

# TUG HILL COMMISSION

## MINUTES OF MEETING

March 15, 2021, Via Video and Audio with Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85472663375>, Meeting ID: 854 7266 3375

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

**Opened**

Commission members included Messrs. Bogdanowicz, Boxberger, Scriber, Yerdon and Mdms. Ritter and Cheresnoski. Staff included Katie Malinowski, Gwen Decker, Felicia Passino, Jennifer Harvill, Matt Johnson, Carla Fowler, and Jean Waterbury. Circuit Riders - Angie Kimball, Paul Baxter, and Mickey Dietrich. Guests included Counsel – Lee Willbanks, Norm Paradis town of Worth, Sandra March C2AE, Bruce Williams town of Montague, Heather Evans, Ed Davis town of Lee, Vern Sundet town of West Monroe.

**Attendance**

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

**Agenda Approved**

On a motion made by Commissioner Scriber and seconded by Commissioner Cheresnoski members approved the minutes of January 25, 2021.

**Minutes Approved**

Chairman's report followed.

**Chairman's Report**

Chairman Bogdanowicz welcomed everyone. The webinar series for Letters from a Tug Hill Logger have been great. He thanked Commissioner Cheresnoski and her son Pete for presenting this webinar. The Conservation on Tug Hill series the commission and the THTLT partnered together for the webinar had very good presenters.

**Welcome**

The Tug Hill Commission is included in both the assembly and senate proposed budgets that were released, with the same funding as last year. This is good news.

A reminder for commissioners that the annual financial disclosure statement is due May 15. Please log on and submit for information.

COVID-19 relief package was finalized last week. It appears good from a loss of revenue standpoint for most state and county governments.

The vaccine rollout is in process and we are heading in the right direction. Please continue to stay vigilant and do not let your guard down. We will see what happens as some states may be moving too fast on reopening.

Commissioner Bogdanowicz asked members if they would like to do meet in person for the April 19 board meeting. Mr. Baxter has checked with Central Square, and they can accommodate us. Social distancing standards will be followed with a limit of 12 in attendance at the Central Square location. Most members feel comfortable to meet in person for the April board meeting in Central Square. The meeting will be hybrid to accommodate for those attending virtually.

Executive Director's report followed.

## **Executive Director's Report**

Mrs. Malinowski reported she has not heard from Albany on the continuity of operation plan that was submitted. The plan is for staffing at 50% capacity in April, which is the same plan used last June for staff returning to the office. However, when cases climbed staff returned to all remote by last December. Infection rates have decreased, and vaccination access is becoming more available.

## **Administration**

The annual internal control plan was submitted to DOB and has been approved. A copy is available if members would like to review it.

The commission is in both the assembly and senate budgets at the same level as the executive budget proposal.

We were in the process of filling the NOCCOG circuit rider position when the COVID 19 pandemic hit, and a hiring freeze was put into effect from Albany. We had to put a hold on the process. We now have direction to move forward. The paperwork has been submitted with a potential start date of April 1. We are waiting for finalization.

A few years ago, Tug Hill, Shaping the Future of the Region book was done with Norah Machia and North Country Books. North Country Books was distributing the books for us but have gone out of business due to the pandemic. We have obtained the inventory of our books and Ms. Machia is working with Blue Line Book Exchange in Lake Placid to distribute the books. We will continue selling directly to businesses if they would like to sell them in their establishments.

## **North Country Books**

Headwaters annual report was completed and went out electronically in February. The report was done remotely and totally electronic this year so not to incur any printing or mailing cost as per Albany guideline restrictions.

## **Headwaters**

Community Recognition Award Program (handout emailed) that was discussed and tabled last year, members agreed will be done this year. Nominations would open April 1 with a deadline of June 1. Nominations would be reviewed by COG chairs, Commissioner Bogdanowicz and Mrs. Malinowski. The award would be presented at the commission's annual dinner meeting in October. Mrs. Malinowski asked for members to think about a better name for the award.

## **Community Recognition Award**

The COG Leaders meeting was held virtually on February 23. We provided updates on what the commission has been working on this past year and COG Leaders shared their priorities. They are all in favor of supporting MMR and plan to do a letter when the time comes.

## **COG Leaders Meeting**

The project list (handout emailed) shows all current projects staff are working on. Ms. Fowler provided a presentation on the THC scanning project for archives that was started during the pandemic while working remotely. A plan for the project was to start when the pandemic hit, and remote working began for staff. A remote plan was devised as Ms. Fowler had access to a scanner and Ms. Decker could retrieve archive boxes to examine and prepare documents for scanning and transfer them to Ms. Fowler for scanning, they began to tackle the project. The commission decided to purchase a scanner that will be useful for us and could also benefit our communities with records management. We are discussing sharing the unit to help with small municipal projects. Members are in favor of this idea.

## **Project List**

Minimum Maintenance Roads work continues. We plan to reach out to Senator Griffo's office in April, as the state budget is a current priority for legislators. Ms. Malinowski has

## **MMR**

been in contact with Tim Hunt Lewis County highway superintendent. Lewis County is in the process of doing a greenhouse gas emissions inventory and he would like to include low volume minimum maintenance road calculations and that keeping them would help with the carbon issues.

The Snowmobile Economic Impact Study began in February. The Center for Community studies has over 2000 survey responses that includes both from online and on the trail interceptions with snowmobilers.

## **Snowmobile Economic Impact**

Roaring Brook is under construction. Number Three Wind received their notice from the PSC on March 11 to proceed with construction. Deer River has their certificate of environmental compatibility and public need. They received an extension in March. They are currently working on implementing an aircraft detection lighting system. Mad River project has been withdrawn and the PSC case closed.

## **Renewable Energy**

Green Corners solar is looking to move forward. The town of Watertown has worked on amendments to their zoning and are in the adoption process. Alder Creek solar is in the public involvement stage. The town of Boonville is working on zoning amendments.

The Office of Renewable Energy Siting finalized regulations implementing the state's new large-scale renewables siting and permitting process on March 3, 2021.

The commission has received increased requests for solar presentations. Mr. Johnson presented at a Cornell webinar on large scale solar with Dave Kay in February. Oswego County has contacted us to assist in a presentation in May and Jefferson County is also doing some.

We have been asked sit on a NYSERDA Agricultural Technical Working Group dealing with agriculture and solar siting issue. Mr. Johnson will be representing the commission on the group.

Mrs. Malinowski has had numerous meetings related to the Land Use and Local Government Advisory Panel as part of the Climate Action Council. Recommendations will be presented to the council in April and May.

We updated the Planning for Offsite Solar paper last month and it is available on our website.

NorCOG/SRCG – Mr. Baxter reported the Parish referendum on the water district proceeding at a higher cost was defeated. The town and village of Parish will meet this week to discuss what direction to take next. Mr. Baxter gave assistance to one of the local highway superintendents in making a website. He hopes to be able to help other municipalities with their websites.

## **COG Reports**

NorCOG/SRCG are working to bring an associate circuit rider on board. Vern Sundet expressed interest in the position. He is an existing town supervisor and does not plan to continue at the end of his term. He attended his first meeting last week at Orwell.

CTHC – Mrs. Kimball reported the village of Adams was approved to join CTHC. A total of 22 municipalities are now in CTHC. The Lorraine Worth court consolidation is signed and completed. Both towns appointed the current Judge Sheldon to serve this year, because the legislation was not signed until after election day. Judge Sheldon does not plan to run, so a new judge going into the first term. Municipalities are working on updating their official roadmaps. Special Areas updates have finally been completed. We continue working on

mini comprehensive plans being approved. No decision yet if CTHC will hold a spring meeting.

RACOG – Mr. Dietrich reported RACOG board meets tomorrow. A US Customs and Border Protection chief officer will speak at the meeting. RACOG is looking to set up a working group for the railroad project. Extending the trail into Carthage and Fort Drum are being discussed. Clean Energy Communities has been a big topic and we have been coordinating with Lewis County and ANKA on that. LED lighting continues to progress. Most communities have signed all their documents. Complete Streets project is continuing. BOCES students will be working on projects as spring approaches. Champion town supervisor Bruce Ferguson will not run for reelection after his current term.

Lowville is working on their comprehensive plan with Ms. Mallette. The town of Wilna may investigate a Northern Border Regional Commission grant for the Herrings Park project. Wilna has purchased a mobile data collecting license. The village in Copenhagen will be having elections.

NOCCOG – Mrs. Waterbury reported a meet and greet zoom meeting was held to introduce new associates with office staff and circuit riders. NOCCOG is working on updating their bylaws. NOCCOG is hopeful to get the GPS program underway again this spring with Mark Clark. NOCCOG is in process of renewing their IMA with COG members. Mrs. Waterbury and Mr. Health met with Mohawk Valley Economic Development District for website designs. They plan to present a proposal on redesigning the NOCCOG website at the April NOCCOG board meeting. The Local Government Education Committee is considering providing a webinar on clean energy later this spring.

The financial report was sent via email. The \$3,000.00 for lodging that was approved last month was added to unallocated. This is due to Mrs. Malinowski and Mr. Mallette traveling to Potsdam to assist with vaccinations. We have some money to use before the end of the fiscal year and are considering purchasing more laptops as we continue to do virtual trainings and provide hybrid webinars. Currently \$1000 is allocated for equipment. Mrs. Malinowski asked members to consider allocating more, however was unsure of an amount. Mr. Willbanks suggested using “not to exceed” a certain amount.

#### **Finance Report**

On a motion made by Commissioner Boxberger and seconded by Commissioner Yerdon members approved to allocate an amount not to exceed \$10,000.00 for equipment.

Commissioner Bogdanowicz opened the floor for public comment.

#### **Public Comment**

Commissioner Boxberger shared that he is also going to be sitting on the NYSERDA Agricultural Technical Working Group.

Commissioner Ritter thanked Mrs. Malinowski and Ms. Mallette helping at the Potsdam vaccine site.

There being no further business, on a motion made by Commissioner Chershnoski 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