

NYS Tug Hill Commission Local Government Conference – April 6, 2023, Session Descriptions

Session 1

8:45 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.

(1A) Policies and Procedures for Managing Your Local Government

This session will begin by discussing the legally required policies all local governments must have. However, there are many facets of local government that are not covered by the legal requirements for policies and procedures. We will also discuss several programmatic areas, including the use of vehicles, cell phones and computers, where "best practices" come into play and how you can address internal controls over these areas through the use of policies and procedures.

Ingrid Otto, Office of the New York State Comptroller

(1B) Fire Department-based Ambulance Service: Where Are We Now and Where Are We Going?

Recent changes to the law authorized fire departments to bill for ambulance service. This interactive program will feature a discussion on the changes to the law, and the role that fire departments may play in the delivery of ambulance and emergency medical services into the future.

Timothy C. Hannigan, Hannigan Law Firm PLLC

(1C) Public Meeting and Hearing Procedures

This session will cover the different types of meetings and hearings commonly held by municipal boards, planning boards, and zoning boards of appeals. Topics will include public notice procedures, who runs the meetings or hearings, how they are run, and ways the public can or should be involved in a productive way.

Scott Chatfield, Esq. (retired)

(1D) ZBA Review of Variance Applications and Interpretation Appeals

This session will review and discuss ZBA functions, basic application guidelines, best decision-making (motion) practices, use variance application review, area variance review, and ZBA decisions as precedent.

Mark Schachner, Miller, Mannix, Schachner & Hafner, LLC

(1E) Asset Management

The highway superintendent's job is to know and understand the taxpayers' assets entrusted to his or her care and to have a long-term plan to manage them.

Tim Hunt, Lewis County Highway Department

(1F) Fiscal Responsibilities of Municipal Clerks

Municipal clerks are not only the official record keeper of a local government but they also play a key role in many financial activities. In addition to collecting license and permit revenues, clerks must keep a record of debt obligations and reserve funds, and certify abstracts of payments approved for payment along with other financial transactions approved by their governing boards. This session will discuss these and other duties that clerks must perform.

Laird Petrie, Municipal Consultant

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Session 2

10:15 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

(2A) Tips, Strategies and Compliance Best Practices for Administering Your ARPA Funds

This session will highlight best practices for effectively and efficiently spending local government ARPA funds to maximize community benefit. From program start-up through project selection and reporting, LaBerge Group ARPA experts will share stories from communities across the state and tips on managing funds and leveraging other sources of funding for local projects during this time of unprecedented revenue opportunity.

Nicole Allen and Jerrine Corrallo, LaBerge Group

(2B) An Update on the Implementation of the NYS Marijuana Regulation & Taxation Act

The Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act (MRTA) sets out a framework that will regulate cannabis in New York State in a manner that will protect public health and safety, while promoting social equity and economic development. The Office of Cannabis Management (OCM) will license cultivators, processors, distributors and dispensaries to grow and sell cannabis. Attend this workshop to gain a comprehensive understanding of the MRTA, OCM and the underlying principles governing the new cannabis industry of New York State.

Philip Rumsey, New York State Office of Cannabis Management

(2C) SEQR Basics

This introduction to the State Environmental Quality Review Act includes an overview of the environmental assessment form (EAF), Type I, Type II, and Unlisted actions and the sequence of making a positive or negative declaration on a project's potential to have an adverse impact on the environment. The relationship between the administration of local regulations and SEQR will also be discussed.

Christopher Eastman and Paula Gilbert, NYS Department of State

(2D) Preventing and Prevailing in Article 78 Proceedings

Article 78 of NYS Civil Practice Law and Rules provides an opportunity for anyone to challenge decisions made by approving agencies or government or municipal officers. The focus of this session will be on common procedure pitfalls that may lead to legal challenges, and ways in which your community can avoid them.

Mark Schachner, Miller, Mannix, Schachner & Hafner, LLC

(2E) NYSDEC Permitting for Highways

This session presents an overview of NYSDEC permitting standards, permit types, jurisdictional versus non-jurisdictional activities, and the process for acquiring required permits.

Todd Phillips, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation

(2F) Knowledge Transfer: Knowing What You Don't Know in Times of Change

People move on, they always do. But, there is valuable information to capture before they do. Transitions are not always easy. Information and relationships can be lost...so can keys and passwords. Your community can be negatively impacted. This session will discuss things to think about, capture and retain, and ways to do so, well before a transition occurs.

Khristopher Dodson, Syracuse University Environmental Finance Center

Session 3

1:15 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.

(3A) State and Federal Funding: Financing and Resources for Municipalities

With public funding for infrastructure and community development at historic levels, it is more important than ever to be prepared to capitalize on these investments. Attendees will engage with program staff about funding available from the Northern Border Regional Commission, the Local Government Efficiency Program, the Community Development Block Grant Program, and other programs. Attendees will also get tips on grant writing and administration so that they can position their communities to implement their infrastructure and development goals.

Kyle Wilbur, NYS Department of State; Charlie Phillion, NYS Homes and Community Renewal; and Khristopher Dodson, Syracuse University Environmental Finance Center

(3B) First Amendment Audits: What Are They and How Can Government Officials Respond

The proliferation of video cameras on mobile devices coupled with growing online political activism has resulted in an explosion of First Amendment audit activity in the past 24 months. YouTube videos of these audits are ubiquitous, showing an individual walking through municipal buildings recording local officials and employees doing their jobs and residents there to conduct municipal business. The videos invariably include scenes of altercations with distressed municipal employees who frequently respond to these auditors in an agitated, confrontational manner. This presentation will provide an overview of what a First Amendment audit is and how local officials can respond to such activities.

Wade Beltramo, New York Conference of Mayors

(3C) Understanding Site & Subdivision Plans for the Approval Process

This session will cover the basic fundamentals for planning, zoning and municipal board members for understanding how to properly interpret the drawings as they apply to the approval requirements. Plan components that you should be familiar with in a site and /or subdivision submission will be highlighted.

Pat Scordo and Matt Cervini, GYMO

(3D) Zoning and Siting Large Solar Facilities

This session will examine how communities can incorporate siting and design standards in zoning for large solar facilities. It will examine local control of large solar that are < 20 megawatts and learn more about NYS review and permitting for > 20 megawatt projects. Emphasis will be on siting, design, screening, agrivoltaic opportunities, and review processes such as site plan review and special use permits.

Nan Stolzenburg, Community Planning and Environmental Associates

(3E) How FEMA's Public Assistance Grant Program Brings Dollars Back to Your Community Following a Disaster

This presentation will guide you through the FEMA Public Assistance process following a disaster. It will cover how Federal disasters are declared and then go step-by-step to give you an overview of what to expect when applying for a FEMA PA grant. By the end, you'll know how your municipality or organization can get the maximum reimbursement funding it needs to recover and build back stronger the next time disaster strikes.

Jerry Lord and Steve Eidt, NYS Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services

(3F) The Do's and Don'ts of Municipal Websites

The internet can be difficult to navigate, especially when it comes to municipal websites and social media pages. This session will go over First Amendment concerns, provide practical tips on what to include with your site, and offer suggestions on how to craft a website and social media policy that will help your municipality avoid common mistakes and problems.

Sarah Brancatella, The Association of Towns of the State of New York

Session 4

2:45 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

(4A) The Open Meetings Law: Demystifying the New Videoconference Procedures

The Open Meetings Law (OML) was first amended to allow public bodies to conduct meetings via videoconference back in 2000. As a result of the COVID pandemic, a more flexible although temporary method of conducting meetings was authorized via executive order. New York's experience with this temporary method of conducting meetings led the State to enact new procedures for conducting meetings via videoconference. This session will provide a full explanation of New York's OML, including the procedures for conducting meetings using videoconference technology. The presentation will also highlight recent changes to the OML regarding the public's right to access records that are scheduled to be discussed at meetings, the definition of "public body," and the posting of meeting minutes.

Wade Beltramo, New York Conference of Mayors

(4B) Lake Effect and Lightning (LEE) – A “Shocking” SUNY Oswego Project

The SUNY Oswego LEE project is funded by the National Science Foundation to study the electrification in lake-effect storms. The two main questions are: 1) How do lake effect storms become electrified? 2) Do wind turbines initiate lightning during these storms and under what conditions do these turbines initiate lightning, if so? Sites across Tug Hill hosted weather stations during the winter of 2022-23. Additionally, students launched weather balloons and a Doppler on wheels traversed Tug Hill during lake effect storms. Learn more about this study and how the results will be used.

Scott Steiger, SUNY Oswego

(4C) Hot Button Land Use Issues

Local governments are not able to regulate all uses the same way. Some uses have special statutory protection or rules established through case law and require special consideration, such as religious uses, mining, and telecommunications facilities. Other uses might be new to the local officials attempting to regulate them, such as solar energy facilities, barn weddings, and short-term rentals. This course is an overview of some of the land uses that many local officials find challenging, along with the statutory rules and case law associated with them and options for regulating them.

Christopher Eastman and Paula Gilbert, NYS Department of State

(4D) Q&A for Planning and Zoning

This is your chance to ask the expert your burning legal questions. This is an open-floor session, so bring your questions about planning and zoning issues. The answers and discussions will be helpful for the beginners, the experienced and everyone in-between.

Scott Chatfield, Esq. (retired)

(4E) The Basics of a Good Road

Bring your questions about roads and streets and see if you can stump the engineer. The presenter will discuss the basics of roads and answer your questions.

David Orr, Cornell Local Roads Program

(4F) Potluck Panel for Clerks: Vital Records, DECALS and Dog Licensing

The presenters in this session will provide information about dog licensing, the DEC automated licensing system (DECALS) and vital records (births, deaths and marriages). Please come prepared ready to discuss your questions and concerns.

David Chico, NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets; Gary Martinez, NYS Department of Health; and Kevin Maloney, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation

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Assessor Session: Those Little Things We Need to Know

This class is composed of different topics that we may not utilize in our everyday work but are important to understand. Many times, it is simply a case of not having to use certain forms or uncertainty in confronting a difficult situation. Examples are correction of errors, legal notices, sellers concessions, and the assessor's annual report. Assessors will receive 6 hours of CE credits for attending the entire session.

Anne Sapienza, FIAO

Morning Session - Begins at 9:00 a.m.

9:00 a.m. to 10:15 a.m.: Correction of Errors

10:30 a.m. to Noon: Legal Notices and Forms

Afternoon Session - Begins at 1:00 p.m.

1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.: Sellers Concessions – Deduct from sales price or not? Auction Sales – Valid or Not?

2:15 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.: Annual Report

3:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.: The Market – Open discussion about what the covid pandemic did to our assessments.