

December 31, 2021

2022 Local Government Conference Registration Live

Start 2022 out right by registering for the Tug Hill Local Government Conference (LGC)! The 2022 LGC will be held at the Turning Stone Event Center, 5218 Patrick Road, Verona, NY 13478. Registration and session information for the April 19, 2022 event is now [available on our website](#). Here you will find everything you need including session titles and descriptions, as well as registration information. Also, please watch your mailboxes, as the registration flyer will be mailed out shortly. There are options for on-line (credit card) and mail-in (check or voucher) registration. Our regular registration rate is \$75 if postmarked by March 18, 2022.

Registration starts at 7:30 a.m. and sessions kickoff at 8:45 a.m. Lunch begins at 11:30 a.m. and will include a keynote, *Leveraging Our Assets in a Global Economy*, by Andrew Fish of CenterState CEO.

Each of the four sessions will include seven individual presentations for you to choose from. Our goal is to include a variety of subjects in each concurrent session that would be useful for a variety of local officials including highway staff, clerks, town and village board members, planning board members, zoning board of appeal members and assessors.

Session one topics are: Employee Handbook Basics, Challenges in Regulating Quality of Life Issues, Site Plan and Subdivision Review, Interpretation and Enforcement of Zoning Laws, Long-Range Planning and Budgeting for Highways, Your Role in a Disaster, and Clean Energy Communities.

Session two topics are: Reserve Funds and Long-Term Planning, Open Meetings Law, Rural Planning Issues, Motions, Criteria and Decision-Making Guidelines, Selecting Pavement Preservation Techniques, Vital Records: Local Registrar and Clerk Responsibilities, and Federal Funding Opportunities.

Session three topics are: The EMS Crisis and Its Impact on Municipal Budgets, Historic Preservation, Accessory Dwelling Units as Affordable Housing, Land Use and SEQR Case Law Update, Ice and Snow Best Practices, FOIL Overview, and the 94-C Renewable Energy Siting Process.

Session four topics are: How to Prepare for and/or Conduct an Audit, Great Board Members, Ethical Considerations for Planning Boards and Zoning Boards of Appeal, Q&A for Planning and Zoning Boards, Myths of Traffic Calming and Complete Streets, Email Essentials, and Cannabis.

Assessor's Session: If you are an assessor, you are invited to take part in six hours of certified training. This morning and afternoon session for assessors will cover the steps for using RPS for valuation. Topics include cleanup of your file, land tables, cost tables and comparable sales. Assessors will receive six hours of CE credits for attending this session.

We hope you will enjoy the lineup of sessions we have in store for you. In large part, we rely on your after-conference survey feedback to create the agenda for the following year's conference. Thank you for all the ideas and comments!

Tug Hill Commission to Meet January 24 via Zoom

The Tug Hill Commission will meet on Monday, January 24 from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. via Zoom. Access information is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83393368741> or dial 929-205-6099, meeting ID 833 9336 8741.

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Vacant, Abandoned, and Unsafe Properties Resources Available

Information and resources from the November training "New Tools for Longstanding Challenges in Code Enforcement: Strategies for Municipalities to Tackle Vacant, Abandoned and Unsafe Properties" are now available online. While an actual video of the training is still yet to be available, guides and handouts of the information covered are available by clicking the links below.

[Distressed & Abandoned Properties: Dealing with the Problem Head On Guide to Article 19 \(Young & Sommer, LLC\)](#)
[Strategic Code Enforcement: A Critical Tool for Achieving Safe, Healthy, and Vital Neighborhoods](#)
[New Tools for Code Enforcement: How Municipalities Can Use Article 19A](#)
[Rental and Vacant Local Laws City of Elmira](#)

The Greater Mohawk Valley Land Bank does have the model Vacant Property Law (VPL) and editable Vacant Property Registration (VPR) forms available upon request. If there is an interest, please contact Allysa Dupont Rader by email, allysadr@gmvlb.org or by calling 315-823-0814. Allysa is willing to provide presentations on the benefits of a VPL to municipal boards, as well as assist with the proper procedures to adopt Vacant Property Laws.

The training was coordinated by the Greater Mohawk Valley Land Bank as part of the Zombie 2.0 Grant, in cooperation with the town of Herkimer and the Local Government Education Committee.

Municipal Corner: Vacant Property Laws FAQs

What is a Vacant Property Law (VPL)? All too often, speculators buy buildings in our communities with no plans to improve them. While sometimes beneficial to these speculators, this often leads to neighborhoods and downtowns full of vacant and deteriorating properties stuck in limbo, owned by irresponsible owners who abandon the property, sometimes opaque LLCs who are impossible to contact. A VPL is a local law that a Village or Town Board can enact and enforce to help reduce vacant properties within the municipality. All owners of vacant property must register and develop a plan to return their commercial or residential properties to use or pay a fee to help provide periodic inspections to ensure the buildings are safe and kept up to current codes.

What are the benefits of a VPL? VPLs give municipalities the tools needed to address vacant properties; the process begins by creating a local Vacant Property Registry (VPR). If the property owner is not local, they are responsible for designating a local contact person who can be reached if action needs to be taken on the property and they must provide a contact for regular maintenance of the property and safety concerns. Such an ordinance gives local governments the mechanisms to require property owners to meet maintenance and safety standards under NYS codes for their buildings. Thriving neighborhoods attract more families and businesses, encourage reinvestment, and improve the quality-of-life for that community.

Are there any exemptions for the fees? A municipality can opt to waive the fees associated with registering vacant properties, with some common exemptions being for seasonal properties, those being actively renovated, and buildings listed for sale at fair market value (FMV).


How can a municipality enact a VPL? GMVLB has created a model law, including a VPL, which are available to participating municipalities upon request. The town or village board can review, revise form templates, and enact the law. GMVLB also offers VPR forms for municipalities at no cost and is happy to help customize any of these to suit community needs with local government guidance.

Are there local examples of VPR? The village of Fort Plain, the city of Oneonta, and other nearby municipalities have enacted VPL/VPRs, which are an increasingly popular tool.

For more information on the model VPL/VPR forms or to schedule an educational presentation for your municipal Board, please email info@gmvlb.org.

Tug Hill Communities Awarded Water Quality Improvement Grants

Seventeen communities and organizations in the Tug Hill region were awarded over \$15 million in grant funding from the most recent Water Quality Improvement Program grants. The table below details the awards. Congratulations to all!

Awardee	Project	Description	Total Grant Award
Town of Watertown	Town of Watertown Wastewater Treatment Facility Disinfection	The Town of Watertown will install an ultraviolet effluent disinfection system at the town's wastewater treatment plant. This project will improve water quality by reducing pathogens in the plant's discharge.	\$1,000,000
Jefferson County	Jefferson County Stormwater Coalition Vacuum Truck	Jefferson County will purchase a street sweeper with vacuum capabilities to be used throughout the county. Using this equipment will reduce the sediment and nutrients entering the Black River, which is a drinking water resource for the City of Watertown and surrounding areas.	\$325,000
Town of Wilna	Herrings Wastewater Treatment Facility Disinfection	The Town of Wilna will install an effluent disinfection system at the Herrings Wastewater Treatment Facility. This project will improve water quality by reducing pathogens in the facility's discharge.	\$104,880
Village of Lowville	Village of Lowville Wastewater Treatment Facility Disinfection	The Village of Lowville will install ultraviolet effluent disinfection at the village wastewater treatment facility. The project will improve water quality by reducing pathogens in the treatment plant's discharge.	\$941,250
Town of Martinsburg	Town of Martinsburg - Hamlet of Glenfield Wastewater Treatment Facility Disinfection	The Town of Martinsburg will install an ultraviolet effluent disinfection system at the Glenfield Wastewater Treatment Facility. This project will improve water quality by reducing pathogens in the treatment facility's discharge.	\$378,400
Village of Copenhagen	Village of Copenhagen Wastewater Treatment Facility Disinfection	The Village of Copenhagen will install ultraviolet effluent disinfection to the village's wastewater treatment facility. This project will improve water quality by reducing pathogens in the treatment plant's discharge.	\$353,400
Village of Lyons Falls	Village of Lyons Falls Wastewater Treatment Facility Disinfection	The Village of Lyons Falls will install an ultraviolet effluent disinfection system at the village's wastewater treatment plant. This project will improve water quality by reducing pathogens in the plant's discharge.	\$315,575
Village of Constableville	Village of Constableville Wastewater Treatment Facility Disinfection	The Village of Constableville will install ultraviolet effluent disinfection at the village's wastewater treatment facility. This project will improve water quality by reducing pathogens in the facility's discharge.	\$236,720
Village of Castorland	Village of Castorland Wastewater Treatment Facility Disinfection	The Village of Castorland will install an effluent disinfection system at the village's wastewater treatment plant. This project will improve water quality by reducing pathogens in the plant's discharge.	\$90,400
Village of Camden	Village of Camden Wastewater Infrastructure Improvements	The Village of Camden will install a new headworks facility with grit removal and screening, new control panel for the influent pumps, a new belt filter press and a new stand-by generator. The project will also include sewer collection system improvements at various locations within the village.	\$2,649,000
Village of Boonville	Village of Boonville Wastewater Treatment Facility Disinfection	The Village of Boonville will install ultraviolet effluent disinfection at the village's wastewater treatment plant. This project will improve water quality by reducing pathogens in the plant's discharge.	\$1,000,000
Town of Forestport	Town of Forestport Wastewater Treatment Facility Disinfection	The Town of Forestport will install an effluent disinfection system at the town's wastewater treatment plant. This project will improve water quality by reducing pathogens in the treatment plant's discharge.	\$1,000,000
Village of Sylvan Beach	Sylvan Beach Wastewater Treatment Facility Upgrade	The Village of Sylvan Beach will make general improvements to their East Oneida Lake wastewater treatment plant. The project will include installing a Sequencing Batch Reactor process (SBR), replacing antiquated equipment, rehabilitating structures for proposed new operations, removing critical pumping operations from the Process Building basement, and providing new electric service and standby generator(s).	\$833,330
Village of Camden	Village of Camden Wastewater Treatment Facility Disinfection	The Village of Camden will install an ultraviolet effluent disinfection system at the village's wastewater treatment plant. This project will improve the quality of treated effluent entering the West Branch of Fish Creek.	\$549,000
Village of Remsen	Village of Remsen Wastewater Treatment Facility Disinfection	The Village of Remsen will install an ultraviolet effluent disinfection system at the village's wastewater treatment plant. This project will improve the quality of treated effluent entering the Cincinnati Creek.	\$384,000
Town of Constantia	Town of Constantia Northshore Sewer Project	The Town of Constantia will replace inadequate onsite septic systems with their Northshore Sewer Project, which consists of a low pressure sanitary sewer system with approximately 903 new connections. This project will improve the water quality of Oneida Lake.	\$4,600,000
Village of Central Square	Village of Central Square Wastewater Treatment Plant Disinfection	The Village of Central Square will install an ultraviolet effluent disinfection system at the village's wastewater treatment facility. This project will improve the quality of treated effluent entering the Little Bay Creek.	\$461,475
			 \$15,222,430

Important Information Covered in USES Webinar on Solar Energy Systems

United Solar Energy Supporters, MRB Group, and the Livingston County Planning Department put together a webinar on December 21, 2021 titled "Special Use Permits and Operations & Maintenance Plans," which can be watched [here](#). Over the course of an hour and a half, the presenters discussed the surge in solar energy projects in recent years, local government's role, the regulatory powers that local governments have, and the procedural steps local governments should follow. The presenters provided guidance and helpful recommendations throughout the webinar.

Special use permitting and site plan review are commonly used regulatory processes for balancing a solar developer's interests with the interests of the municipality and its residents. The presenters highlighted some special use permit considerations that should be incorporated into application requirements, such as drainage mitigation plans, abandonment and decommissioning plans and agreements, property operations and maintenance plans, and the proposed payment-in-lieu-of-taxes program, to name a few. Municipalities will want to consider what special use standards solar energy systems should follow. For instance, lot coverage, setbacks, landscaping and buffering, and prime/farmland of statewide importance protections are all important standards to create when drafting solar energy system regulations.

Municipalities should be leveraging their networks to ensure that their regulations truly address the community's concerns. It is important for municipalities to work with their counties through the General Municipal Law 239-m review process. A municipality cannot make a final decision until it has received the county's report or 30 days have passed since the county received the proposed regulations. Furthermore, municipalities should build a strong working relationship with solar developer special use applicants. The municipality will want to know details about the operations and maintenance of a solar energy system and can be involved in pre-construction dialogue. A pre-construction meeting is recommended so that municipal staff, other agencies, the applicant, and contractors have an opportunity to discuss approvals, agreements, permits, conditions, project schedule, sureties, and many other important topics prior to breaking ground.

If your community is interested in designing solar energy system regulations, please reach out to Matt Johnson, matt@tughill.org, or Alaina Mallette, alaina@tughill.org, and request assistance. We also recommend reading the commission's [Planning for Offsite Solar Energy Projects issue paper](#). You can also watch a webinar organized by the commission that provides an overview of the [Review Processes for Siting Large, Utility-Scale Solar Projects - YouTube](#).

NYS Companion Animal Capital Projects Accepting Applications

The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets invites eligible municipal and incorporated not-for-profit pounds, shelters and humane societies to submit proposals for funding consideration from the Companion Animal Capital Projects Fund. Funding in the amount of \$4,250,000 will be available under this RFP for the costs of capital projects, including construction, renovation, rehabilitation, installation, acquisition or expansion of buildings, equipment or facilities necessary for the secure containment, health, and adequate care of sheltered dogs and cats. For the full grant announcement, search for funding opportunity ID AGM01-CACF2-2021 at grantsgateway.ny.gov or go to <https://agriculture.ny.gov/animals/rfp-0255-2021-2022-companion-animal-capital-projects-fund>. Grants are due by January 25, 2022.

In municipalities with a population of less than two million, for pounds, shelters or humane societies that are operated by or under contract for the provision of pound or shelter services with one or more municipalities:

- 1) For projects serving an individual municipality, grants of between \$50,000 and \$200,000, not to exceed 50% of the total project cost, or
- 2) For projects serving two or more municipalities, grants of between \$100,000 and \$500,000, not to exceed 75% of the total project cost.

NYS Urban Forestry Council Quick Start Grants Due February 10

Through U.S. Forest Service funding, the NYSUFC offers Quick Start competitive grants of up to \$1,000 each to small communities who want to pursue Tree City USA status, starting with an inaugural Arbor Day tree planting celebration in spring or fall. For more information, see nysufc.org/grants.

Open Meetings Law Training Materials Available

The New York State Committee on Open Government held a virtual training on the Open Meetings Law on December 16. Kristin O'Neill, the Assistant Director of the Committee on Open Government, conducted the session which consisted of a one-hour overview of the statute followed by a question-and-answer period.

The presentation outlined the requirements for public participation, video conferencing and meeting locations, both in the existing statute and the changes allowed through Executive Order and through legislative action under Chapter 417 of the Laws of 2021, during the Covid-19 pandemic. The current legislation allows for virtual attendance for board members and for boards to bar in-person attendance of the public, as long as virtual access is allowed, and the meeting is recorded and later transcribed. These current amendments to Open Meetings Law are due to be repealed on January 15, 2022.

Other new legislation highlighted was Chapter 481 of the laws of 2021 which was signed into law in October and requires that records to be discussed at a meeting be made available by posting on a municipality's website (if they have one) at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting. This is a change to the statute which had required that records be made available upon request "prior to or at the meeting" which has been in effect since 2012 to a firm 24-hour prior standard. Also highlighted was Chapter 587 of the Laws of 2021 signed into law in November which amended Open Meetings Law to require that agencies which maintain a website and have a highspeed internet connection post minutes on the website within two weeks of a meeting or one week of an executive session.

The session also discussed other pertinent sections of Open Meetings Law regarding quorums, what constitutes a meeting, notice requirements, minutes, recording meetings, executive sessions, public participation, exceptions to the law and non-compliance and enforcement.

To access a copy of the power point of the session visit: opengovernment.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2021/12/omi-information-session.pdf. To contact the Committee on Open Government with questions call (518)474-2518 or email opengovernment.ny.gov.

Town & Village Budget & Accounting Technical Assistance Available

The commission has contracted with Laird Petrie in his retirement to provide budgeting and accounting technical assistance to towns and villages belonging to one of the region's five Councils of Governments. Starting the program in October, the commission has fielded nine requests for Laird's expertise to date ranging from help setting up a capital reserve fund to guidance on basic municipal recordkeeping.

Examples of services Mr. Petrie can provide include:

- Assistance with annual budget preparation, including attendance at budget workshops when requested.
- Assistance with preparation of the Annual Update Document (AUD) required to be filed with OSC each year.
- Training municipal accounting personnel and aid with developing accounting records required by OSC.
- Assistance with multi-year capital plans including establishing, accounting, and reporting for capital reserve funds.
- Assistance with long-term operational plans including the use of various reserve funds authorize by General Municipal Law.
- Assistance with the planning, budgeting and accounting for capital projects including those involving debt and grant funds.
- Assistance local officials with shared service and government reorganization initiatives (dissolutions, consolidations, etc.).
- Assessment of various internal controls and policies and recommendations to governing boards as to how to effectively safeguard municipal assets.

Interested municipalities should contact Carla Fowler, Community Development Specialist at the Tug Hill Commission, carla@tughill.org or (315) 785-2380 to request assistance.

FY 2021 Assistance to Firefighters Grants Open

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Grants Program Directorate have issued a notice of the FY 2021 Assistance to Firefighters (AFG) grants which began accepting applications on November 8, 2021. The AFG grant program allows applications in three areas 1) Operations and Safety; 2) Vehicle Acquisition and 3) Regional Projects. Each of the activities has its own eligibility requirements outlined in the grant documents at www.fema.gov/media-collection/fy-2021-assistance-firefighters-grant-afg-application-guidance-materials. The goal of this program is to enhance the safety of the public and firefighters with respect to fire and fire-related hazards. The funds “provide critically needed resources that equip and train emergency personnel to recognized standards, enhance operational efficiencies, foster interoperability and support community resilience” per the grant documents.

Funding may be applied for by fire departments, non-affiliated EMS agencies, and State Fire Training Academies only. Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) numbers and registration in the System for Award Management (SAM) program are required to apply. Be aware that it can take up to four weeks after submitting your SAM registration for it to become active and then recognized by the Grants.gov system. Information on obtaining a DUNS number and registering in SAM is available at www.grants.gov/web/grants/register.html.

AFG grants require matching funds, the amount of match being determined by community size. In general, a matching amount of non-federal funds of equal to and not less than 15% of the grant amount is required. Exceptions for smaller communities are made for communities of less than 20,000 residents, which means for most of Tug Hill communities the match amount is 5%.

There is \$414 million in funding available and there are anticipated to be 2,500 awards. The deadline to apply for the FY2021 AFG grant program has been extended to 1/21/22 at 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time.

Guided Snowshoeing Trips

The Great Lot Sportsman's Club will be hosting five guided snowshoeing trips this winter at their club at 4277 Osceola Road in West Leyden. Reservations are required. Participants are asked to meet at 9:45 a.m. at the Great Lot Sportsman's Club entrance. You can follow one of the guides or take a map and explore the many snow-covered trails on your own. Afterwards all will be treated to a hot lunch and refreshments at the clubhouse. The snowshoeing and lunch are FREE and open to all age groups! There are a limited numbers of snowshoes to borrow.

For more information or to sign up please contact Guy Case @ (315) 378-7592, Andy Bailey @ (315) 225-3119, or Jim Ray @ (315) 225-1731.

Visit www.thegreatlot.com and download a trail map.

2022 SNOWSHOEING DATES, all at 10:00 a.m.: January 15, February 12, February 26, March 12, March 26.

New Oswego County Fishing and Hunting Guide Now in Print

The new Oswego County Fishing and Hunting Guide is now available in print! Printing was delayed by pandemic-related issues, but it is now available, and it features several pages of coverage about the Salmon River and the opportunities it presents for fishing.

Copies are available by request by contacting county promotion and tourism at visitoswegocounty.com/about/contact-info/.

Contact Us

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For upcoming trainings, grant deadlines, and meetings, view our [calendar](#).