

November 20, 2020

Lorraine-Worth Court Consolidation Legislation Signed

Following years of a vacancy in the town justice position and many temporary appointments by the Fifth Judicial District of a justice to cover their court, the town of Worth began to look for long-term solutions. New York's Uniform Justice Court Act section 106b authorizes multiple municipalities to elect a single justice to preside in justice courts of two or more adjacent towns in the same county. With this in mind, Worth began work with the neighboring town of Lorraine to explore combining their town courts.

The two towns followed the steps outlined in the statute to effect this change, including joint resolutions, a study of the situation which included a plan for the change, public hearings and local approval, which were completed in the spring of 2020. Once the local work was done, state legislation needed to be approved to affect the plan and the towns worked with their state representatives Senator Ritchie and Assemblyman Blankenbush to champion the legislation. The legislation, bill number S6873/A9052 was approved by the legislature in June of 2020. Following the legislative approval, the bill was sent to Governor Cuomo for his approval and signature which was completed on November 11, 2020.

The legislation effectively dissolves the individual town court of each town and creates a new combined judicial district covering both towns, with one justice with jurisdiction over both towns to be elected every four years. Since the completion of the legislation comes too late in the year for an election to be held this year, the towns will need to appoint a justice to cover the new judicial district until December 31st of 2021 and a candidate for the position will need to run for election next November for a four year term.

This is the second consolidated court operating in the Cooperative Tug Hill Council, with the Harrisburg/Montague/Pinckney court having been in operation since 2012. The towns of Lewis and Boylston have also effected legislative changes regarding residency requirements for judges to expand the pool of people available to run for the office in these towns. For more in depth information on court issues like consolidations and other solutions to judicial vacancies, see the commission's white paper at tughill.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Justice-Court-Consolidation-Solutions-Final.pdf.

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Constable Chronicles Webinar Series - Part 3: The Evolution of Constable Hall in the 1900's, Wednesday, December 2

The Constable Hall Association and the Tug Hill Commission are pleased to announce the third and final live webinar in the "Constable Chronicles" series. Paul Harvey would call the third Constable Chronicle "the rest of the story." This chronicle follows the Constable family and the evolution of Constable Hall in the 1900s, where we learn the stories of the last owners of the Hall and their family members. We also will see the impact that changes in the village, the country, and world had on them. Recollections from interviews with the last Constable family who lived at the Hall will connect us with joys, tragedy, and triumph of the era. And the quiz at the end is not to be missed.

The webinar will be narrated by Martha Constable Murray, a direct descendant of William Constable Jr., the builder of Constable Hall in Constableville, New York.

Please join us for an evening of "facts, fiction and folklore" as Marty brings us the final story in the webinar series from the perspective of the Constable family on **Wednesday, December 2, 2020, 7:00 pm EST**. This event is free and open to all. Register at us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_CVfAYHNtRTSwObDKObTi5Q

December 14 Commission Board Meeting

The Tug Hill Commission board will meet next on Monday, December 14, 2020 from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. online at us02web.zoom.us/j/87184168419 or via phone at (929) 205-6099 US, meeting ID 87184168419 . The public is welcome to attend.

Lewis County Residents Asked to Complete Broadband Survey

Lewis county residents and businesses can give input about their access to broadband internet, the speed available to them and the cost by going to www.lewiscountybroadband.com. The survey is co-sponsored by Lewis County and the Development Authority of the North Country (DANC).

Working with a contractor, ECC Technologies, the broadband campaign is a two-pronged effort. Contractors have already begun on-the-ground work to inventory and map broadband facilities in the county, including existing fiber and coaxial cabling and tower sites. The second part of the campaign is a survey of county residents and businesses to determine who has access to broadband and what people are paying or are willing to pay.

The information gathered through the survey will be mapped, showing the locations in the county that are unserved or underserved by high-speed internet access, paving the way for targeted solutions. This two-pronged approach – an on-the-ground inventory of existing cables, fiber, etc. and the survey – will provide data that can be used in grant applications to enhance broadband in the county. It will also help the Development Authority determine where to best invest in broadband resources.

DANC is a contributor to a larger cross-region collaborative effort including the Tug Hill Commission, Mohawk Valley Economic Development District (MVEDD) and Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board (CNY RPDB) that spans from Cortland County to St. Lawrence County to collect and share data and better coordinate broadband improvements across our rural regions. Lewis County is the first of the counties to undertake the inventory and survey. Other counties in the collaboration are expected to begin a similar process by the end of the year.

Access to affordable broadband (high-speed internet) is necessary for students to be able to learn from home, for parents to be able to work from home, for people to be able to utilize telemedicine, and to attract commerce. You can access the Lewis County survey from any computer or mobile device with internet access at www.lewiscountybroadband.com. If you don't have access to a computer, check with your local library about current operating hours and library use restrictions. If you have questions about this project, call the Lewis County planning department at (315) 376-5422.

THC Updates Technical Paper on Documents, Policies, & Records to have on File in the Clerk's Office

This month, the technical paper entitled "Document, Policies, & Records to have on File in the Clerk's Office" was updated to reflect several changes in required documentation since last publication in 2001 and an update of State Archives' [Retention and Disposition Schedule for New York Local Government Records \(LGS-1\)](#)

When topics arise that are of concern to many Tug Hill municipalities, commission staff develop issue or technical papers to provide information and background in a concise, organized manner. Issue papers explore more complicated topics important to the region, whereas technical papers describe how to do something or provide data-driven information.

This publication, as well as over two dozen other papers on a variety of topics pertinent to Tug Hill and its local governments, are available on the commission's website at <https://tughill.org/publications/technical-issue-papers/>. For hard copies, please contact your circuit rider or the commission office toll-free in the region, at 888-785-2380.

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Habitat Management for Young Forest Wildlife at Tug Hill Wildlife Management Area

In 2015, the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) launched the [Young Forest Initiative](#), aimed to increase young forest habitat for wildlife species that prefer this type of habitat. One property using this management strategy is the [Tug Hill Wildlife Management Area](#) (WMA), a 5,110-acre property in the town of Montague, Lewis County. DEC acquired the Tug Hill WMA in 1955, primarily to provide hunters and trappers an area with a remote forest experience. This large WMA is surrounded by thousands of acres of state forests and other conservation lands.

DEC wrote a habitat management plan for Tug Hill WMA, which included the creation of 455 acres of young forest habitat over a 10-year period. This has been done using small patch clear-cuts, beginning in 2018 and concluding in 2020. The average patch size is 4.8 acres, and the total area of the patch cuts is 54 acres. Species that will benefit from young forest management on this property include ruffed grouse, American woodcock, and snowshoe hare.

Wildlife have already moved into these newly managed areas. When DEC staff conducted American woodcock surveys in 2015, they did not observe any woodcock. However, during the 2020 survey, staff observed three woodcock using the new open areas. DEC has also consistently observed ruffed grouse in these areas along with snowshoe hare. Several other noteworthy species have been using the recently cut areas, including white-tail deer, black bear, coyotes, and many species of birds. As of this fall, 114 total acres have been harvested on the WMA using several habitat management practices, with another 331 acres to be harvested over the next six years.



Aerial photo of patch cuts at Tug Hill WMA by Tim Pyszczynski

DEC Announces Tie for State Record Pumpkinseed Caught in the Black River

Each year, New York State's lakes, rivers, ponds, and streams produce large numbers of trophy-sized fish. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's [Angler Achievement Awards Program](#) recognizes exceptional catches in several categories.

Commissioner Basil Seggos recently announced that the state record for a pumpkinseed has officially been tied by a catch on the Black River earlier this year. Jordan Tontarski caught the pumpkinseed last winter in Jefferson County, tying a state record set 25 years ago. The record pumpkinseed fish weighed in at 1 pound and 9 ounces.

Quality fisheries on the Black River is a great indicator of the health of the Black River watershed, and Tug Hill Commission encourages anglers of all abilities to try their luck at catching their own record fish in the watershed. For more on where you can fish the Black River, visit: www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/40570.html



For additional information on the Angler Achievement Awards Program, call (518) 402-8891 or email fwfish@dec.ny.gov



Department of State

2020-2021 Winter Webinar Series

When: December 2020 and January 2021

Where: Attend from wherever you are. You will need a computer with speakers or a mobile device.

Courses: Subdivision Review, Floodplain Regulation, Skills That Make Great Board Members, Planning Board Overview, Zoning Board of Appeals Overview.

Who: Planning Board Members, Zoning Board of Appeals Members, Governing Board Members, Planning Staff, Code Enforcement Officers, Other Local Officials

More Training Information: http://www.dos.ny.gov/lg/lut/index.html

To Register:

Click on each course below that you want to attend to register.

Once registered, you will receive a confirmation email with instructions for joining each session.

December 8, 2020 Subdivision Review 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM 2 hours training credit

December 15, 2020 Floodplain Regulation 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM 2 hours training credit

December 22, 2020 Skills That Make Great Board Members 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM 2 hours training credit

January 5, 2021 Planning Board Overview 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM 2 hours training credit

January 12, 2021 Zoning Board of Appeals Overview 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM 2 hours training credit

Contact Us

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Visit us at:

Web: www.tughill.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/TugHillCommission

To request our newsletter electronically please email gwen@tughill.org or call

1-888-785-2380.

For upcoming trainings, grant deadlines, and meetings, view our calendar .



Powers & Duties of Local Highway Officials Manual

Cornell Local Roads Program’s powers and duties manual was updated in 2018 and is an important resource for town officials. It can be found here: cornell.app.box.com/v/clrp-ws-pd. This 180-page manual contains a wealth of information related to topics such as establishing highways and streets, legal duties regarding highways, written notice laws, ethics and conflicts of interest, and labor relations, just to name a few.

Resources:

- Cornell Local Roads Program Powers and Duties Manual (beginning on page 93) cornell.app.box.com/v/clrp-ws-pd
• NYSAOTSOH www.nystownhwys.org/
• Cornell Local Roads Program www.clrp.cornell.edu/