

January 15, 2021

Commission Releases Forest Tax Exemption Issue Paper

The commission has just released a new issue paper, [The Forest Tax Exemption and Impacts on Municipal Budgets](#). Commonly referred to as 480-a, the tax exemption program is intended to promote long-term forestry goals while providing property tax relief for landowners. Recent activity on Tug Hill, however, has shed a renewed light on an unintended consequence of the law. With data supplied by the Lewis, Jefferson and Oswego County real property offices and an impact statement provided by Lewis County, the paper demonstrates the tax shift that occurs when a large forested landowner in a small rural town enters the tax exemption program. While the intent of the law is to keep privately owned properties in forest management, the financial stress it places on the local taxing jurisdictions can be overly burdensome. The paper also offers some suggestions as to how to mitigate the impact. The paper is available on our website by clicking the link above.

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New Commission Website

The Tug Hill Commission's website at www.tughill.org has been updated to make it easier to access on mobile devices and to find relevant information. We are still making minor tweaks, so please reach out if you need help navigating the new menu structure or have suggestions for us!



Services News Government Local

315-785-2380 | tughill@tughill.org | Latest News: [NYS Public Employer Mandatory](#)



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January 25 Tug Hill Commission Board Meeting

The Tug Hill Commission board will meet next on Monday, January 25 from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. online at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84212381154>

or via phone at (929) 205-6099 US, meeting ID 842 1238 1154 The public is welcome to attend.

Broadband Surveys: Lewis County Still Open; Jefferson County Now Available

Lewis County's broadband survey project is well underway with more than 600 residents and businesses in the county responding about their high-speed internet access and affordability. The more data gathered, the more successful the county will be at attracting the funding, providers and infrastructure needed to improve broadband.

The county would especially like to hear from additional residents in the **towns of Leyden, Lewis, New Bremen, Osceola and Lowville**. Please take a moment to participate in a brief, confidential survey that will ask you questions about your access to broadband, whether from a business or your home: www.lewiscountybroadband.com. Answers will help document exactly which areas of the county are unserved or underserved by high-speed internet access. If you don't have access to a device to do the survey electronically, contact the county planning department at 315-376-5919 for assistance.

Jefferson County's broadband survey is just starting. Working with the Development Authority of the North Country and ECC Technologies (same as Lewis County), both projects are two-pronged efforts. ECC is undertaking 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.

You can take the survey from any computer or mobile device at this link: www.jeffersoncountybroadband.com. If you do not have internet access, public access to a computer may be available at your local library. Contact them first, to check on current hours and restrictions. Computer access is available at Flower Memorial Library in Watertown during operating hours. Check www.flowermemoriallibrary.org for times and days of operation.

NYS Community Development Block Grant Funding Available

NYS Homes & Community Renewal (HCR) has announced the opening of the 2020 NYS Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program competitive application for public infrastructure, public facility and community planning projects. [Applications](#) will be **accepted until 4:00 p.m. on Friday, March 5, 2021**.

HCR has also announced the opening of the CDBG open round application for Economic Development and Microenterprise activities. [Applications](#) for this program will be **accepted throughout 2021 with rolling awards**.

To learn more about these funding programs, [register](#) for the webinar to be held **January 14, 2021 at 10 a.m.** Contact OCRinfo@nyshcr.org with questions.

Right-sizing Stream Crossings for Fish, Wildlife, and Resiliency Webinar

Thursday, January 28, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. Eastern Time

Pre-registration required at us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_lwAyCd03Sxu1dQ31yqV-Rg

Streams are often disrupted by undersized and improperly placed culverts, resulting in habitat fragmentation and increases in erosion, flooding and flood-related damage. Culverts and bridges can be designed to minimize impacts to stream habitats and aquatic connectivity. DEC recently adopted protocols to evaluate road-stream crossings for "passability" and to prioritize crossings with the greatest need of replacement and repair. DEC is also working on funding solutions to help municipalities right-size their culverts and bridges for improved connectivity and resiliency.

This training session, originally scheduled for the 2020 Local Government Conference in the highway track, will be presented by Corbin Gosier, Biologist 2 (Ecology) of the Division of Fish and Wildlife at the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation.

Best Practices for Zoom Meetings

Holding your municipal board meetings or public hearings over Zoom these days, or extending access to your personally-attended board meetings via means such as Zoom? Here are some points to consider:

- Not everyone attending a Zoom meeting is well-intentioned. Some make sport out of attending Zoom meetings specifically to disrupt your meeting. To keep your meeting on-track and within the community standards you wish to maintain, it is best to implement at least basic security measures. These may include:
- **Require a passcode.** This can be a fairly easy way reduce the number of Zoom meeting vandals looking for a meeting to disrupt. Some Tug Hill communities have publicized the Zoom meeting link, but made the password available through contacting the municipal clerk. Vandals are less likely to make that extra effort. There will be easier targets for them elsewhere.
- **Require meeting registration.** This is a choice when setting up the meeting, and is one more way of validating attendees.
- **Set up a waiting room.** This strongly recommended option allows the meeting host to admit people who seem more likely to be legitimately interested in attending your municipal meeting. If the name is of a Hollywood celebrity, a sports or rock star, or a major religious personage, their authenticity seems more dubious.
- **Mute participants upon entry.** This can be changed once you verify they are a bona fide participant or attendee/observer.
- **Approve or block entry to users from specific regions/countries.** Many of the meeting disruptions have been from sources outside the U.S. You may opt to only allow entry to users from the U.S.
- **Do not allow meeting participants to share screens.**
- **Know – in advance** – how to remove someone who is misbehaving from your meeting. You have the option to remove them and not allow them to attend that meeting again.
- **Additional options worth considering:**
 - *Do you want to allow chat?* It can be a useful way to communicate during the session, but it can also be a conduit for profanity.
 - *Do you want to allow participants to rename themselves?* Again, consider the possibility that they may rename themselves into something objectionable.
 - *Do you want to allow them to change their screen picture?* Again, same potential for mischief.
 - *Do you want to allow them to unmute themselves?* In a physical public meeting, members of the public are generally not granted the 'privilege of the floor' on their own initiative at any time of their choice. *However*, if you deny them the ability to unmute themselves, you may wind up with a participant who has muted *themselves* to reduce background noise, and then when they *need* to speak, they can't unmute themselves – and if you've also turned off chat, they have no way of communicating that to the meeting host. There's no good one simple answer on this one.

Zoom itself offers a guide at zoom.us/docs/doc/Securing%20Your%20Zoom%20Meetings.pdf

Conservation 101 Video Available

The first webinar in a series of webinars about conservation on Tug Hill was held Wednesday, January 13. An introduction to Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust and the primary tool they use to protect land was discussed. To view the video, go to: youtu.be/VpHi_nNY0FY.

The next webinar will be Wednesday, February 10, 7:00 p.m. and will cover farmland conservation. Register [here](#).

The third in the series will be held on Wednesday, March 10, 7:00 p.m. and will discuss forest conservation. Register [here](#).



George Cataldo Remembered as a Venerable Folks of Tug Hill

A “Venerable Folk of Tug Hill” has passed. George Cataldo, 90, passed away on Tuesday, January 5, 2021. George Richard Cataldo was born at home on Franklin Street in Lyons Falls on June 19, 1930. He had a long and varied life and remarked many times in recent years that he had lived a very good life, met lots of people, and he learned from everyone he met. An avid collector of maps, books, postcards and other historic information, George was a wealth of knowledge and had many true and dear friends locally and around the country. He worked on a farm, joined the armed services and later attended NYS Ranger School at Wanakena. He then worked on various logging and forestry jobs, even traveling out west. George did a lot of surveying in the Tug Hill region and held various other jobs. George retired from working for Lewis County in the Real Property Department, where he honed his love for maps. Over the years he had acquired quite a collection, each with a story. George was community minded and enjoyed family and local history.



George was recognized in 2014 as one of the “Venerable Folks of Tug Hill” and was featured in a collection of portraits done by the artist Loretta Lepkowski for this project. The people selected as Venerable Tug Hill folk exemplify the traditions and spirit of the Tug Hill region. The goal of the project was to document personal stories that make up the diverse traditions and culture of residents of Tug Hill. For more information about George and this project, go to www.tughill.org/about/tug-hill-sages/venerable-folks-of-tug-hill/.

FREE webinar on Wednesday, January 27, 2021 2:00 – 3:30 p.m.

An overview of New Local Government Retention Schedule 400 Plus Pages of Changes, Updates and Ensuring You Can Throw Things Away Legally:



Michael Martin from the office of New York State Archives will present on the new Retention and Disposition Schedule for New York Local Government Records or LGS-1. The LGS-1 was launched on August 1, 2020 and replaced all previous schedules on January 1, 2021. We will discuss its role in local governments, an overview of changes to previous schedules and how to ensure you are legally disposing of your records by using the schedule.

To register for this free webinar, click here: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_1-FbQK-XTtqs4GQE_bW0Tw

SPEAKER: Michael P. Martin is the Central New York Regional Advisory Officer for the New York State Archives. Where he provides guidance in records management to local governments, large and small, throughout the area. In the past he has worked in the electronic records unit of the Archives.

Contact information for Michael Martin: Michael.Martin@nysed.gov, 518-330-7987



Are you a municipality looking to put together a time and money saving pavement management program?

The Cornell Asset Management Program (CAMP) summer intern project helps you implement a pavement management system for your highway network. A college student, mentored by a municipal employee, collects pavement inventory and condition data, and creates a five-year maintenance plan for your municipality using our Cornell Asset Management Program-Roads and Streets (CAMP-RS) software. The focus of the internship is on pavement management, but if time allows, inventory and condition assessments for culverts and small bridges can be gathered using the new culverts and bridges module within the CAMP software. The project provides your municipality with a way to overcome some of the time constraints that limit the implementation of a pavement management system. Students get practical experience that will help them after they graduate from college.

How to Apply? Municipalities should send a letter on municipal letterhead to the Cornell Local Roads Program - New York State LTAP Center (CLRP-NYSLTAP) by February 28, 2021, stating their intent to participate in the program. By sending the letter, the municipality agrees it will meet all the responsibilities listed on page 3 of the [CAMP brochure](#), and will have the necessary equipment before the training held in late May. The letter should state if the municipality will be recruiting the student.

For more information at www.clrp.cornell.edu/trainingevents/interns.html or contact Geoff Scott, P.E., Technical Assistance Engineer at (607) 255-2806 or grs78@cornell.edu.

Cornell Local Roads Program/ 416 Riley-Robb Hall / Ithaca, NY 14853 / phone: 607-255-8033 /

Contact Us

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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](#).

Emergency Planning Webinar Recording Available

On Tuesday, December 29, Timothy Riecker from Emergency Preparedness Solutions delivered a very timely webinar to 34 local officials and agency personnel. A new law that went into effect in September 2020 requires public employers to create plans to protect employees and contractors in the event of another public health emergency declaration in NYS. The requirement for these plans applies to all local, county and state government entities, including authorities and public benefit corporations and districts.

To view the webinar, which includes Tim's powerpoint and questions and answers during the presentation, go to the commission's YouTube channel, www.youtube.com/channel/UCvolFp3AbYIQWODNDSTNHww.

The Role of Local Municipalities and Entities in Addressing Aquatic Invasive Species Webinar, January 27

You are invited to a webinar to assist local municipalities with navigating the regulatory framework associated with managing high priority aquatic invasive species (such as invasive mussels). The webinar on **January 27th from 9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.** will focus on eastern states, and will share [a new toolkit](#) that municipalities can use.

The webinar is being hosted by the National Sea Grant Law Center and Creative Resources Strategies, with support from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. [Click here to learn more and register.](#)