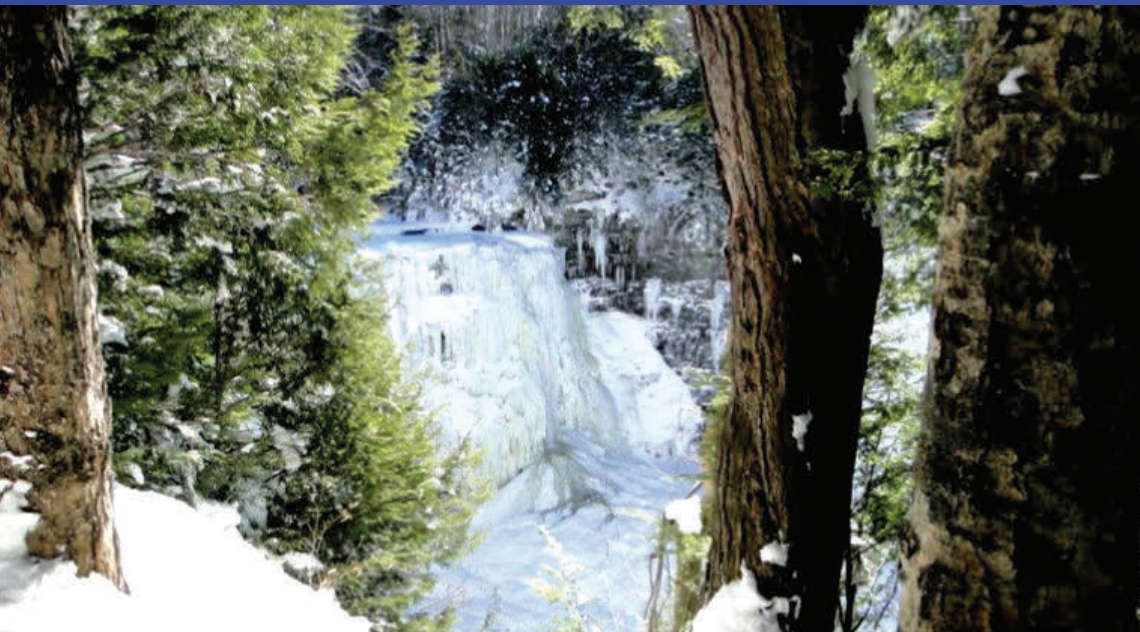


HEADWATERS



2017 NEWSLETTER & 2017-2018 ANNUAL REPORT, ISSUE 54

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New Tug Hill Book Fall 2018

For the past year, Norah and Tony Machia have been traveling the hill, interviewing local officials and residents and taking photographs of the places that make Tug Hill unique. The manuscript will go to print late this spring, to be available for purchase in the fall of 2018. The book's release will be part of the celebrations planned for the Tug Hill Commission's 45th anniversary! Look for ordering information later this year.



Commission Welcomes New Board Members

Gerry Ritter, Forestport and Bill Scriber, Parish were both appointed to the Tug Hill Commission as NYS Assembly Speaker appointments in 2017, and commissioner Leona Cheresnoski was re-appointed for another five year term.

Gerry has over 30 years of experience with local government, including eight years as the commission's circuit rider for the Northern Oneida County Council of Governments. Gerry retired from the commission in 2014, at which time she was recognized by the Genesis Group of the Mohawk Valley as a community leader and received the Joseph Carucci Legacy Award. She has continued in her retirement to serve on the Local Government Education Committee of Oneida and Herkimer Counties, and is the co-chair of the town of Forestport planning board.



From left: Gerry Ritter, Bill Scriber and Leona Cheresnoski.

Bill brings significant experience in local government, economic development, and education, serving on various boards for over 20 years. He is currently chairman of the joint town-village planning board in Parish, and served on the SUNY Oswego Council, APW Board of Education, Oswego County BOCES. Bill is employed as the Acting Executive Director at the Port of Oswego Authority.

Leona is the commission's longest serving member, originally appointed in November 1983. Leona has served as the commission's vice chairman, and is very active with the New York State Old Tyme Fiddlers Association and the Osceola Public Library. Both her mother, Alice Clemens, and husband, Ray Cheresnoski, were recognized as Tug Hill Sages, in 1993 and 2006, respectively. ■

Meet the NYS Tug Hill Commission's Watertown Staff

Commission staff provide support to Tug Hill councils of governments in community and economic development, land use planning, natural resource management, geographic information systems (GIS) and related fields.

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Back, left to right: Jennifer Harvill, Philip Street, Matthew Johnson, Jean Waterbury. Front: Carla Fowler, Katie Malinowski, Felicia Passino, Gwen Decker.

"Helping local governments and citizens shape the future of the Tug Hill region"

Land Conserved in Salmon River Watershed

Over 3,200 acres of forest was purchased by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation in the towns of Orwell and Redfield, and was announced by Governor Cuomo in May 2017 at the Salmon River Fish Hatchery. Owned by Harden Furniture and leased by the Stavemill Hunt Club for decades, the property was purchased by Marcy Timberlands in 2012. In 2015, the property was sold again, this time to The Conservation Fund at the state's request. The property's location north of the Salmon River Reservoir made it a priority conservation area in the state's Open Space Plan. By working with the Tug Hill Commission, towns of Redfield and Orwell, Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust and the Stavemill Club, The Conservation Fund crafted a project that meets the needs of the public, the hunt club, and the towns. The Conservation Fund also created a video that explains the project and its importance to the working landscape of Tug Hill.

The announcement came at the same time the state announced the acquisition of the former National Grid properties along the Salmon River, which includes another 2,800 acres of land in the towns of Orwell, Albion and Richland. Those lands were part of a 2005 consent decree regarding Clean Air Act violations, and were required to be transferred to NYS for conservation, recreational, and education purposes. National Grid will continue to operate and maintain its electric transmission and distribution facilities located within these lands, and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation will manage the land for fishing and other types of recreation.■

At left: The Kendall Tract, towns of Orwell and Redfield. Photo by Carl Heilmann.



ABOUT HEADWATERS

Headwaters is the annual newsletter report of the NYS Tug Hill Commission.

The Tug Hill Commission is a state funded, regional agency overseen by a board of nine unpaid commissioners - two each from Jefferson, Lewis, Oneida, and Oswego counties, and one at-large. Commissioners are appointed for five year terms: three each by the Governor, State Senate and State Assembly. The commission has an administrative link to New York State's Department of State. Front cover photo Salmon River Falls, courtesy Linda Fellers.

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Working Together: Tug Hill Councils of Governments

Municipalities in the Tug Hill region have long recognized the benefits of collaborating to improve government efficiency and enhance delivery of services to their constituents. This approach has resulted in the establishment of five councils of governments (COGs for short) serving 45 municipalities within and two municipalities adjacent to the region.

COGs are independent units of local government created through intermunicipal agreements signed by all member communities under the authority of Article 5-G of the NYS General Municipal Law. They are governed through by-laws, budgets and policies adopted by their respective boards, and are an integral partner in the delivery of programs and services of the commission. The commission recognizes the value of locally formed COGs as:

- Representative of their member municipalities and citizens in their communities;
- Responsive to the needs of their communities and the people they serve;
- Responsible for their self-governance and in establishing policies and priorities for their work; and,
- Regional in recognizing that they have commonality with all communities in the Tug Hill region and strive to acknowledge the ties that bind them.

Support for the COGs is provided by the commission and local government dues. Each COG is served by a local government advisor, also known as a municipal management consultant or more informally a “circuit rider”, which is a vital part of service delivery. The job of the circuit rider is to enhance the capacity of local governments, add value to the expertise of the commission staff, and serve as the vehicle for improved communication and cooperation between COG member municipalities.

The five Tug Hill COG executive boards frequently meet together as “Super COG” to discuss issues of region-wide importance, update each other on their activities and Tug Hill Commission programs, and share topics of mutual concern. The last Super COG meeting was held in the village of Boonville in October 2016, featuring a large round-table discussion.

COG leaders often meet between Super COG gatherings to maintain communications between the COGs and to signal needs for the larger Super COG meetings. The most recent COG leaders meeting was in Lorraine in January 2018. The next Super COG meeting is planned for late May 2018. ■



Village of Barneveld Dissolves

The village of Barneveld, in the town of Trenton, Oneida County, dissolved on December 31, 2017. The 284-resident village was presented a citizen's petition for dissolution under General Municipal Law Article 17-A in February 2017. A referendum resulted in a favorable vote for dissolution and the village's next board meeting began a 180-day period to complete a dissolution plan. The plan included an analysis of fiscal costs of dissolution, assets and their fair value, liabilities and indebtedness, and proposed terms for their disposition. Ultimately, the plan summarizes how residents will continue to be furnished municipal services upon dissolution.

Barneveld formed a dissolution committee with stakeholders from the village and town, meeting frequently to complete the plan. Tug Hill staff were asked to provide technical assistance. The

final dissolution plan included provisions for the formation of a water and lighting district, and is expected to reduce taxes to former village residents by about \$50 per year. The town will also receive the Citizens Empowerment Tax Credit, which is equal to 15% of the combined amount of real property taxes levied by all of the involved municipalities. The estimated incentive payment will be \$49,701, based on the village of Barneveld's 2015-16 tax levy of \$7,667.00 and the town of Trenton's (town-wide minus special districts) tax levy for 2015 of \$323,676.

Barneveld was the fourth village dissolution in the region. Altmar dissolved into the Oswego County town of Albion in 2013. Prospect, also a village in the town of Trenton, dissolved in 2015. The Jefferson County village of Herrings dissolved into the town of Wilna in 2017. ■



COGREPORTS

COUNCILS OF GOVERNMENTS REPORTS

Cooperative Tug Hill Council

Minimum maintenance roads continue to be a priority for many CTHC towns and the Council as a whole. The legal case in the town of West Turin regarding their low volume road law remains at the state court of appeals, adding urgency to this long-standing battle. Local government leaders from five CTHC towns, along with Tug Hill Commission staff, visited Albany in May to garner attention to and support for this issue. Proposed legislation would add a section to NYS Highway Law specifically allowing municipalities to classify low volume and minimum maintenance roads. Unfortunately this legislation was not

approved in the 2017 legislative session, but the Council has vowed to continue the fight.

Council towns continue to work on their special areas protection program under the Tug Hill Reserve Act (Chapter 486 of the unconsolidated laws of 1992). The Reserve Act recognizes the statewide and national significance of the water, wildlife, forest, farms and recreational resources of the Tug Hill region, and allows for protection of these assets through the preparation of a local reserve plan by a council of governments. This year the town of Osceola's map was the

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Local officials from Cooperative Tug Hill Council attend meetings in Albany to talk about minimum maintenance roads. From left to right: Katie Malinowski, Paul Pratt, Doug Leuenberger, Vince Moore, Angie Kimball, Ed Hayes, Phil Street, Terry Thisse.

Northern Oneida County Council of Governments

NOCCOG communities had a successful year in grant funding, with assistance from commission staff. The town of Floyd successfully applied to both the DEC Urban and Community Forestry and NYS Parks grant programs. The grant funding includes nearly \$30,000 for tree planting and almost \$100,000 for other improvements in the park. The town of Ava will also receive over \$250,000 for improvements at their park. With the increasing awareness of the impacts of road salt on water supplies, salt storage fa-

cilities were also popular and well-funded this year, with the towns of Remsen and Boonville receiving funds for construction.

Construction also began in the Village of Camden where a 2015 award provided funding to undertake a downtown revitalization initiative, providing a facelift to several Main Street buildings.

The year brought increasing community collaboration following the threat of changes in

sales tax distribution from the county to towns and villages. Municipalities, who all depend heavily on sales tax revenue to balance budgets and maintain services, worked together and ultimately were pleased when the formula for distribution was left unchanged. Leadership from contiguous communities are now beginning to meet regularly to discuss potential opportunities for shared services and seeking means to attack common challenges. Among the proposed consolidations is a new ambulance district in

the northeastern portion of the county, to maintain rural ambulance service to residents in Steuben, Remsen, and Trenton. Other municipalities are also increasingly utilizing professional staff of neighbors, such as assessors and codes enforcement officers.

Among the most notable changes in NOCCOG in 2017 was the dissolution of the second member village, Barneveld, as described in an article on page 3.■

Councils of Governments *Circuit Rider Contacts*

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North Shore Council of Governments

The village of Central Square implemented the replacement of its sign at the site of the village hall on East Avenue. The electronic sign the village selected is easier to update and can convey more information. The village is also updating its zoning.

The village of Cleveland continued its efforts to rehabilitate the Cleveland Dock with a fall 2017 meeting of representatives of state government entities, the county, and the village, and is moving forward with improvements to the village's water system.

With the assistance of a \$2.8 million grant, the town of Constantia moved forward with the effort to expand availability of public water into the eastern portion of town, along New York State

Route 49 east from the vicinity of Taft Bay to the western boundary of the village of Cleveland. The town has also been renovating its sidewalk system in the hamlet of Constantia.

The Central New York Raceway Park proposal in the town of Hastings has run into funding complications which has stalled its progress. Super DIRT Week was hosted by Oswego Speedway in the city of Oswego in 2017 for the second year running.

The town of West Monroe adopted a significant revision of the town's land development regulations, and work started on the sewer project which will renovate the existing Big Bay sewer system and add users in the Toad Harbor area.■

Salmon Rivers Council of Governments

The town of Albion moved forward toward a possible public water system, has held multiple public meetings, and is moving toward finalizing establishing a proposed service area. The town has nearly reached the end of the process involved in the transfer of responsibilities inherited by the town following the dissolution of the village of Altmar in 2013.

The town of Amboy planning board has been reviewing and updating the town's comprehensive plan.

The town and village of Parish continue to explore options for bringing public water to Parish, and the town held several public meetings to report progress and receive public input and questions. The Parish

planning board has been working on an update of Parish's comprehensive plan.

The town and village of Parish continued exploring the potential there might be for reintroduction of salmon to the Little Salmon River, which runs through Parish on the way to Lake Ontario. Physical structures, including dams between Parish and Lake Ontario are obstacles to development of a salmon run.■



Tug Hill circuit riders, left to right: Jennifer Armstrong-Symonds, Angie Kimball, Mickey Dietrich, Paul Baxter.

River Area Council of Governments

Kathy Amyot retired on November 30th, 2017 after serving as the RACOG circuit rider for the past 17 years. Kathy was instrumental in many successful projects in the RACOG area, including the restoration of the Buckley Building in Carthage, cleanup of the Crown Cleaners Superfund site in Wilna, and the Herrings dissolution.

Mickey Dietrich was hired as the new circuit rider for RA-

COG. For the past 15 years Mickey has worked as the GIS (Geographic Information Systems) specialist for the Tug Hill Commission. Even though he is now the new RACOG circuit rider, he is still continuing with many of his essential duties as GIS specialist.

The town of Wilna continues to implement items relating to the dissolution of the village of

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2017 County Wide Shared Services Plans

The County-Wide Shared Services Initiative law was enacted in early 2017 to prompt counties and municipalities to reduce property taxes while improving local government efficiency. The law requires counties to convene a shared services panel consisting of the chief executive of all towns, villages, and cities, as well as the option of school districts, to develop taxpayer savings and efficiency plans.

According to a report done by the Rockefeller Institute of Government, Center for Technology in Government, and The Benjamin Center SUNY New Paltz, the plans produced a range of proposals for property tax savings in 12 main areas: public health and insurance; emergency services; sewer, water, and waste management systems; energy procurement; parks and recreation; education and workforce training; law and courts; shared equipment, personnel, and services; joint purchasing; government reorganization; transportation and highway departments; and records management and administrative functions.

The first shared services plans developed under the new law include 389 proposals totaling \$208 million in projected savings in 2018 and at least \$76.1 million in recurring savings. Of the 57 counties required to create a plan, 34 (or nearly 60%) chose to adopt a plan by September 15, 2017. The remaining counties chose to delay adoption until September 15, 2018. In the Tug Hill region, Jefferson and Oneida counties submitted preliminary plans. ■



Continued Focus On Energy Policy and Projects

Renewables on the Ground Roundtable

Commission staff participated in a nine-month Renewables on the Ground Roundtable effort, led by The Nature Conservancy and the Alliance for Clean Energy New York. The Roundtable was a collaboration among non-traditional partners – land use planners and conservationists, wind and solar developers, agricultural interests, regulators, and local and state government officials.

Fort Drum Joint Land Use Study

Funded by a federal grant, the Development Authority of the North Country, working with Matrix Consulting, has been developing a Fort Drum Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) throughout 2017. The study has been coordinated with a technical working group, comprised of local planners, stakeholder organizations, and Fort Drum (including the Tug Hill Commission), and a steering committee of elected officials from communities surrounding the base. The goal of the JLUS “is to reduce potential conflicts between Ft. Drum and the surrounding communities while accommodating new growth and economic development, sustaining economic vitality, protecting public health and safety, and protecting the operational missions of Fort Drum.”

Proposed Wind Farm Progress

The Copenhagen Wind Farm began construction in 2017, and Number Three, Deer River, and Mad River Wind Farms continued to work through the Article 10 process. Roaring Brook Wind Farm has went through the local permitting process but has not begun construction. Another wind company, EWT America, is proposing five 326 foot tall wind towers inside the existing Maple Ridge Wind Farm footprint. These towers have no gear box, which reportedly requires less maintenance, and allows for quieter operation and a longer useful life. EWT plans to use the “Community Distributed Generation” model, which allows customers that do not or cannot have a renewable project on their property to join together to share in the benefits of local renewable energy sources.

Solar Training

The commission co-hosted a Solar Energy Seminar with Jefferson County Planning, Cooperative Extension, and Farm Bureau in November. The workshop provided information to local officials and landowners on the pros and cons to leasing land for solar, what happens to the agricultural exemption if leased for solar, the economics of solar farms, how solar farms impact land values and environmental benefits and threats of solar farms. ■

Remembering Ken Vigus

The Tug Hill Commission lost a long-time commissioner and supporter when Ken Vigus passed away on March 25, 2017 after a long illness. The commission honored Ken at its November annual dinner, presenting his widow Rhonda Vigus with a Loretta Lepkowski painting of his hunting club, pictured below.

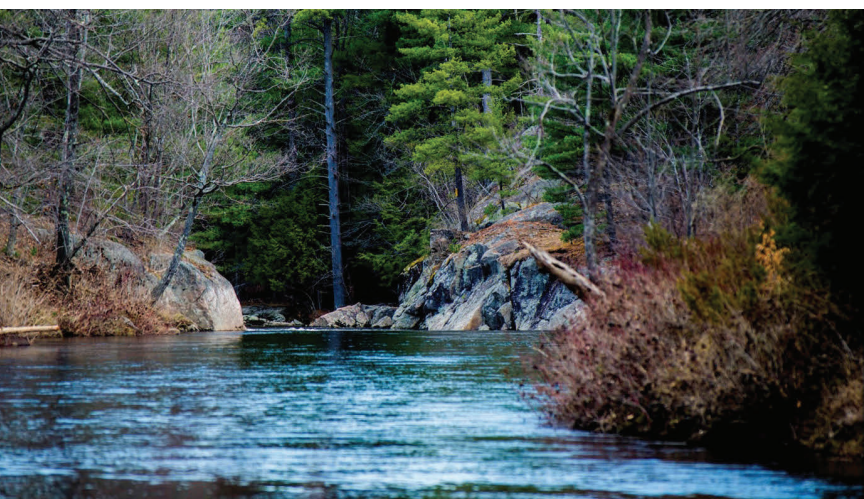
Ken served his community and the Tug Hill region for many years. He was appointed to the commission in 2002, served terms as both vice chairman and chairman, and was a member at the time of his death, marking over 14 years of service to the Tug Hill region. He enjoyed hunting on Tug Hill, where he was a member and currently president of Horse Shoe Hunting Club. He was also currently a member of the Boonville Zoning Board of Appeals and had previously served on the Boonville Town Planning Board. ■



CTHC Adds Four Member Villages

The Cooperative Tug Hill Council (CTHC) grew in numbers in 2017. Since 2003 when the town of Williamstown joined, 16 towns have operated via inter-municipal agreement (IMA) as CTHC. The four villages within the CTHC area have traditionally not been members, but that changed this year.

After sending letters to each village, the Council approved personal visits by circuit rider Angie Kimball to invite them to join. In the spring the villages of Lyons Falls and Port Leyden approved to join, and most recently in November the villages of Constableville and Turin approved to join as well. CTHC now totals 20 municipalities, and a new five year Council IMA will be approved by each member by the end of 2017. ■



Summer Intern

The commission hired Robbie Fredericks as a summer intern for the summer of 2017. Robbie is from Manlius, NY (with family connections to Tug Hill) and is a recent graduate of SUNY Cortland, where he majored in Geographic Information Systems (GIS). His primary focus was to work with commission staff to update and improve the Cooperative Tug Hill Council's 2006 Resource Management Plan. A copy of the finished product can be found at <http://www.tughillcouncil.com/documents/>.

Robbie also provided invaluable backup to the commission's GIS and GPS programs (pictured in center below). This position was funded and administered by a unique partnership between the Tug Hill Commission, the Cooperative Tug Hill Council (CTHC), and the Environmental Finance Center at Syracuse University. ■



Commission Funding 2017-18

The Tug Hill Commission's funding has remained constant at around \$1 million for the sixth year in a row. Almost all of the commission's funding comes from its annual state appropriation. Approximately 85% of the budget is spent on salaries, with the balance covering commission operating expenses.

In 2017-18, commission staff helped partner communities and organizations secure over \$1.5 million in grants funds, trained more than 1,300 local officials and started working on 23 new projects across the region, maintained progress on an additional 57 projects and answered many technical assistance questions.

We also worked with state agency partners on a variety

of statewide priorities and initiatives. These included shared services, municipal dissolutions, watershed programs, and conservation projects.

The commission employed 13 people, four of whom are circuit riders for the region's five council of governments. The other nine staff members provide program and administrative support out of the commission's office located in Watertown. Commission staff provide support in many areas including planning, community development, training, natural resources and GIS.

The commission continues to look for fiscal savings while sustaining vital services to the Tug Hill region, and looks forward to helping our communities in the coming year. ■



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CTHC

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latest updated map to be approved by the Council, for a total of 13 approved maps at the end of 2017. Remaining towns are working on updating maps and the Council hopes to have a totally updated regional map to approve in 2018.

The Harrisburg - Montague - Pinckney (HMP) consolidated court continues to operate utilizing the town of Harrisburg's facility. The three towns have approved a new IMA for the HMP court, effective January 2018. The town of Boylston, who had a justice vacancy, worked with Senator Ritchie, Assemblyman Barclay and the Tug Hill Commission to propose legislation expanding the residency requirement for the Boylston justice to include anyone from an adjoining town in Oswego County. The legislation passed both houses and was signed by the Governor in June 2017. This allowed Boyl-

ston to elect a new justice at the November election and fill their vacancy.

The Cooperative Tug Hill Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), for which CTHC provides administrative support, heard five cases this year and the IMA governing the ZBA was renewed. The town of Redfield and village of Lyons Falls are working on zoning with assistance from commission staff. Finally, CTHC shared an intern, Robbie Fredericks, with the commission this past summer. Mr. Fredericks updated the CTHC Resource Management Plan, which operates as a planning document for the Council's member municipalities. The original plan was completed in 1976 and another update was done in 2006. The information in the updated plan can be used by any Council municipality for planning or grant writing.

Work continues on the updated CTHC website. The 1990's

regional special areas map has been opened to the public. A link to the commission's map viewer has been added, allowing access to the newly approved special areas maps. Pages for each CTHC municipality are also being created, to offer contact and meeting information, along with mailing and physical addresses for the municipality.

Three wind power projects continue to be active in the CTHC area, see page 6 for details. ■

RACOG

Cont. from page 5

Herrings, which was effective March 31, 2017. Wilna is also working on redevelopment of the former Crown Cleaners site, to become a town park. In December the town of Champion took over court services for the village of West

Carthage, through a consolidation effort. Discussions began in 2015 to provide more efficient and effective justice court services to village residents.

The town of Champion has been working on a new comprehensive plan for the last 19 months with commission senior planner Matt Johnson. The plan was approved in March. The EPA stabilized and removed approximately 100 containers of hazardous material during the summer and fall from the old Deferiet paper mill site. These materials were found during building inspections for asbestos by the EPA.

At the November RACOG meeting, Jason Willits from NY-Alerts presented how the member municipalities could use the NY-Alert system for local purposes. RACOG also completed an update on their website. ■