

Minimum Maintenance Roads Presentation at Rockefeller Institute of Government

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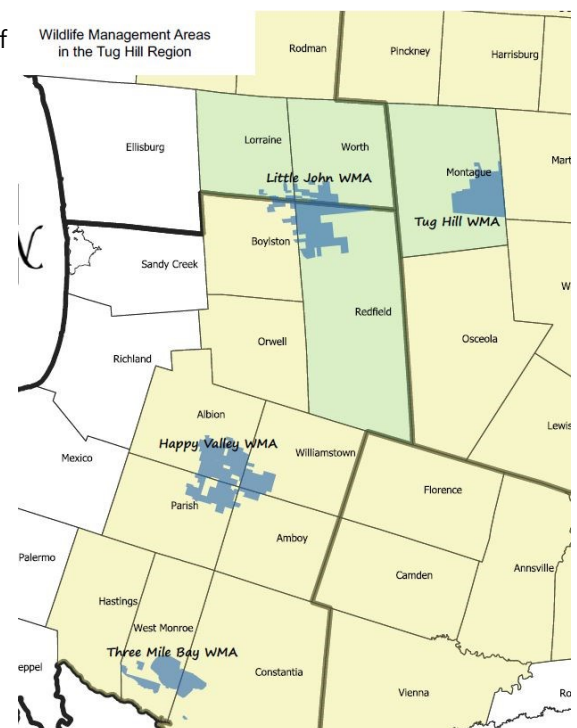
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Commission Planning Director Phil Street joined a panel of presenters at the Rockefeller Institute of Government in Albany on March 14 to discuss topics related to policy innovation, pilot programs, and engineering progress. Phil's presentation focused on the commission's recently released issue paper, *Protecting Roads from Snow Plowing Demands: A Checklist*, and added a rural issue to the largely urban and suburban topics discussed throughout the day. Phil provided background on local roads, the current home rule supported practice of minimum maintenance road law adoption, and the call for state legislation clearly authorizing this tool that was recommended by a state-formed Local Roads Research and Coordination Council in the early 1990's.

Bills sponsored by Assemblymember Gunther (A03724) and Senator Griffo (S02910) have both been referred to their respective transportation committees. A number of groups, including the NYS Association of Towns, NYS Association of Town Superintendents of Highways, the Adirondack Association of Towns and Villages, and the NYS Snowmobile Association are actively supporting the bills.

Wildlife Management Area-related Bills

Senator Ritchie and Assemblyman Barclay have introduced two bills, S03949/A06302, that would add seven Oswego County towns to the section of Real Property Tax Law that lists specific towns where the state pays town, county and school taxes on land classified as wildlife management area. Currently, the Tug Hill region towns of Lorraine, Montague, Redfield and Worth are listed in Section 532(g) of Real Property Tax Law, along with several other towns in various counties. The pending bills would add the towns of Albion, Amboy, Boylston, Constantia, Parish, West Monroe and Williamstown, which if passed and signed into law would include all Tug Hill towns that contain wildlife management areas.



LED Lighting Meeting

On March 11, the towns of Champion, Martinsburg, Wilna, and the villages of Carthage, Croghan, Deferiet, Lowville, and West Carthage had a second opportunity to ask questions of Jessica Waldorf from the NY Power Authority (NYPA). For communities considering different ways to convert their street lights to LED, NYPA has an option that results in the municipalities ultimately owning the streetlights while still achieving significant cost savings.

Conversion of street lights to LED bulbs through current owner National Grid results in approximately a 10% savings, with National Grid remaining the owner and manager of the street light infrastructure. The same LED conversion using the NYPA-managed municipal ownership path ultimately results in a 65-70% cost savings after the initial loan to purchase the street lights and fixtures from National Grid, and pay for design and construction costs of the conversion. The loans are typically paid off after 10 years. While paying back the loan, communities will see a 2-3% yearly savings. The more communities that participate in the NYPA option, the better the pricing deal for LED bulbs and cost savings on the long-term maintenance agreement.

If interested in learning more, please contact Mickey Dietrich at (315) 681-5023 or mickey@tughill.org. If this group of communities decides to proceed with the NYPA option, there will be a cutoff date for participation.

CTHC Meetings Scheduled

The executive committee of the Cooperative Tug Hill Council (CTHC) will meet on Tuesday March 26th at the Boylston Town Hall (580 Co. Rt. 13, Boylston) starting at 7 pm. The committee will conduct their regular business and will discuss items relating to the upcoming CTHC spring meeting. They will also hear updates from the Tug Hill Commission on projects of joint interest and any other business which may come before the committee. This meeting is open to the public.

Additionally, the annual CTHC spring meeting will be Thursday April 25th at the Steak and Brew Restaurant in Turin (4497 NYS Rt. 26, Turin). Cocktail hour will begin at 6 pm with dinner at 7 pm and the meeting to follow. More details and invitations will be out soon to CTHC representatives and our member municipalities via US mail. This meeting is also open to the public at no charge, although there is a charge for visitors to join us for dinner.

Additional details about both of these meetings and on the council can be found at www.tughillcouncil.com.

New York State Annual Burn Ban Starts

The annual state ban on outdoor burning begins on March 16th and extends through May 14th. While things are still presently snow covered here in the north country, once spring arrives conditions quickly arise which are conducive to wildfires. The burning of outdoor brush and debris is historically the single largest cause of wildfires in the state according to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

The DEC posts a daily fire danger rating map on their website at <https://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/68329.html>. Violators of the state's open burning regulations are subject to both criminal and civil enforcement actions, with a minimum fine of \$500 for the first offense.

For more information about NY State's burn ban and information about the open burning regulations in general check out the commission's white paper at <http://www.tughill.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Open-Burning-Regulations-2018-Update.pdf> or check out the DEC's "Learn Before You Burn" webpage at <https://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/32064.html>.



480a Public Meetings in March

The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is holding a series of public meetings to provide stakeholders with the opportunity to offer input on the Forest Tax Law Program's Section 480a. The purpose of these meetings is to discuss areas of the program that could be improved including increasing compliance, reducing administrative burdens, and improving forestry outcomes.

The Forest Tax Law was enacted in 1974 to give forest landowners with 50 acres or more of qualifying land in New York State an incentive for the "continued production of forest crops." Currently, there are more than 3,400 forest landowners and more than 1.2 million acres of private forest land enrolled in the program. The changes under consideration would address the Real Property Tax Law Section 480a and would not alter the annual tax benefit, stumpage tax, commitment period or penalties for non-compliance.

Landowners and private consulting foresters participating in the 480a program and any interested parties are encouraged to attend one of the eight public meetings that will be offered across the state. DEC will also host a webinar for those who cannot participate in-person. Meetings closest to the Tug Hill region are:

March 27, 2019, 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.

DEC Region 6 Sub-Office
7327 Rt. 812
Lowville, NY 13367

For more [information on Forest Tax Law](#) and current regulations, interested parties can visit the DEC website. For more information about the webinar or to submit comments email, contact bslmregs@dec.ny.gov.

Amish Session Well Attended

A recent session entitled "Learning About the Amish Community as Your Neighbors" was well attended with nearly 50 area officials filling the Trenton municipal building.

The Local Government Education Committee of Oneida and Herkimer Counties presented the session to provide insights into the Amish community. Speakers Oneida County Sheriff Rob Maciol and NYS Police Sgt. Bernard Kennett to discuss traffic and other related issues, such as proper signage required for slow moving vehicles, safety in sharing the roadway, and the need for roadside stands to acquire permits through the Health Department.

Another session entitled "Engaging the Amish In Your Community" will be offered at the Local Government Conference at Jefferson Community College on March 28th. The speaker will be Robert MacKenzie, director of the Lewis County Emergency and Fire Management Services who has many years of experience working with Amish families in the Lewis County area.



Hall of Fame Award Announcement

Digital Towpath is pleased to announce that Jeanne Brown, Project Director at Digital Towpath Cooperative, has been elected to the NYS IT Leadership Hall of Fame.

The Hall of Fame honors exemplary NYS public servants who have devoted their careers to the NYS Information Technology Community.

Jeanne's expertise, decades-long commitment, and ingenuity to transform local government IT is well known and it is because of this she was nominated.

Jeanne will receive the award and be recognized at the NY IT Leadership Academy Awards Ceremony at 4 pm on April 4th at the Albany Capital Center.

Save the Date for Records Management Workshops!

Your Role as Local Government Records Management Officer
Thursday, May 2, 2019, 9:30 AM - 1:00 PM

Boonville Town & Village Offices
13149 State Route 12
Boonville, NY 13309

Workshop Type: Classroom Training

Presenter: Michael Martin, State Archives Regional Advisory Officer (RAO)

By law, each local government must have a Records Management Officer (RMO) who is responsible for managing its records management program. This workshop looks at the role and responsibilities of the RMO.

This workshop will:

- Review the laws that established the role of Records Management Officer (RMO).
- Identify the responsibilities of the RMO and others.
- Discuss the attributes of a good records management program.
- Provide tips for building a records management program and maintaining support over the long term.
- Provide a forum for sharing strategies on maintaining support.
- Review the services offered by the State Archives to organizations that want to establish a records management program.

Managing Born Digital Records - Friday, June 14, 2019, 9:30 AM - 1:00 PM

Jefferson County Building
175 Arsenal Street
Watertown, NY 13601

Workshop Type: Classroom Training

Presenter: Michael Martin, State Archives Regional Advisory Officer (RAO)

Today, most records are born digital, but many are still printed to paper, often unnecessarily. This workshop will explore strategies to manage these records digitally throughout their lifecycle and make the printer obsolete. This workshop will discuss the challenges of managing born digital records and give participants practical solutions to the problems of managing born digital records including access, retention, disposition, and preservation of these valuable records.

To see the full schedule of State Archives workshops and/or register for these or other training opportunities, please visit: <http://www.archives.nysed.gov/workshops/schedule>.

Contact Us

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If you would like to receive our newsletter electronically please email your request to gwen@tughill.org or call 1-888-785-2380.

Electronic versions appear in full color!

The Tug Hill Commission will meet Wednesday, March 27 from 4:00 pm to 5:30 pm at the Tug Hill Commission offices, 317 Washington Street, Watertown. The public is welcome to attend.