

TUG HILL TIMES



NYS TUG HILL COMMISSION | DULLES STATE OFFICE BUILDING | 317 WASHINGTON STREET | WATERTOWN NY 13601 (315) 785-2380 | www.tughill.org

March 27, 2020

Tug Hill Local Government Conference Sessions Available on Website

Several speakers were able to provide their Local Government Conference sessions electronically, and are available at www.tughill.org/services/training/local-government-conference/2020-conference-presentations/

Registrations paid for online through Eventbrite have been refunded to credit cards. Please contact Gwen Decker at gwen@tughill.org if the credit has not appeared on your account. Registrations paid for by check have not been refunded yet, as all commission employees are currently working from home. Checks will be mailed back to individuals and communities as soon as commission staff returns to the office.

The 2020 Census is happening now!

Remember to complete your questionnaire online, by phone, or by mail.

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Information for Local Governments and COVID-19

We hope you are well in this unusual and unprecedented time. Commission staff is working to provide guidance to our towns and villages on how to maintain municipal operations in a rapidly changing environment. We have been compiling information documents and links on our website at <https://www.tughill.org/community-resources-concerning-covid-19/>. Please check back frequently as things are changing and we are trying to keep our documents and links up to date. And as we always advise, please consult with your municipal attorney as needed.

Public Meetings in NY and COVID-19 compiles information from several sources, with high-level takeaways at the top of the document.

To help Tug Hill towns and villages hold public meetings until this situation resolves, the Tug Hill Commission has purchased a business subscription to Zoom, an on-line platform that allows for interactive videoconferencing, call-in options, recording and transcription. If you are interested in using this option, please contact your circuit rider ASAP and we will provide technical support to make your municipal meetings happen with *hopefully* a minimum of technology hiccups.

Municipal Employees in NY and COVID-19 also compiles information from several sources with high-level takeaways at the top of the document.

Land Use Applications in NY and COVID-19 gives guidance to local government boards that may be concerned about land use applications before them that are subject to certain time constraints.

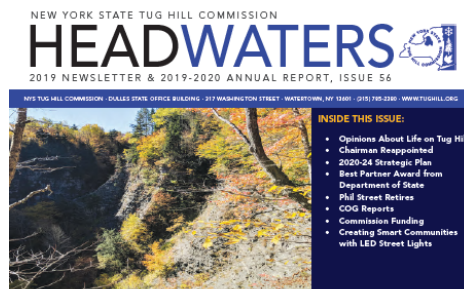
Courts Information in NY and COVID-19 gives a breakdown of current directives applicable to town and village courts.

Many thanks to our partners at Association of Towns of NYS, NY Conference of Mayors, Cornell Local Roads Program, and Department of State for the guidance they are providing.

Commission Annual Report, *Headwaters*, Published

The latest edition of Headwaters, the Tug Hill Commission's annual newsletter/annual report, was sent both electronically and in the mail last week. Highlights from 2019 include:

- Results from the 2019 Tug Hill Resident and Landowner Survey
- Chairman Bogdanowicz's reappointment
- Finalization of the Commission's 2020-2024 Strategic Plan
- Best Partner Award from Department of State
- Phil Street's retirement
- Council of Government reports
- LED street lighting project



Opinions About Life on Tug Hill

The quality of kindergarten through 12th grade education, access to groceries and other necessities, and housing were similarly rated "good" over many studies. Comparison of 2019 responses to the original 2009 survey shows an interesting combination of stability and change.

What is Similar?
Overall, there is continued satisfaction with the outdoors, environment, and overall rural setting of Tug Hill. It seems to be what brings people to the region and what keeps people here. Interestingly, the top five quality of life factors are as excellent in 2009 were the same in 2019: the amount of open space on the Hill, a feeling of safety and security, recreational opportunities, quality of drinking water, and farming and forestry activities.

What is Different?
Despite over a quarter of respondents believing that employment opportunities are improved, most support was for expansion of tourism and recreation.

What is Improved?
The amount of open space on the Hill, a feeling of safety and security, recreational opportunities, quality of drinking water, and farming and forestry activities.

What is Different?
Despite over a quarter of respondents believing that employment opportunities are improved, most support was for expansion of tourism and recreation.



Resources for Limited or Lack of Wireless or Internet Services:

Free Wifi/Internet

Charter Communications (Spectrum) and Comcast are giving households with K-12 and college students, and those who qualify as low-income complimentary WIFI for 60 days.

- Families who do not have the service will also receive free installation of the service.
- Both companies are expanding Wifi hotspots to the public within the company's available regions.
- Call 1-844-488-8395 (Spectrum) or 1-855-846-8376 (Comcast) to enroll.
- Individuals must call company after 60 days, or they will be automatically billed.

Extra or Unlimited data

Charter (Spectrum), Comcast, AT&T, and Verizon are offering extra or unlimited data plans to customers until May 13 for no additional charge. Customers are encouraged to visit provider websites for details.

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Lifeline Program for low-income consumers

SafeLink Wireless is a Lifeline-supported service, which is a government benefit program available to eligible low-income consumers in every state. It can give you a free cell phone and minutes to use, mobile access to emergency services, and a choice of cell phone plans if you meet the program guidelines. To qualify for Lifeline, subscribers must either have an income that is at or below 135% of the federal Poverty Guidelines, or participate in one of the following assistance programs:

- Veterans and Survivors Pension Benefit
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Food Stamps
- Medicaid Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Federal Public Housing Assistance (Section 8)

⇒ Service is limited to one person per household.

⇒ Call 1-800-Safelink (732-3546) or visit safelinkwireless.com for enrollment.

⇒ Subscribers can use their own phones:

- SafeLink Keep Your Own Smartphone plan requires a compatible or unlocked Smartphone. Most GSM Smartphones are compatible.
- Subscribers can get up to 350 minutes and 3 GB of data, which includes voice minutes and unlimited texts, voicemail, nationwide coverage and 4G LTE on 4G LTE compatible devices.

Northern Border Regional Commission Grant Applications

Due May 15

The Northern Border Regional Commission's (NBRC) annual Economic & Infrastructure Development grant applications will open April 6, due May 15. Approximately \$4.5 million will be available for projects in each of the four NBRC states (NY, VT, NH, ME). Maximum awards are \$1,000,000 for eligible infrastructure projects, up to \$350,000 for other types. Awards require up to a 50% match depending on the level of county economic and demographic distress.

NBRC funds can be used as match for leveraging other federal grant funds, only up to 80% of the total project. There always needs to be a 20% non-federal match. All funds are in the form of reimbursement for eligible expenses incurred after a notice of proceed has been issued.

Prioritized grant projects include those that:

- ⇒ Revitalize and modernize essential infrastructure in NBRC communities,
- ⇒ Increase access, affordability, and use of high-speed telecommunications,
- ⇒ Stabilize and reduce electric and thermal energy costs,
- ⇒ Retain, expand and diversify business enterprise that capitalizes on the region's natural, cultural, and economic assets,
- ⇒ Position the NBRC as an attractive and supportive place for creative and entrepreneurial people,
- ⇒ Support and expand a highly productive workforce with skills suited to existing and future business needs,
- ⇒ Foster entrepreneurial leadership and capacity for community economic development, and
- ⇒ Inform and align local, state, and regional economic development decision making with regional data and perspectives.

Detailed information, including the on-line grant application, can be found at www.nbrc.gov.

Trout and Salmon Fishing Season Opens April 1, Licenses Available Online

The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) announced this week that trout and salmon fishing season opens April 1. During the current COVID-19 public health crisis, getting outdoors and connecting with nature while angling in New York's waters is a great way to help maintain mental and physical health.

New York's trout and salmon fishing results in a cumulative five million days spent fishing the state's freshwater fisheries and contributes economically to local communities. A complete list of this spring's planned trout stocking can be found at www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/30465.html.

Sporting licenses may be purchased online at any time (decals.dec.ny.gov/DECALSCitizenWeb/citizenhome.htm), and anglers may use their privileges immediately by carrying their transaction number (DEC-LS#) with them. Anglers, hunters, and trappers may also use the HuntFishNY mobile app to display an electronic copy of their license. The app is available through Apple App or Google Play stores. Back tags and carcass tags must still be mailed, and customers should allow 10-14 days for receipt of their tags.

While enjoying the outdoors, please continue to follow the CDC/NYS DOH guidelines (coronavirus.health.ny.gov/home) for preventing the spread of colds, flu, and COVID-19:

- ◇ Try to keep at least six feet of distance between you and others.
- ◇ Avoid close contact, such as shaking hands, hugging, and kissing.
- ◇ Wash hands often or use a hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available.
- ◇ Avoid surfaces that are touched often, such as doorknobs, handrails, and playground equipment.

Free Webinars for Floodplain Management

March 31, 1:00 - 2:30 pm CDT

Subdivision Design for Flood Resilience, Part 1

Register here: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/2482139109280873997>

April 2, 1:00 - 2:30 pm CDT

Subdivision Design for Flood Resilience, Part 2

Register here: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/3162146369130393869>

New York State Annual Burn Ban Starts

The annual state ban on outdoor burning begins on March 16 and extends through May 14. While things are still presently snow covered over most of 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 DEC. With many people furloughed, laid off or working from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic it is tempting to get a jump on your yard work by burning yard debris, but please obey the law and refrain from burning until the expiration of the burn ban.

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>.

Upcoming Cornell Local Roads Program Webinars

What Would You Do? – Ethical Choices

Tuesday, March 31, 2020, 2-3 pm Eastern

David P. Orr, PE, Director & Senior Engineer

Cornell Local Roads Program – NY LTAP Center

When faced with an ethical dilemma, knowing what to do is not always easy or straightforward. This interactive session will review some typical ethical problems for engineers and highway officials. For each scenario, an interactive response will be used to acquire and review the audience's responses when asked "What would you do?"

Please register to participate in the webinar at: <https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/4236733167897922060>

We Are All Responsible for Good Roads

Thursday, April 2, 2020, 2-3 pm Eastern

David P. Orr, PE, Director & Senior Engineer

Cornell Local Roads Program – NY LTAP Center

David will provide a review of what makes good roads from state highways to the lowest volume local road. The session will cover the top 10 ideas that you can use to improve your roads and streets.

Please register to participate in the webinar at: Registration Link TBD - Check back later on the CLRP website or future emails from for the registration information.

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For upcoming trainings, grant deadlines, and meetings, view our [calendar](#).