering switching their heating system from fuel oil to woody biomass, there is an opportunity to tour the Edward-Knox School's new facility on Friday, December 10th at 10 am. If interested in participating, please email Doug Welch at welchd@canton.edu by Monday, December 6th. The tour is being offered free of charge, and will be an excellent learning opportunity for those wondering about the details of making the conversion.

COG CHAIRS MEET

Representatives of the five Tug Hill Councils of Government (COGs) met with Commission Chair Michael Yerdon, Tug Hill circuit riders and Commission management staff on Thursday, December 2nd in Parish. Annually, the COG leaders meet with the Commission to discuss key regional issues and share what the COGs have been working on. In addition, this year the leaders focused on the upcoming Governor transition and fiscal situation facing the region's communities and the Tug Hill Commission.

Cooperative Tug Hill Council Chair Roger Tibbetts and Circuit Rider Jane Jones shared with the group their priority on getting the Low Volume Roads legislation enacted and their work with CTHC towns

on Special Areas and the Planning Accord for Tug Hill Planning. They also talked about the work that the Commission and towns of Harrisburg, Pinckney and Montague are doing on a shared Justice Court under recent enabling legislation passed this year. Chairman Tibbetts also talked about how CTHC is preparing for the retirement of Circuit Rider Jane Jones in 2011 and the Council's support for ensuring that a new circuit rider will be hired by the Commission. Commission Chair Mike Yerdon assured all the COGs that the circuit rider program of the Commission is of the highest importance and that the Commissioners are already speaking to the region's state legislative delegation about the importance of these positions.

River Area Council of Government representatives Paul Smith and Michael Storm shared on RACOG successes on recreational facilities and the new Long Falls Park and Farmers Market in Carthage, brownfield activities in Natural Bridge and the Black River, and the recent shared Police Services Study in Carthage and West Carthage.

Salmon River Council of Governments Chair Leon Heagle discussed the activities of SRCG and the Commission relating to the Altmar-Parish-Williamstown School District closure of elementary schools in Altmar, Parish and Williamstown. Chairman Heagle impressed the importance of those buildings being brought back into the communities in a way that does not harm local tax base and how might they help meet economic development and housing needs. Chairman Heagle and Circuit Rider Paul Baxter also shared with the group how the village of Altmar was responding to the recent vote to dissolve the village. Chairman Heagle thanked the Commission for the assistance they are giving the village and noted that several of his COG communities were watching on how this planning effort moves forward.

Northern Oneida County Council of Government representative Arnie Talgo shared the efforts on the part of NOCCOG and the Commission on mapping all 19 town and village road systems for each of NOCCOGs municipalities. He and Circuit Rider Gerry Ritter noted that the goal of the mapping project was to complete official maps for every member municipality. They also commented on the number of comprehensive plans that were being

completed for their communities and the amount of local official training that NOCCOG and the Commission provided in the region.

North Shore Council of Government Chair Richard Colesante spoke of the amount of water supply work that is occurring in the towns of West Monroe and Constantia. This work was also serving as a catalyst for both towns to look at their comprehensive plans and land use regulations in response to possible growth and development as a result of public water. Chairman Colesante and Circuit Rider Paul Baxter also spoke about the work that Paul does with town budgets and how this was helping the towns to grasp just what was happening with budgets and taxes. Chairman Colesante commented on how in Constantia, the rapid rise in Fire and EMS expenses was dominating the non-highway portion of the Town budget. Circuit Rider Baxter also noted that many of his communities were monitoring the public concerns about consolidation and mergers.

All of the COG leaders expressed their support for the assistance the Commission provides to their communities and their concern over current and potential future budget impacts on the Commission. The COGs want to stay on top of transition developments and will be speaking to their member communities about priorities that they would like the Commission to be focusing on.

