

May 20, 2022

Commission Adopts Video Conferencing Policy, Schedules LGC 2023

The Tug Hill Commission board met on Monday, May 16 in Turin. The two primary items of business were to adopt a video conferencing policy and to decide on venue and dates for the 2023 Tug Hill Local Government Conference.

The commission's adopted video conference policy can be found at tughill.org/commission-policies/, and follows the requirements of the 2022-23 New York State Budget addition of Public Officers Law §103-a. The new section of law allows members of public bodies to participate in meetings via video conference from a location that is not accessible to the public so long as certain conditions are met, including that a majority of the board meets from a publicly accessible location(s). The addition to Public Officers Law outlines several requirements that public bodies need to meet to use the video conference provision, which this policy complies with. It also marks the end of continuing extensions by the NY Governor that suspended requirements of open meetings law due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 2023 Local Government Conference will be held Wednesday, April 5 and Thursday, April 6, 2023 at Turning Stone Event Center. More details to come!

Additionally, minutes of past commission meetings, as well as video of meetings since April 2020, are available at <https://tughill.org/minutes/>.

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Commission Staff Meeting and Outing

Tug Hill Commission staff enjoyed a day out and about in Lewis County earlier this month. After a staff meeting at the Maple Ridge Center, the group was graciously hosted by Tom and Nancy Kovach at Trixie-Belle Farm. It was also Fort Drum intern Josh Lumsden's last day working with the Tug Hill Commission. RACOG circuit rider Mickey Dietrich brought his team of horses to the farm, and everyone enjoyed some team building exercises and a wagon ride. Thank you to the Maple Ridge Center and the Kovach's for hosting us!



“Internet for All” Programs Announced

Internet for All programs are slated to build internet infrastructure, teach digital skills, and provide necessary technology to ensure that everyone in America – including communities of color, rural communities, and older Americans – has the access and skills needed to fully participate in today’s society. The Enabling Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure Program is available to multiple applicant types, whereas the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program and State Digital Equity Act programs are available for states to apply for and administer. The *Internet for All* programs launched on May 13 with three Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) issued through the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA):

- **Enabling Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure Program** (\$1 billion);
- **Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program** (\$42.5 billion);
- **State Digital Equity Act programs** (\$1.5 billion).

The Enabling Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure Program will award grants on a technology-neutral, competitive basis to eligible entities for the construction, improvement, or acquisition of middle-mile infrastructure. Eligible applicants include state, counties and local governments, internet service providers, technology companies, telecommunications cooperatives, nonprofits, public utility districts, and economic development districts. Applications open June 21 and are due by September 30.

To participate in the BEAD Program, states must submit a letter of intent and a planning funds budget by July 18, which will unlock \$5 million in planning funds and allow states to begin creating their five-year action plan. Initial planning funds applications are due August 15. Each participating state is guaranteed a minimum \$100 million allocation, with additional funding determinations made based on the forthcoming coverage maps from the Federal Communications Commission. The process and timeline for how this program will roll out from the New York State ConnectALL office is undetermined.

The launch of the State Digital Equity Planning Grant Program kicks off a series of Digital Equity Act steps that will invest \$1.5 billion to heighten adoption and use, like digital literacy training, for those who need it most, including communities of color, rural communities, and older Americans. States are eligible applicants.

For more information, please read the [Internet for All Fact Sheet](#).

June 22 Webinar on Developing a Policy for Managing Email

Local governments and state agencies rely on email to share information, in a myriad of ways, as a part of regular business. Examples of using email to share information include:

- Authorize specific actions
- Disseminate policies and procedures
- Approve payments
- Interpret terms of contracts
- Correspond with the public, customers, or constituents
- Communicate with staff
- Circulate memoranda related to official business
- Discuss work schedules and assignments
- Share agendas and minutes of meetings
- Issue final reports or recommendations

This webinar will present some practical approaches to managing email with related policies, and procedures to help implement them. This webinar is being held on Wednesday, June 22, 2022 from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. [Click here to learn more and register](#). Registration for this webinar will close at 4:00 pm on the business day prior to the session. All webinars are recorded for future viewing.

2022 County Fair Schedule

Jefferson, Lewis, Oneida, and Oswego Counties are hard at work preparing for their respective county fairs this year. See the schedule below for fair dates and website links to make plans to attend. While you're there, stop by the Tug Hill Commission's vendor table for more information on our services and a chance to spin the trivia wheel for fun prizes. We hope to see you there!

[Jefferson County Fair](#)

July 14 - 17

[Lewis County Fair](#)

July 19 - 23

[Boonville-Oneida County Fair](#)

July 26 - 31

[Oswego County Fair](#)

August 17 - 21

July 2022							August 2022						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2		1	2	3	4	5	6
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	28	29	30	31			
31													

Oneida County Main Street Program in Boonville

Representative from the Oneida County Planning Department and the village of Boonville recently gathered on Main Street in Boonville for a site visit in conjunction with the Oneida County Main Street Program.

The Main Street program aims to improve safety, provide better access to local businesses, allow people to move safely on foot, accommodate bicycles, support climate smart investments, provide a sense of place, and enhance communities.

The Oneida County Planning Department is working with cities, towns, and villages throughout the county to rethink and rebrand their main streets, including complete street designs, parking, streetscapes, façade programs, public space design and entrance way development. The program will have two phases: planning assistance and capital project funding.



Photo by Elieen Pierson

CTHC Spring Meeting Held May 19

On Thursday May 19 the Cooperative Tug Hill Council (CTHC) held their annual spring meeting at the Steak and Brew Restaurant in Turin. Fourteen of the twenty-two CTHC municipalities were present, along with Paul Baxter, a Tug Hill Commission circuit rider and several other guests, for a total of 33 attendees. Following approval of the previous meeting's minutes and the current financial report, the current slate of officers was re-elected as there were no nominations from the floor. The 2022 CTHC officers are Roger Tibbetts returning as Chairman; Doug Dietrich as Vice Chairman; Carla Bauer as Secretary; and Ian Klingbail, Steve Bernat, Paulette Walker, and Fran Yerdon returning as Directors. CTHC thanked the Executive Committee members for their service and for volunteering to serve for the upcoming year.

In new business, the proposed work goals for 2022 were reviewed and approved by the members. Additionally, the updated and locally approved Special Areas map for the town of Pinckney was approved by the council and will be added to the regional CTHC Special Areas map. New Associate Circuit Rider Kelley Martin was introduced to the attendees and welcomed to the CTHC fold.

The speaker for the evening was Tim Hunt, Lewis County Highway Superintendent who gave a very informative talk about town roads and various issues facing the municipalities in dealing with their highway networks. Tim gave a breakdown of road mileages, improved vs. unimproved roads, state funding and development pressures. He also discussed the possibility of partnerships between the municipalities and Lewis County to encourage development in certain areas to encourage recreation and protection of certain areas for conservation of the places that make Tug Hill unique. A lively discussion followed and hopefully the groundwork has been laid for some partnerships going forward which will help balance the goals of all parties in the future.

Due to COVID protocols several Tug Hill Commission representatives were unable to attend, but in their absence a written update of several topics and news pertinent to the council was given to attendees with some follow-up by CTHC Circuit Rider Angie Kimball. The meeting closed with Supervisor and Mayor's topics discussed, including a report by Terry Thisse, Martinsburg Supervisor, about the new valuation method for wind and solar projects in Real Property Tax Law 575-b and the possible impacts on local municipalities.





Photo credit: David J. Schryver photo © nnywaterfalls.com

Whetstone Gulf State Park Season and Whetstone Falls

With warmer weather in sight, locals and tourists alike avail themselves of the natural attractions in the Tug Hill region. For Whetstone Gulf State Park, the rapidly approaching Memorial Day holiday marks the beginning of their summer season which lasts until mid-September. Located along a three-mile gorge on the eastern edge of the Tug Hill Plateau, Whetstone Gulf State Park is a prime tourist attraction in Lewis County. Visitors to the park can enjoy a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities such as hunting, fishing, swimming, hiking, camping, and more.

Among the spectacular natural sites within the park are the Whetstone Gulf Falls and the Whetstone Creek Falls, included on our “22 for 2022” waterfall recommendation list. The onset of Whetstone Gulf State Park’s summer season marks an opportune time to begin seeking out the waterfalls and trails in our region. A hike of moderate difficulty, the Creek Falls form several smaller drops along the trail on the way to the impressive Gulf Falls, which mark a drop of approximately 50 feet.

For more information on the state park, visit the New York State Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation webpage [here](#).

For more detailed information, directions, parking, and other links regarding the falls at Whetstone Gulf State Park and other sites within the Tug Hill region, please check out Visit Tug Hill’s new “Waterfalls” page [here](#).

Constableville Adopts Solar Energy Development Law

The village of Constableville recently adopted a new local law to regulate small and large scale solar energy development. They are among many Tug Hill communities to do so, as large scale solar projects are on the rise in the region. The law provides a review process that is intended to ensure that these developments have the least possible impact on neighboring properties and the environment in general. While very large projects – those generating 25 megawatts of power or greater – are reviewed and approved by the NYS Office of Renewable Energy Siting, that entity is still required to take local zoning or land use regulations into consideration. Contact the commission office if your community is interested in adopting or amending this type of regulation.

Contact Us

NYS Tug Hill Commission

317 Washington Street
Watertown, NY 13601

Phone: 315-785-2380

Toll Free within the region:

1-888-785-2380

Email: tughill@tughill.org

Visit us at:

Web: www.tughill.org

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](#).