

# TUG HILL COMMISSION

## MINUTES OF MEETING

December 14, 2020, Via Video and Audio with Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87184168419>, Meeting ID: 871 8416 8419

Chairman Bogdanowicz opened the meeting 10:04 a.m.

**Opened**

Commission members included Messrs. Bogdanowicz, Maciejko, Boxberger, Scriber and Mdm. Ritter and Chereshnoski. Staff included Katie Malinowski, Gwen Decker, Felicia Passino, Jean Waterbury, Alaina Mallette, Jennifer Harvill, Matt Johnson, and Carla Fowler. Circuit Riders - Angie Kimball, Paul Baxter, and Mickey Dietrich. Guests included Counsel – Lee Willbanks, NOCCOG Associate Circuit Rider Harlan Moonen, NOCCOG board members John Doiron, and Bob Sauer, Oswego County Planner Karen Noyes.

**Attendance**

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

**Agenda Approved**

On a motion made by Commissioner Chereshnoski and seconded by Commissioner Boxberger members approved the minutes of October 19, 2020.

**Minutes Approved**

Chairman's report followed.

**Chairman's Report**

Chairman Bogdanowicz welcomed everyone to the final meeting of 2020 via video conference. He wished all a healthy holiday season. Please stay home, do not travel and be patience and hopeful for prosperity in 2021. Hopefully in 2021 we start to see some success to reduce the COVID-19 transmissions and mortalities associated with it.

**Welcome**

He thanked Mrs. Harvill and Peter Hayes for a job well done on the Constable Chronicles webinar series that showcased the history of the Constable family and their impact on the North Country. Comments from across the country have been received from those with ties to the Tug Hill.

Commissioner Bogdanowicz gave recognition to Harlan Moonen for his 25 years of service as NOCCOG Associate Circuit Rider. He worked with Harlan the last 10 years and has a great deal of respect for him. He will be missed. Commissioner Ritter commented that it was a pleasure working with Harlan. He brought a great deal of knowledge and was a strong supporter of the commissions work. John Doiron, NOCCOG Chair commented working with Harlan has been great and hopes he enjoys retirement. Mrs. Waterbury and Mrs. Malinowski both thanked him for his service, support, knowledge, and contribution. Bob Sauer, NOCCOG Vice Chair commented that Harlan provided credible information and a needed part of meetings and was well respected. Commissioner Maciejko wished Harlan a good retirement. All expressed best wishes for him in his retirement. Mr. Moonen expressed his thanks to everyone and how amazing it has been to serve 23 years and meet and work with the municipal boards and the commission and see the development over the years.

At our September meeting Commissioners Boxberger, Chereshnoski and Ritter were appointed to the nominating committee for election of officers 2021-2022 for chair, vice chair and secretary. At the October meeting Commissioner Chereshnoski proposed a slate of officers that includes Tom Boxberger as secretary, Mike Yerdon as vice chair, Jan Bogdanowicz as chair. All have agreed to run. Commissioner Bogdanowicz asked members for any discussion on the nominations. He asked a second time and a third time. There being no additional nominations Commissioner Bogdanowicz asked the secretary to cast a ballot for

the appointment of Tom Boxberger as secretary, Mike Yerdon as vice chair and Jan Bogdanowicz as chair for a slate of officers for 2021-2022. On a motion made by Commissioner Maciejko and seconded by Commissioner Cheresnoski, members accepted the slate of officers as presented for 2021-2022.

Via email you received the 2021 meeting calendar draft. Mrs. Malinowski commented that Zoom meetings will continue through March, with the possibility to have in-person meetings come April, however, that still to be determined. The Local Government Conference is canceled again for 2021, however, we will have a meeting in March. The annual dinner in November has moved to October to accommodate the conflicts that arose with election day and municipal meetings. A meeting in each COG is included in the 2021 calendar.

On a motion made by Commissioner Scriber and seconded by Commissioner Boxberger members accepted the 2021 meeting calendar as presented.

Executive Director's report followed.

## **Executive Director's Report**

Mrs. Malinowski reported staff has returned to remote work as much as possible due to the rise in COVID-19 cases. The office is not closed, staff can come in if they need to do necessary things. Circuit riders can attend meetings using their best judgement with the uptick in communities. We will continue with Zoom and some hybrid meetings.

## **Administration**

We are waiting to hear on the stimulus bill. The executive budget comes out in January and we should have a better idea where we are. Mrs. Malinowski wants to schedule individual calls with all commissioners before the end of the year.

Minimum Maintenance Roads is high priority in the Tug Hill region. We are in continued discussions with Albany. The Assembly Program and Counsel has identified several issues with the bill. After discussing with our staff, we think rewriting of the bill would make it less complicated be a better approach than trying to continue with it as its currently written. A meeting is planned with Senator Griffo's staff to discuss the bill. We were successful this fall to get the Assembly Rural Resources Committee members Assemblymembers Santabarbara and Woerner added to the bill.

## **MMR**

We received an interpretation from Mark Gebo on the Weikel/West Turin second appellate court decision (sent to member via email). He felt the case was found against the town for reasons not related to MMR law but details of the situation. We will use some of his recommendations in our rewrite of the MMR bill.

Mr. Willbanks commented is appears the burden will be on the town to prove it is not a year-round residence, based on the way the option is written.

The Lorraine/Worth Court Consolidation legislation has been signed by the Governor and is now a law. This will provide the town of Worth with more options.

## **Lorraine/Worth Court Consolidation**

We continue to work on broadband. Lewis County's survey is underway. Jefferson County is also working with the Development Authority of the North Country to do a study. Oswego County work is in progress with the Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board which use some of their CARES Act Funding to bring on consultant to work in four of the five counties. Oneida County work is being discussed. In discussions with Mohawk Valley Economic Development District, they are trying to figure out what to do with their CARES Act Funding. We hoped they would do like CNYRDB. Oneida County has been asked if they

## **Broadband**

wanted to be added to Central New York's contract. More discussion is planned with NOCCOG and Oneida County is planned.

Headwaters in preparation. There will be no mailings this year only electronic.

**Headwaters**

Via email you received a proposal for a Snowmobile Economic Impact Study. New executive Director Brittany Davis and her staff held a Zoom with commission staff to discuss the project. The Center for Community Studies at JCC would implement the study along with Camoin 310. We suggested they broaden the study to include the entire Tug Hill region and have an economic development team be brought in for the survey. The expense for the study is \$22,000. Lewis County is providing approximately \$10,000 to support the project. Mrs. Malinowski would like the commission to support and be part of the study. She asked members to consider allocating \$5000 to support the project. Commissioner Scriber commented that only if the encompasses all the counties in the Tug Hill region. Mrs. Malinowski will ask for the proposal to be revised for all Tug Hill counties to be included. Commissioner Bogdanowicz asked for a motion.

**Snowmobile  
Economic Impact  
Study**

On a motion made by Commissioner Scriber and seconded by Commissioner Boxberger members approved to allocate \$5000 to the Snowmobile Impact Economic Study with the revision that all Tug Hill counties to be included.

Mad River wind farm has withdrawn from Article 10 as of last week. We will continue to monitor developments on the project.

**Renewable Energy**

Ms. Mallette and Mr. Johnson have been assisting the town of Watertown with amendments to the codes and laws with the Greens Corners solar farm being proposed in the towns of Watertown and Hounsfield.

Towns have been working hard to get their local laws changed and finalized due to the 94c process.

Staff continues to do planning to provide trainings.

**Upcoming Training**

December 29 - NYS Public Employer Mandatory Emergency Planning Requirement  
End January-March - Letters from a Tug Hill Logger 3 Part Series (Leona and Pete Cheresnoski)

Via email you received a 480a revised issue paper draft. Mrs. Harvill and Mrs. Kimball are near completion. We are waiting for an updated table to show the impact on Osceola before we can finalize the paper. We expect to release the paper at the end of the year.

**480a Issue Paper**

NOCCOG – Mrs. Waterbury reported Mr. Moonen retires at the end of the year. The NOCCOG executive board will approve the contract with Joe Rowlands for associate circuit rider at their Thursday zoom the board meeting. Mr. Rowlands will begin the position January 1, 2021. He was previously supervisor of Stueben and on the NOCCOG Board. A new supervisor for Stueben is on board. The NOCCOG board will need to fill the vacant position. Continuing to do Zoom meetings and getting more requests to due to no in person meetings in Oneida County. NOCCOG contracted with Mark Clark to do GPS. He has done work in Annsville and started in Camden, however had to stop due to a test positive of COVID of a person working with him. He will do GPS as he can. NOCCOG sent out information for their annual meeting using a google form survey and 10 responses were received, which is the majority of the 17 members. She is working to get NOCCOG involved in the broadband project. Mr. Doiron submitted a request of the \$2000 instead of the \$7500 annually NOCCOG has received in previous years from Oneida County. The board is waiting to hear from Oneida County.

**COG Reports**

NorCOG/SRCG – Mr. Baxter reported in November NorCOG held an in-person meeting and SRCG held a hybrid meeting. Uncertain when the next meeting will be depending on the COVID-19 situation. Municipalities overall have been moving away from having public access to offices and implementing Zoom meeting and hybrid meetings. People are trying to be cautious. Budget season wrapping up and municipalities are working to get details completed. Municipalities are having difficulties recruiting extra help for winter months at highway departments due to the pandemic. They see the need for contingency plan in the event of a COVID-19 infection. Municipalities appreciate are assistance for the ability to hold Zoom meetings.

CTHC – Mrs. Kimball reported many towns have had retirements and resignations including long timers of highway departments, town of Adams with over 30 years and town of Worth with 48 years. A new highway superintendent is on board at Worth. Other resignations for Harrisburg include the clerk, some planning and zoning board members and justice court judge. The justice position was filled, however that left a planning board position vacant at Pinckney that has been filled. There will be more local official changes. Towns are working on water and sewer projects. Port Leyden hired a new water plant operation. Lyonsdale is receiving pressure to do a water district. Rodman is dealing with resignations and retirements. Some Oswego towns highway employees are in quarantine. Casandra Buell moved up to director of planning at Lewis County. Barnes Corners Snopals are contacting boards about the Snirt Run. There is no finalization or restitution for the damages done to roads from the previous Snirt Run. Mrs. Kimball and Ms. Mallette are working on get mini comprehensive plans approved. Zoom and hybrid meetings continue. CTHC did not hold a fall meeting for 2020. The budget was sent out electronically and we received 20 of 21 votes.

RACOG – Mr. Dietrich reported the LED lighting project is moving forward. Champion and Castorland have opted out. Jefferson County is submitting a shared service plan. Lewis County will be submitting a shared service plan. With the National Grid incentive and LGE grant we obtained; communities will be receiving funds to offset costs. RACOG is looking into Community Choice Aggregation and Lewis County planning attended a meeting and did a presentation for RACOG board. Jefferson County has also been looking into it. There will be a Clean Energy Communities and Community Choice Aggregation Zoom webinar tomorrow at 6:00 p.m. with Lewis County and ANCA providing presentations. Communities have been reaching out for assistance with emergency planning in the event they should have a quarantine situation during the winter. Each county highway departments are working on putting together plan. We are holding an Emergency Planning Zoom webinar on January 29 to assist communities. Communities are being cautious with the current uptick of COVID-19. Town of Wilna is trying to fill a senior highway position, with only nine applications submitted. In the past they received up to 70. Communities are struggling to get new staff. The developer for the railroad depot between Carthage and Lowville purchased the old depot in Carthage and the former Memories Restaurant in Lowville and plans for pedal cars. Some communities are in favor of the pedal cars and others would prefer a multi-use trail. The village of Lowville has expressed interest in joining RACOG. Mr. Johnson and Ms. Mallette continue to work with Lowville on a comprehensive plan. There is also a new page devoted to the comprehensive plan on Lowville website.

The financial report was sent via email. We continue to be careful with expenses. There are no concerns currently. We continue to wait on staff salary increases.

**Finance Report**

Commissioner Bogdanowicz opened the floor for public comment.

**Public Comment**

Commissioner Cheresnoski expressed thanks, for all the staff has been doing during this difficult time with the pandemic.

There being no further business, on a motion made by Commissioner Cheresnoski and seconded by Commissioner Boxberger members adjourned the meeting at 11:15 a.m.

**Adjourn**

These minutes were approved by the Board of Commissioners.

Tom Boxberger

Secretary