

TUG HILL COMMISSION

MINUTES OF MEETING

September 21, 2020, Via Video and Audio with Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87090552047>, Meeting ID: 870 9055 2047

Chairman Bogdanowicz opened the meeting 10:03 a.m.

Opened

Commission members included Messrs. Bogdanowicz, Boxberger, Yerdon, Scriber and Mdm. Cheresnosk. Staff included Katie Malinowski, Gwen Decker, Felicia Passino, Jean Waterbury, Jennifer Harvill, and Carla Fowler. Circuit Riders - Angie Kimball, Paul Baxter, and Mickey Dietrich. Counsel – Lee Willbanks.

Attendance

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

Agenda Approved

On a motion made by Commissioner Yerdon and seconded by Commissioner Scriber members approved the minutes of June 15, 2020.

Minutes Approved

Chairman's report followed.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Bogdanowicz thanked everyone for attending the video conference meeting. He wished a happy Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur to our Jewish friends. Nationally we have lost a great Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg with her passing this month. He shared that Frontier is doing a lot of work in Montague and hopefully that is a positive for internet connectivity.

Welcome

Upcoming is our election of officers for the 2021-2022 term for chair, vice-chair, and secretary. Per our bylaws a designated organizational meeting will be scheduled for December 14 at the commission's Watertown office, if we are able to meet in person. Commissioners Boxberger, Cheresnoski and Ritter were appointed to the nominating committee and will present a slate of officers at the October 19 commission meeting. On a motion made by Commission Yerdon and seconded by Commissioner Cheresnoski members approved the appointing of officers at the December 14 meeting.

Executive Director's report followed.

Executive Director's Report

Mrs. Malinowski reported we continue to work remotely and operate at 50% staff scheduled in the office at a time. She reports to the Governor's office weekly. She has requested a modification to the return to work plan (handout via email) to allow more than one employee in state vehicle at a time and for an increase of 75% capacity at a time at the office. There has been no approval to change the current plan at this point.

Administration

We have not received any new budget bulletins from DOB. We are being careful and doing our best to watch our expenses and waiting for more details and guidance from the state.

We have been working to update our GIS Policies, Processes and Procedures (email handout) that outlines our current GIS operations. The document had not been updated since 2008. We have switched from ESRI to QGIS. The switch to QGIS allows us to save money and provides with an online component, as well as allow us to grow and use to the full potential as technology continues to evolve. In his previous role as GIS Specialist Mr. Dietrich did the bulk of the GIS work in the office. As he is not the RACOG circuit rider, staff is working to share the

GIS workload more equitably. Our GIS team is Mr. Dietrich, Ms. Mallette, Mrs. Harvill, Mr. Johnson and Mrs. Malinowski.

A new IT Policy (email handout) was created now that we are working remotely and using the cloud for document management. We have not had an IT policy in the past, however, we felt it was important to implement one now that we are working more in the virtual environment and need to attend to security details. Mrs. Waterbury, Mrs. Malinowski, Mrs. Passino, and Mr. Johnson worked on the policy and THC counsel, Mr. Wilbanks, reviewed it. Mrs. Malinowski shared the document on her screen and provided an overview for members and asked for approval.

On a motion made by Commissioner Cheresnoski and seconded by Commissioner Boxberger members approved the IT Policy as presented.

The Climate Action Council which was set up in the Climate Act that was passed last year, also has set up some advisory panels. Mrs. Malinowski will be sitting on the Land Use and Local Government advisory panel, which will hold their first meeting September 24. As much of this is downstate driven Mrs. Malinowski felt upstate participation was important and provides an opportunity to share our experience with communities dealing with the siting process of wind and solar facilities.

The Office of Renewable Energy Siting that was formed in last year's budget has released proposed regulations intended to speed up the siting and construction of renewable energy projects, for public comment. Commissioner Bogdanowicz raised a question if Article 10 still applies and if the regulations is to be voted on again by the legislature. Counsel Wilbanks confirmed that after a public hearing and comment period, the regulations will be in effect without further action of the state legislature. As proposed, at certain thresholds developers will have the choice to opt out of Article 10 and into the new siting process. Mrs. Malinowski will review the regulations draft and forward information to commissioners. An in-person public hearing is scheduled in Clayton, November 19 from 5:00 -9:00 p.m. We will continue to track developments.

The Lorraine/Worth Court Consolidation legislation has not been delivered to the governor's office yet for consideration. It has been passed by the Assembly and Senate. Lorraine and Worth have approved sending letter to the governor's office to support his signing the legislation. CTHC will meet Tuesday evening and may also doing a support letter.

Lorraine/Worth Court Consolidation

As a result of our discussion about COVID-10 and continuing confusion from municipalities on requirements, staff worked to generate a new COVID-19 FAQ (email handout) for municipalities to use as a guideline for municipal operations. We reached out to the Association of Towns for input. The COVID-19 FAQ is available on our website.

COVID FAQ

Upcoming training webinars:

- September 22 - Constable Chronicles Webinar Series Part 1
- September 29 - Virtual Black River Watershed Conference
- September 29 – Evaluating and Amending Your Zoning Law Workshop (hybrid)

Training/Webinars

Approximately 60 have signed up for the Constable Chronicles. The most signed up for a single session for the Black River Watershed conference is 28. Mr. Johnson will be presenting the zoning workshop, which will be our first hybrid. We are also working on additional planning and zoning trainings, and are promoting the trainings via press releases, the Tug Hill Times and our website.

Ms. Mallette and Ms. Fowler are making progress on the broadband project. Mrs. Malinowski shared her screen to show the geography being discussed. There are improvements happening in Montague, Osceola, and Redfield. Lewis County is onboard and working with DANC; Oswego County is covered by CNYRPDB; Jefferson County is still talking with DANC; Oneida County is joining with CNYRPDB. Our goal is to gather information for these geographic areas, so they are prepared to apply for the Broadband Reconnect 2nd round of funding. Ms. Fowler shared that she and Ms. Mallette are working on the survey component to calculate those unserved and underserved.

Broadband

NOCCOG – Mrs. Waterbury reported NOCCOG held a board meeting via Zoom a few weeks ago. They did not have their annual meeting this year due to COVID-19. They plan to do a mailing this week that includes the chairman report, proposed budget and bylaw changes and a ballot for voting of officers. The board approved a reduced membership for next year from \$1000 to \$500. Harlan Moonen, Associate Circuit Rider is not going to renew his contract in January. The board has reached out to Lisa Bellinger who was interviewed for the circuit rider position earlier this year, and she will be replacing Mr. Moonen. The board approved a three-month contract from October to December. A yearly contract will be done in January 2021. Another associate circuit rider will be needed once Mr. Healt takes over the circuit rider position. The commission staff has continued to assist in municipal meeting coverage.

COG Reports

CTHC – Mrs. Kimball reported Adams is working on a water line extension. Martinsburg is working on water and sewer improvements; town justice Kevin McCardle has resigned. Boylston is working on wind and solar changes to zoning and subdivision amendments; as well as a local law so they can appoint out of town residents for appointed positions. Western is working on seasonal use zoning. Florence and Williamstown both have salt shed buildings up; Lewis is still in the process working on theirs and just applied for an extension. Montague is talking with legislators to see if some funding is possible for hosting the Doppler radar. Osceola's planning board chair resigned. Pinckney has approved to update their special areas map and reapprove their official highway map. Redfield is working with DEC to get some rules enforced for the reservoir. Town of Turin Brick Bock building will be taken over by the county by eminent domain and demolished; village of Turin is working to get quotes for the demolition. Western appointed a ZBA to fill the seat of a member who recently passed. Worth is working on a new municipal building and looking to hire an engineer for the project.

RACOG – Mr. Dietrich reported the LED project started with 15 participants, Champion is opted out, Wilna and West Carthage are moving forward. There have been many questions and uncertainties with options and costs that have arisen with this project. Ms. Fowler and Mrs. Malinowski have been involved in the project discussions. We are wrapping up doing separate municipal meetings for each community and will hold a group LED meeting tomorrow evening.

Mr. Dietrich hopes that projects put on hold due to COVID-19 may be revisited now and make some progress and will discuss at the next RACOG meeting. Complete Streets boardwalk for Carthage might be going in this fall and finishing up benches for Copenhagen. Lowville is working on their comprehensive plan, Ms. Mallette has been assisting. Staff is assisting with municipal meeting coverage via Zoom. Zero Dock Street restaurant is now open in Carthage on the Black River. A developer is looking to have pedal bike cars in Lowville and Carthage. He has purchased the train station in Lowville and is currently in the process of buying the train depot in Carthage.

NorCOG/SRCG – Mr. Baxter reported towns are going into budget season and working on preparing them. Dock improvements are complete in Cleveland. Parish is dealing with conflicts with the water district and plan to have a referendum to have residents reaffirm they want to move forward. They are also dealing with internal conflicts on their board. Albion is

dealing with internal conflicts on their board and were unable to do business at their last meeting.

The financial report was sent via email. The closeout statement for 2019-2020 shows our total expenses at a little over one million dollars. We had extra funding last year from our collaborating on the complete streets grant project. The current 2020-2021 statement shows our salary at just over \$373,000. Some expenses have not been processed in Albany yet. We continue to be frugal on non-salary expenses. To date we have approximately \$900 in COVID-19 expenses, which Albany has asked us to code for expenses related to the pandemic. Inter office expense of \$500 paid to the NYS Office of Archives for reports to be kept. Costs are down as staff is not doing much traveling and many meetings and trainings continue to be remote.

Finance Report

Commissioner Bogdanowicz opened the floor for public comment.

Public Comment

There being no further business, on a motion made by Commissioner Scriber and seconded by Commissioner Yerdon members adjourned the meeting at 11:27 a.m.

Adjourn

These minutes were approved by the Board of Commissioners.

Tom Boxberger

Secretary