

TUG HILL COMMISSION

MINUTES OF MEETING

Via Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82194279008>, Meeting ID 821 9427 9008

May 18, 2020

Chairman Bogdanowicz opened the meeting 10:02 a.m.

Opened

Commission members included Messrs. Bogdanowicz, Boxberger, Yerdon, Scriber, and Mdms. Chereshnoski and Ritter. Staff included Katie Malinowski, Gwen Decker, Felicia Passino, Alaina Mallette, Carla Fowler, Jennifer Harvill and Matt Johnson. Circuit Riders Paul Baxter, Angie Kimball, and Mickey Dietrich. Guests – commission attorney Lee Willbanks, Oswego County legislator Herb Yerdon, Norman Paradis, Robyn Burgess.

Attendance

On a motion made by Commissioner Yerdon and seconded by Commissioner Boxberger members approved the agenda as presented.

Agenda Approved

On a motion made by Commissioner Chereshnoski and seconded by Commissioner Yerdon members approved the minutes of April 20, 2020.

Minutes Approved

Chairman's report followed.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Bogdanowicz welcomed everyone to the commission's second video conference meeting. The North Country, Mohawk Valley and Central New York have made the metrics for phase one opening. If all the metrics stays on track it looks like phase 2 could start in the North County in about two weeks, around May 29. Management of the virus is still extremely very fluid. State finances are tight, and leadership is working extremely hard to get through this. The commission is fortunate to have leadership that is working on behalf of the communities, the commission, and all the agencies and authorities in the state of New York.

Welcome

Executive Director's report followed.

**Executive Director's
Report
Administration**

Mrs. Malinowski reviewed the two budget bulletins sent by Albany so far. First, there is a strict enforcement of the existing hiring freeze for at least the next four months. This means that filling the NOCOG circuit rider position will not happen at this time. Matt Johnson's upgrade paperwork was submitted prior to the hiring freeze and there an inquiry for more information after the budget bulletins were issued, but no finalization.

Second, state agencies are required to eliminate all non-essential non-personal service spending, including publications, supplies, equipment, and contractual services that are not necessary to protect the health, safety, and security of employees and citizens and to ensure the continuation of high priority operations and services. Agencies should cease the initiation of new contracts or purchase orders for all but essential items. Today's budget for consideration reflects that guidance as much as possible.

Ms. Malinowski walked through each of the budget lines. Highlights included:

- Salaries at \$865,682, a best-case scenario, if receive approval for steps, 2%, longevity and NOCCOG circuit rider hire in October.
- The center bold column in the proposed budget is the commission's actual 2019-20 expenditures as of the end of last week, which is close to an end of the year report.
- Advertising was high last year because two positions were advertised for. The commission approved the attorney contract for 2020-21 at the last meeting, and that

payment is being processed. The cloud computing line increased due to remote working and zoom meetings. Copiers remain the same as those are contracts. The postage machine will be eliminated at the end of June and staff is evaluating alternatives as mailings have significantly decreased.

- The membership line for the Adirondack North Country Association, Empire State Products Association, and the New York Planning Federation has been zeroed out. These could be revisited later. Eliminating the miscellaneous line – water cooler. Keeping subscriptions to Queen Central, Watertown Daily Times and Boonville Herald. These help us to stay informed on happenings in Tug Hill communities.
- The printing line is reduced to \$1000, should things free up later in the year. The revised regional map will be digitally published only for now. The annual meeting invite is also in this line.
- Software maintenance is being reduced, with ESRI license maintained for one more year as the transition to QGIS is completed. Snap survey software license will be eliminated, and will use survey monkey or google forms as online alternatives.
- Training and travel are significantly reduced for the coming year. The two commission vehicles will be kept as eventually staff will travel to meetings again, but gas costs should be down considerably. Commissioner line for lodging and meals is reduced given the current switch to online meetings.
- The total for non-salary expenses is \$51,350. Total annual expenses with this budget are \$917,032. This is all subject to future budget bulletins.

On a motion by Commissioner Boxberger and seconded by Commission Scriber members approved the budget as presented.

The North Country reopened last week for Phase 1. If everything goes well, the office could start looking at opening May 29 for Phase 2. Mrs. Malinowski has received guidance for the reopening, including a template required to be completed and approved. changes. Hand sanitizer, bleach water disinfectant, disinfecting wipes will be available. A sneeze guard will be installed at Mrs. Decker’s desk. Staff density is being reduced by 50% (including DOS and DEC members), alternate schedules, and continued teleworking. The commission certainly does not want to rush into anything or put anyone in jeopardy.

Reopening

Some staff participated in training and are still assisting DOL with unemployment insurance pandemic claims process, which is starting to taper off.

The commissioner financial filing deadline has been extended until August 17.

Commissioner Filing

All commissioners received the updated personnel policy that Mrs. Passino, Mrs. Waterbury, Mr. Johnson, and Ms. Malinowski worked on editing and updating from 2015. Commission attorney Mr. Willbanks also reviewed and commented. Changes included adding a probationary period, better explanation of non-comp and compensatory time, and leave notification for requesting time off.

Personnel Policy

On a motion made by Commissioner Yerdon and seconded by Commissioner Chereshnoski members approved the personnel policy as presented.

The NOCCOG circuit rider search committee (Mrs. Waterbury, Betsy Mack – NOCCOG fiscal officer, Bob Sauer- NOCCOG executive committee, Steve Hunter – former NOCCOG circuit rider) completed three interviews. John Healt is the preferred candidate of the committee, when the hiring freeze is lifted, the paperwork process for onboarding will begin.

NOCCOG Circuit Rider

All registration money for the Local Government Conference was returned a few weeks ago.	LGC
Mrs. Malinowski asked members their preference regarding the annual dinner that takes place in October or November. Normally details are finalized in August. Members suggested waiting until June to discuss again due to the changing situation with the pandemic.	Annual Dinner
The updated regional map brochure is done but printing is on hold for now. It will be published digitally once the upgrades to the website are complete.	Regional Map
Several webinars have been held to provide training in place of the cancelled LGC:	Training/Webinars
<p>April 22, Smart Solar Siting – Barton & Loguidice – 492 attended</p> <p>April 28, Reserve Funds – Laird OSC – 23 attended</p> <p>May 14, Small Wireless Facilities and 5G – NYCOM – 175 attended</p> <p>May 15, QGIS – Mickey and Alaina – 102 attended</p>	
Upcoming on June 18, Justice Court Options – Mrs. Kimball. She has also presented on this in Albany in the past.	
The Greens Corner solar project located in the towns of Hounsfield and Watertown has formally indicated interest in switching to the new section 94c process. Mrs. Malinowski attended a webinar by the New York Planning Federation last week about the new process and provided information on what the section 94c means for local law consideration. The webinar will be available via video and the link will be shared if possible.	Wind/Solar
The Roaring Brook Wind Farm in Martinsburg is under construction. Deer River is currently asking for comments on their PSC recommendations and a siting board decision is expected in July. Number Three is getting close to starting construction.	
Legislation is still pending for the Lorraine-Worth court consolidation (S6873/A9052) and Minimum Maintenance Roads. No word if legislators are going to reconvene for session.	Lorraine/Worth Court Consolidation/MMR
Broadband and cellular coverage issues have become apparent as people are working, schooling, and doing doctor visits from home. Commission staff are having conversations with various entities including DANC, an Adirondack group, the Governor’s office, and others. The Upstate New York Cellular Task Force put out a report with recommendations mainly focused on the Adirondacks. Staff are considering an issue paper, possibly a partnership with Syracuse University for research. The current crisis could open funding opportunities for the project that did not previously exist.	Broadband
CTHC – Mrs. Kimball reported that legislation is still pending for the Lorraine/Worth court consolidation. Municipalities are doing Zoom meetings for most part, and there have been some in-person meetings.	COG Reports
RACOG – Mr. Dietrich reported municipalities are focusing on board meetings, planning board, utilities remotely at this time.	
NorCOG/SRCG – Mr. Baxter reported that municipalities are doing the minimum necessary and paying bills to survive. Assisting municipalities with zoom meetings. There has not been good guidance from the state in terms of group meeting sizes. The transition to Phase 1 of the reopening has been frustrating for communities to figure out what to do and to remain compliant. Municipalities are taking a careful look at their expenses to get through the rest of	

this year. He attended the Oswego County legislature meeting last Thursday. The county has approximately a four million yearly paving budget. They decided to allocate \$500,000 of that and then wait and see how that goes and how revenues go before they authorize additional spending. Sales tax revenues, aid to municipalities and CHIPS are very much in question.

A discussion took place on how the pandemic has affected the region, municipalities, counties on many levels.

Ms. Malinowski reviewed the financial report in the beginning of meeting.

Finance Report

Commissioner Bogdanowicz opened the floor for public comment.

Public Comment

Commissioner Boxberger thanked Mr. Johnson and Ms. Mallette for their assistance with the town of Watertown planning board zoom meeting.

Commissioner Ritter shared that there seems to be a misunderstanding regarding having public in person meetings or using zoom for public hearings.

Commissioner Scriber shared that the town of Parish has a public hearing tonight and he asked the chairman if they were going to social distance and wear mask and hand sanitizers and I do not think the town is aware they have to do that. There is not much guidance coming from the state on this for municipalities. He is uncomfortable attending the meeting.

Commissioner Bogdanowicz asked if anyone heard how the primary going to be handled. Commissioner Yerdon shared he thinks it will be done by absentee. Mr. Baxter shared he thinks it will be all mail in ballots. Commissioner Ritter shared in Oneida County they are still supposed to work on primary day in June.

Commissioner Cheresnoski asked how staff has been doing. Mrs. Decker thanked her for asking and that staff is doing the best they can with the resources available at this time. Mr. Johnson shared he is amazed what we have been able to do from home using our cloud files being on the cloud and our computing capacity. Mrs. Harvill shared it is an adjustment but kudos to Felicia and everybody on staff that makes this work. Mr. Baxter shared he tips his hat to the office staff and how highly they have stepped up to this and kept everything going. Staff has really risen to the occasion and he am very proud to be part of this organization.

Chairman Bogdanowicz stated our next meeting will be June 15 via zoom.

There being no further business before the board, on a motion made by Commissioner Scriber and seconded by Commissioner Yerdon members adjourned the meeting at 11:00 a.m.

Adjourn

These minutes were approved by the Board of Commissioners.

Tom Boxberger

Secretary