

## Lorraine Minimum Maintenance Road Home Rule Bill Passes Senate and Assembly

A home rule bill (A6412/S6249) authorizing the town of Lorraine to establish minimum maintenance roads passed both the NYS Senate and Assembly last week. Sponsored by Senator Mark Walczyk and Minority Assembly Leader Will Barclay, the bill amends highway law by adding a new section 205-c to allow the town board in any designated town, after a public hearing, to adopt a local law designating any low-volume road or portion thereof providing agricultural or recreational land access, except for farm access roads or roads that provide access to an individual year-round residence at the time of designation, as a minimum maintenance road. The law details the process, and if signed by Governor Hochul, will take effect on the 120<sup>th</sup> day after signing and shall expire and be deemed repealed eight years after it becomes law.

The home rule bill in large part mirrors the statewide bill that has been proposed for many years. The current statewide bill (A2225/S1836), sponsored by Senator Joe Griffo and Assemblymember Aileen Gunther, was passed in the Senate this session, but remains in the Assembly Transportation Committee.

If signed into law, the home rule bill will give the town of Lorraine the opportunity to demonstrate that minimum maintenance roads can be an effective and safe way to manage limited local resources yet still provide the appropriate level of access for landowners and recreationists. Lorraine is 39 square miles in size with a total population of 924 in 2020, which equates to 23.7 people per square mile. The total town road mileage is approximately 36.4 miles, with approximately 15 miles of that designated as minimum maintenance roads. Twenty percent of the land in Lorraine is designated New York State Forest, and of the town's minimum maintenance road mileage, 6.5 miles of it has state

land on one or both sides of the road. In 2020, the town's budget was approximately \$1.4 million, and 75% of that was spent on highway management. Several town roads in Lorraine provide critical access to the 9,233-acre Winona State Forest: Sharp, Marsh, Brown, Kate Hall, Bishop, Wart, Dodge and Hessel. These roads are unpaved, providing access to the area by motor vehicle in the summer, and access to the area via skis, snowmobiles, dog sleds, snowshoes and fat



*Dodge Road in the town of Lorraine.*



*Dog sledding in Winona Forest.*

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**The Tug Hill Commission will meet on Monday, June 26 at 10:00 a.m. at the village of Castorland office, 5185 State Rt. 410, Castorland, NY 13620. The public is welcome to attend.**

# Inaugural NOCCOG Scholarship Awardees Announced

The Northern Oneida County Council of Governments proudly announces the awardees in their first ever scholarship program: Preston Campbell, from Adirondack Central School, Gianni Liberatore, from Camden Central School, and Kyrian Hall, from Remsen Central School.



The program, which started this year, is for college bound seniors attending high school within the NOCCOG municipalities. A \$500 award will be given to each selected senior after successful completion of their first college semester. Ideally, the winners will focus on a public service or municipal management field.

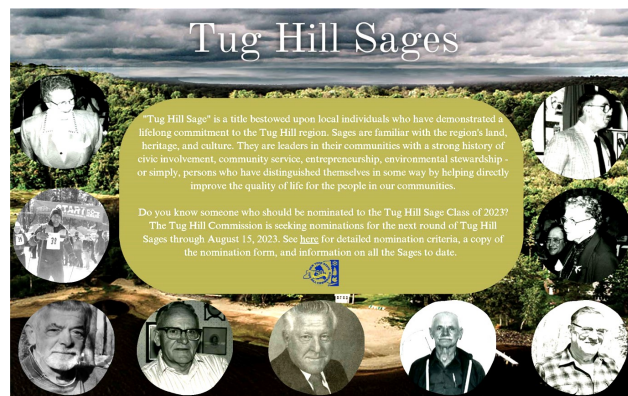
The award is given in recognition of the importance of local government, as well as the often-unacknowledged service, commitment, and dedication of community members who are essential in the daily operation of our towns and villages. It is also given with the hope the recipient will someday be involved in their local government.

Congratulations to all!

## Tug Hill Sages Class of 2023 Nominations Due August 15

As part of the NYS Tug Hill Commission 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, we are once again seeking nominations for Tug Hill Sages. Since 1983, the distinction of “Tug Hill Sage” has been bestowed upon local individuals who have demonstrated a lifelong commitment to the region through leadership, civic involvement, and community service – or individuals who have otherwise directly contributed to improving the quality of life for those on the Hill. Sages also have a deep knowledge of the Tug Hill region’s heritage, culture, and environment. To date, 36 individuals have been recognized for their contributions to the region.

The commission is accepting nominations now through August 15, 2023. Sage nominees will be reviewed and selected by the Tug Hill Commission board based on the information provided in the form and adherence to the nomination criteria. The newest round of Tug Hill Sages will be selected in September and announced at the commission’s October 19 anniversary celebration at Tailwater.



A nomination form, detailed nomination guidelines, and pictures with backgrounds of all current sages can be found at the commission’s website: [www.tughill.org](http://www.tughill.org). Nomination forms can be mailed to the commission office or emailed to Taylor McKinney at [taylor@tughill.org](mailto:taylor@tughill.org). Please contact Taylor via email or at (315) 785-2606 with any questions.

## Town of Constantia Adopts New Comprehensive Plan

The town of Constantia recently adopted a new comprehensive plan. The plan, developed by the planning board, is intended to prioritize capital investments and provide direction for future development within the community. The plan provides a framework for the existing land development and subdivision controls and will help assure that growth will be in accordance with plans for future water, sewer, and other development. Key components of the plan are hamlet revitalization, the improvement of public infrastructure, and protecting and enhancing Oneida Lake and its benefits. The plan’s graphic and editorial design was greatly enhanced by a town resident. It is available for download on the town’s website- <https://constantiany.org/>.

## Camden Comprehensive Plan Survey to Start Soon

A survey will soon be sent to residents of the town of Camden as part of the town’s comprehensive plan update. Tug Hill staff and the Camden Planning Board have been preparing the survey for mailing to give people another way to contribute opinions to the comprehensive plan update. A postcard with information about the update process, as well as a link and QR code to the online version of the survey, will be sent out to all town residents. A paper copy will also be mailed upon request by calling the town clerk.

Weeks ago, two SWOT exercises were completed, with many members of the public participating. The input from these sessions was considered and formulated into survey questions. Input from the survey will be used to create the most reflective document of the needs and desires of the people of the town of Camden.

# Black River Watershed Conference Informs and Inspires Stakeholders

Almost 100 people filled the banquet room at Zero Dock Street in Carthage this week for the 2023 Black River Watershed Conference. Attendees learned about stakeholders' efforts to enhance and protect water quality and to inspire others, including the next generation, to do the same. Master of ceremonies, Tug Hill Commissioner Tom Boxberger, also a board member of the Jefferson County Soil & Water Conservation District, led the attendees through a wide array of presentations. The conference began with the Black River Adaptive Modeling Project by Ramboll Engineering, followed by the St. Lawrence Eastern Lake Ontario Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management's (SLELO PRISM) eDNA early detection project, and a PFAS Emerging Contaminants discussion by Paul Hare of Ramboll Engineering, Sujan Fernando from Clarkson University, and Kristine Wheeler from the NYS Department of Health.

After lunch, a lightning round afforded an opportunity for updates from Hamilton, Herkimer, Oneida, and Jefferson County Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Both Hamilton and Jefferson Counties spoke about their work to educate young people about water, the water cycle, invasive species, riparian buffers, soil health, climate change, and more. Herkimer County showcased their new agricultural plastics baler, which is available for farmers to use, and Oneida County talked about streambank stabilization projects that they have undertaken. Other community updates included the Friends of the Black River, the River Area Council of Governments by Mickey Dietrich, DEC and Cornell Water Resources Institute Great Lakes Program updates by Emily Fell, the Black River Trail in the city of Watertown, and an update on the FERC relicensing projects in the Black River watershed.



There was also a presentation by Tim Hunt and Nichelle Swisher about innovations and efforts to reduce road salt usage and the Adirondack Road Salt Reduction Task Force. The day ended with Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC) and Drinking Water Source Protection Program (DWSP2) presenting about their funding and technical assistance opportunities.

Links to the presentations will be made available ASAP at [tughill.org/black-river-watershed-conference-2/](https://tughill.org/black-river-watershed-conference-2/). The commission thanks the attendees, speakers, sponsors, and exhibitors for their enthusiastic support of the 13<sup>th</sup> annual conference. This conference is planned every year by the Lewis, Jefferson, Hamilton, Herkimer, and Oneida County Soil and Water Conservation Districts, the Tug Hill Commission, and the NYSDEC Region 6 and Great Lakes Program.

## Home Energy Efficiency Workshop June 27

The North Country Regional [Energy Hub](#) is sponsoring a home energy efficiency workshop for homeowners on Tuesday, June 27 5:00 p.m. at the Lewis County JCC Education Center, 7395 East Road, Lowville, NY 13367. A local energy advisor will be available to discuss ways to create a healthier and safer home while saving money.

This workshop will cover New York State funding programs and various do-it-yourself tips/ tricks to keep homes comfortable in every season. For more information, contact Eamonn LaDue, Energy Advisor for Lewis County, at 315-788-8450 ext. 280.

## Information Governance Webinar June 28

The New York State Archives is presenting a webinar by David Lowry on information governance and how it can help your organization on June 28. The session will introduce the concept of information governance, explain what it includes and how it will strengthen records management programs, and outline how to implement an information governance program.

**When:** Wednesday, June 28 from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

**Register:** On the New York State Archives [workshop](#) page before 4:00 p.m. on June 27. Access the catalogue of other recorded State Archives workshops at their catalogue page [here](#).

# Commission Releases Three New Technical Papers

## Municipal Insurance Coverage Annual Review

TECHNICAL PAPER SERIES

Municipal Insurance Coverage Annual Review  
June 2023



NEW YORK STATE TUG HILL COMMISSION

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The Tug Hill Commission Technical and Issue Paper Series are designed to help local officials and citizens in the Tug Hill region and other rural parts of New York State. The Technical Paper Series provides guidance on procedures based on questions frequently received by the Commission. The Issue Paper Series provides background on key issues facing the region without taking advocacy positions. Other papers in each series are available from the Tug Hill Commission. Please call us or visit our website for more information.



It is recommended to review municipal insurance coverages annually to assess changes in your municipality's risk tolerance, to manage claims, and to anticipate future risk exposure. However, municipal insurance coverage is a topic that often flies under the radar during a time of the year when towns are inundated with budgeting and other year-end obligations. This paper encourages early annual review of municipal insurance coverages, not only to allow time for your agent to meet with you and to make necessary adjustments to your policies, but also to ensure that you are paying for only the coverages that your municipality needs.

The paper includes a one-page checklist that poses questions meant to begin your conversation and to assign key personnel to the tasks.

## How to Write a ZBA Decision

Zoning boards of appeals (ZBAs) were created in the New York State planning statutes as a "safety valve" for the zoning process. Because zoning can limit the freedom of a property owner to develop their property in a way that they may desire, a mechanism is needed to review specific instances of hardship or improper classification of a property and give owners a vehicle to possibly effect change. The goal of the zoning board of appeals is to come to a well-reasoned decision in any case before them. While a written decision is not required, one way that the ZBA's hard work on each case can be shown is via the written record and ultimately by a well written decision. This paper focuses on the skills and tools needed to develop a good decision.

ISSUE PAPER SERIES

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## Regulating Home-based Businesses

Home-based businesses, also known as home occupations, have long been operated in the Tug Hill region and across upstate New York. This type of business occurs where the occupant or occupants of a residential dwelling also use their property to provide some type of retail service or sales, typically from a space within the dwelling, but occasionally from an accessory structure. Advances in technology, and the availability of high speed internet, have only increased the popularity of home-based businesses. Municipalities should plan for and regulate home based businesses in a way that allows and promotes them while being sensitive to their potential impacts on neighboring properties and the community as a whole. This paper explores the tools available to do so.

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This paper was developed with input from the staff of the Local Government Training program at the NYS Department of State's Division of Local Government Services.

All three papers are now available on the commission's website at [tughill.org/publications/technical-issue-papers/](http://tughill.org/publications/technical-issue-papers/).

## Contact Us

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To request our newsletter electronically please email [gwen@tughill.org](mailto:gwen@tughill.org) or call

1-888-785-2380.

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