

TUG HILL COMMISSION

MINUTES OF MEETING

June 15, 2020, Via Video and Audio with Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87288997834>, Meeting ID: 872 8899 7834

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

Opened

Commission members included Messrs. Bogdanowicz, Boxberger, Yerdon, Maciejko and Mdms. Ritter and Cheresnosk. Staff included Katie Malinowski, Gwen Decker, Felicia Passino, Jean Waterbury, Jennifer Harvill, Alaina Mallette, Carla Fowler, and Matt Johnson; Circuit Riders - Angie Kimball, Paul Baxter, and Mickey Dietrich. Also NOCCOG Associate Circuit Rider John Healt.

Attendance

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

Agenda Approved

On a motion made by Commissioner Ritter and seconded by Commissioner Yerdon members approved the minutes of May 18, 2020.

Minutes Approved

Chairman's report followed.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Bogdanowicz thanked everyone for attending the video conference meeting. This past Friday five upstate regions are now in Phase 3, Finger Lakes, Central NY, Mohawk Valley, North Country, and Southern Tier. Phase 3 includes opening of tattoo parlors, nail salons, massage therapy and limited indoor dining. Detailed information is available on the NYS Department of Health website. Showing low infection rates, Western NY could possibly enter Phase 3 tomorrow June 16, the Capital District should be Wednesday, and the Mid-Hudson region would be next week. New York City remains in Phase 1, however if the lower trends continue, they could possibly get to Phase 2 on June 22. Price Chopper in Watertown had a pop-up antibody testing to ask people if they want to get tested to see if they had Covid-19. A pop-up testing was done last week in Utica Rome area. These are not made public, they are set up at stores and people asked if they would like a test to see if they had the coronavirus. The Department of Health is trying to create a database of who had it and provide information about regions and reopening phases. Last week Governor Cuomo signed executive orders to extend voting for school board elections and school budget votes. Another executive order done last week was to alter requirements for nursing home personnel testing's from twice weekly to once a week for facilities that are in regions that are in Phase 2.

Welcome

There has been a great deal of concern amongst the public with the circumstances of the death of George Floyd. Hopefully, some good will come from this tragedy and future race relations can get better here in the region and across the country. When you think of the Tug Hill you don't really think of diversity. But if you were to look back in years, most folks that lived on the hill at one time or another, were immigrants.

Commissioner Bogdanowicz and Mrs. Malinowski have been discussing a possible retreat in August. We need to continue to social distance, have access to restrooms, and keep it safe for everyone. He asked members for thoughts whether it is too soon to gather together and options for a place. After discussion, consensus was that it would be safe if an accommodating place can be found. Thoughts included Whitaker Park in Martinsburg and Whetstone Gulf. Mrs. Malinowski shared that Whitaker Park is closed and Whetstone Gulf is not open yet. She will keep checking and let members know

Commissioner Bogdanowicz asked members their thoughts on whether to hold the annual dinner that is typically in November. Mrs. Malinowski shared that due to conflicts in the past with election day we are considering the month of October. Invites would go out beginning of September. Members agreed to review again to see what the situation is with the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.

Executive Director's report followed.

Executive Director's Report

Mrs. Malinowski reported we are at 50% staff in the office, no more than five staff at a time in with staggered schedules. State agencies came together to meet with OGS to discuss what precautions will be taken for elevators, restrooms, common areas. OGS will be cleaning the areas, limited occupancy in restrooms and hand sanitizer will be available.

Administration

Mrs. Malinowski shared and reviewed the Return to Work template that members received via email. The template was discussed with staff prior to completing. Masks are required when not in your own office. A sneeze guard was purchased for Mrs. Decker's desk, limited occupancy in kitchen, copy room and library. Signage for cleaning, 6 feet distancing and occupancy are posted. Some items have been moved to avoid congregating and sharing. Staff is supplied with one mask per week. Everyone has individual hand sanitizer, and larger ones at common areas. Only one staff in state vehicles at a time, disinfecting wipes are in each vehicle. Staff will fill out an online health screening form upon arrival when in office, that is only accessed by Mrs. Malinowski. A touchless thermometer is provided at the office. No visitors currently. If there was an absolute need an appointment would be required. The Return to Work template was submitted to Albany.

Ms. Catcher and Ms. Martel will continue teleworking until July, at which time we will review staff scheduling.

Commissioner Boxberger asked if Mrs. Malinowski would accommodate staff with medical reasons and things like that as well. Mrs. Malinowski stated she emailed staff last week and if there is a medical concern, if we have proper documentation, we will work through that with them. There are other tools such as voluntary reduction in work schedules and Family Medical Leave Act.

There is a new testing tracker map available online to track the number of tests done in each region daily and how many of those are positive. There is a low rate of positive tests results. If people keep following the requirements things should continue to progress.

We have not received any additional budget bulletins since the two received last month regarding the hiring freeze and non-personal service spending.

The Lorraine/Worth Court Consolidation legislation passed both the assembly and senate and is now awaiting the governor's signature. Mr. Johnson and Mrs. Kimball have worked on this for a few years.

Lorraine/Worth Court Consolidation

We are staying up to date on the executive orders and sharing that information with our communities as we work through the phases of reopening. NYCOM came out with a reopening guidance document last week. It is tough for everyone to figure out opening their offices, how much in person is permitted, and staying safe. We continue to provide ongoing technical assistance.

Executive Orders

The new commission regional map was released in the last Tug Hill Times and is available on our website. Ms. Mallette created a flip book version that can be downloaded. We are unable to have the brochures printed at this time due to the budget restrictions.

Regional Map Brochure

Mrs. Malinowski sits on the steering committee for the Staying Connected Initiative and shared a map showing the initiative. There is interest to expand work in New York to connect the Catskills. The New England Governors and Canadian Premiers joint group passed a resolution for wildlife connectivity in 2016. New York was not a part of that, so we are working to get them on board. She has involved in meetings in Albany prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. We would like to get the governor's office involved also. We assisted communities on language for comprehensive plans about wildlife connectivity.

Staying Connected Initiative

Upcoming training webinars:

June 18 -Justice Court Options – Mrs. Kimball

June 23-Transparency in Comprehensive Planning – Matt Horn, MRB Group

June 25-Road to Recovery, Path to 2025 Agricultural Webinar, with Jefferson County Economic Development and Nathan Rudgers, Farm Credit East

Training/Webinars

We have been discussing a possible program series with Constable Hall. They have been struggling with just their gardens open, but the museum has been closed awaiting opening in Phase 4. More discussion is needed with John Constable and Peter Hayes to determine what we can do to help them.

Ms. Mallette and Ms. Fowler are participating in bi-weekly group conversations with organizations including DANC, ADK group, Governor's office, and others working to get more broadband access in the region. This is a huge project that will be long term. Ms. Mallette shared that the committee will meet tomorrow. This project will go into the summer of next year or potentially longer depending on developments. Ms. Fowler sent letters to school districts to request information on what areas have poor access or affordability issues and we will begin making a coverage map.

Broadband

NOCCOG – Mrs. Waterbury introduced John Healt to members. He is currently an associate contract circuit rider and has interviewed for the NOCCOG circuit rider position. He is the preferred candidate but that is not moving forward at this time due to hard hiring freeze.

COG Reports

NOCCOG purchased GPS units last year. Mr. Dietrich assisted in training for the village of Holland Patent and towns of Remsen and Camden. The town of Annsville and village of Sylvan are both interested in using the units for public water and highway projects. NOCCOG has some funds they would like to dedicate to the GPS project for an intern or a part time person. Ms. Fowler is making contacts and helping organize the project. NOCCOG will not hold their annual meeting in September. They will mail the budget and ballots for budget approval and election of officers. Mr. Healt, Mr. Moonen and commission staff have been covering municipal meetings.

CTHC – Mrs. Kimball reported some communities are doing in person meetings, some doing Zoom and some hybrid. The CTHC Executive board agreed to add an amendment to the associate contract for a policy regarding in person meeting safety. A few towns are working with engineers on sewer systems due to regulation changes. Constableville's water plant operator resigned; they are looking to fill that position. There is a new representative for the Deer River wind project, but do not have a name yet. Martinsburg is working on a sewer study and water project. The fire department has concerns about the fire tax due to the new pilot for the Maple Ridge. Roaring Brook wind farm construction is underway. Redfield is working on a driveway installation law. Montague is having problems with their Frontier landline being out frequently. Town of Turin is working on regulating large gatherings. Turin and Florence

are working on salt shed projects. A new dollar store is coming to Williamstown. Ms. Kimball and Ms. Stuckey attended the Worth in person meeting this month at the highway garage to accommodate social distancing. They are working on buying property for a new town hall. A resident has asked about the town maintaining a seasonal road. A CTHC board meeting is being planned for June 23 and ZBA hearing at the end of the month. No decision has been made on holding the fall dinner meeting.

RACOG – Mr. Dietrich reported most communities are still doing Zoom meetings. Some in person meetings may be starting next month and some hybrid. Peter McCain, from Fort Drum will be interning July through August and will be doing mapping of sidewalks and other projects. LED lighting project evolving with new National Grid buyback quotes. New York Power Authority has an upcoming meeting with the Public Service Commission and National Grid this week. Mr. Dietrich meet with BOCES carpentry teacher to discuss student involvement with Complete Streets project, for projects in Carthage and Copenhagen.

NorCOG/SRCG – Mr. Baxter reported the Cleveland Dock project was delayed due to COVID-19, however, construction is well underway and completion is expected in July. Work is underway on Route 22 Bennetts Bridge in Orwell. West Monroe is looking to expand sewer services. They reached out to DANC for assistance, but DANC is unable to help. They plan to meet with DEC to discuss options. Town of Parish is working on water and wastewater and DANC is helping on that project. Communities are looking at budgets with the decreased revenues. A big issue is looking at highway work and how much to spend due to the uncertainty of CHIPS and state aid reductions. Oswego County has a \$4 million paving budget with only \$500,000 currently allocated.

The financial report was sent via email. The 2019 fiscal year is almost closed out, with a few outstanding expenses. The end of year report will be ready for the next meeting. The first financial statement for 2020-21 was reviewed, including personnel services costs, attorney costs and vehicles repairs.

Finance Report

Commissioner Bogdanowicz opened the floor for public comment.

Public Comment

Mrs. Decker shared she reached out to Jefferson County Emergency Management and they were able to provide the commission with hand sanitizer. She suggested a thank you letter be sent to them.

Commissioner Ritter shared an update on the Boonville fire cleanup completed by the city of Rome. Most of the businesses have already gone elsewhere in the village. Property owners are deciding how to move forward. She also met with a Carmen O'Keefe from Apex Power regarding a solar energy project.

Commissioner Cheresnoski suggested doing an agenda for the annual dinner to discuss at the next meeting.

There being no further business, on a motion made by Commissioner Maciejko and seconded by Commissioner Boxberger members adjourned the meeting at 11:31 a.m.

Adjourn

These minutes were approved by the Board of Commissioners.

Tom Boxberger

Secretary