

Commission Annual Retreat Held in Boonville

Commission board members, staff, and associates gathered at Erwin Park in Boonville Monday, August 21 for the Tug Hill Commission annual retreat, an opportunity to discuss big picture ideas, issues, and opportunities for the coming year. Topics at this year's retreat were a review of the 2023 Local Leaders Survey, discussion about a draft 2023 revision of the commission's Outside Region Policy, ideas about the next 50 years of the Tug Hill Commission, and last activities and details to celebrate the commission's 50th anniversary.

Thanks to the village of Boonville for allowing use of the Liv Lansing pavilion. It is an appropriate location, as Liv Lansing was one of the early members of the Tug Hill Commission board of directors.



Standing: Gabriel Yerdon, Taylor McKinney, Jan Bogdanowicz, Carla Fowler, Lee Willbanks, Angie Kimball, Matt Johnson, Matthew Smith, Jennifer Harvill, Christine Healt, Mickey Dietrich, Felicia Passino, John Healt, Lisa Bellinger. Kneeling: Emily Fell, Katie Malinowski, Paul Baxter, Heidi Tompkins, Gerry Ritter

Budgeting and Accounting Training for Small Towns September 26 and 27, Glenfield

The Tug Hill Commission and Association of Towns of the State of New York are collaborating to provide training on financial requirements and regulations for town governments. Instructor Laird Petrie will provide a two-day, comprehensive training on town governments requirements and regulations related to budgeting and accounting on Tuesday, September 26 and Wednesday, September 27 at the Howard G. Sackett Technical Center, 5836 St. Rt. 12, Glenfield, NY 13343.

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Day One: 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. is designed to cover topics that will be beneficial for elected town officials as well as bookkeepers, accountants, and comptrollers.

Day Two: 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. is designed to assist town bookkeepers, accountants, and comptrollers to record day-to-day financial transactions and generate necessary financial reports to the town board and outside agencies.

The cost is \$75 for a one-day registration; \$125 for a two-day registration, and both days include breakfast and lunch. Materials are also included. The Edge Hotel, 3952 St. Rt. 12, Lyons Falls, NY 13368 has reserved 10 rooms the evening of September 26 at \$89 per night plus tax for attendees. Call (315) 348-4211 and ask for the Tug Hill Commission block rate. Rooms must be reserved by August 26 to guarantee pricing.

Please register at **[THCBudgetSchool.eventbrite.com](https://www.thcbudgetschool.eventbrite.com)** no later than September 15. More information on the training can be found through the registration link. We encourage people to register early, as space is limited! If you have questions, please contact the Tug Hill Commission at (315) 785-2380.

A Farewell to Community Development Specialist Carla Fowler

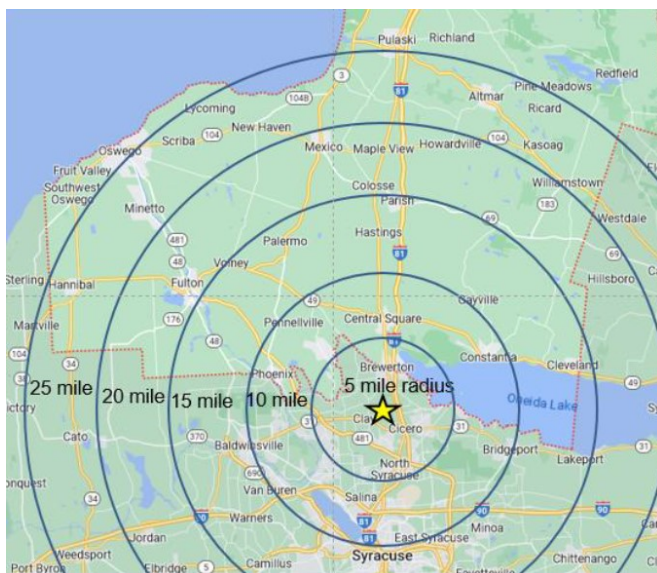
After an 18-year career with the Tug Hill Commission, Community Development Specialist Carla Fowler is leaving to take a position with the [Housing Assistance Council](#), a national nonprofit supporting affordable housing, community development, and technical assistance throughout rural America. August 30 will be her last day at the commission.

Carla has been involved in a variety of regional and community scale projects at the commission, including the Black River Blueway, Adams main street program, Trenton Park improvements and village dissolutions in Altmar, Barneveld, and Herrings. Carla has helped leverage funding for numerous projects, most recently as a key team member to help Jefferson County secure an \$8.5 million Restore NY grant to revitalize the village of Deferiet's old mill site. She has appreciated the opportunity to work with Tug Hill communities and will look for opportunities to collaborate in her new position.

NorCOG Receives Micron Update

The North Shore Council of Governments (NorCOG) met Wednesday, August 16 at the West Monroe town hall, with the major agenda item of the evening being a presentation and question-and-answer session with Dave Turner, Director at the Office of Strategic Initiatives for Oswego County, and Austin Wheelock, CEO of the Oswego County Industrial Development Agency.

The major topic of discussion was the Micron chip manufacture facility being planned and built in adjacent Onondaga County, and the projected development which will take place in the North Shore as a result. They outlined some of the major expected regional impacts in the years to come, and the impacts the North Shore communities and businesses can expect. Some of the areas weaknesses include limited public infrastructure, and available housing. In addition, local businesses can expect competition for available skilled workers, especially since Micron workers are expected to be paid a starting salary considerably higher than the average wage for Central New York. Wheelock said the project can only grow as fast as the available workforce allows, and workforce development efforts are already underway. Limits on worker availability will not just constrain Micron growth, but spinoff development as well.



Map showing radii from proposed Micron site.

Oswego County has a steering committee for strategy in addressing the potential impacts. Subcommittees include economic development, public and private infrastructure, workforce development, healthcare, education, housing, child care, transportation and logistics, and hotel, restaurant, and tourism. The North Shore and the Tug Hill Commission are represented on several of those task forces.



NorCOG members listen to Oswego County presentation.

Wheelock noted that there is more to do than time allows for. A transportation study is currently underway. Some state money has been budgeted to assist in dealing with Micron impacts, but NorCOG expressed concerns that those resources seem likely to be inadequate for local needs, and that local taxes may have to go up to help address those needs.

The meeting adjourned with a consensus that NorCOG should have another meeting like this in the fall, to stay on top of these issues as best as possible, and planning that meeting is in progress now.

The Tug Hill Commission will meet on Monday, September 18 at 10:00 a.m. at the Town of Williamstown Office, 2910 County Route 17, Williamstown, NY 13493. The public is welcome to attend.

Highway Departments and Town Budgets Workshop Well Attended

The second *Highway Departments and Town Budgets* workshop with Laird Petrie, held August 23 in Trenton, was attended by approximately 30 town supervisors, highway superintendents and town board members. There were many questions and much discussion about the duties and responsibilities of the highway superintendent and the town board, relating to budgets, highway funds- particularly the 284 agreement, highway reserve accounts, shared services within the municipality, transferring funds to the highway account, as well as hiring personnel, and purchasing of highway equipment and materials.

For a copy of the handout that was used at the workshop, please visit the Tug Hill Commission's [website](#). Many thanks to the town of Trenton for hosting and to all that attended!



Progress on Tug Hill Traverse

Over 35 volunteers joined Bob McNamara, the Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust, and the Black River Chapter of the Adirondack Mountain Club on Friday, August 11 for another work session on the Tug Hill Traverse. Volunteers included two Tug Hill Commission staff members, Matthew Smith and Gabriel Yerdon, and around 25 students from SUNY ESF.

The volunteers split into working groups and built abutments for a new foot bridge crossing a tributary to the East Branch of Fish Creek, and cleared fallen limbs, brush, and vegetation from other expanses of the trail. The collaboration provided an excellent opportunity for the group of ESF students, mostly incoming freshmen, to see a portion of the Tug Hill core forest, and worked as a capstone on the last day of their summer program. The groups hiked over rolling hills, past beaver ponds, the East Branch of Fish Creek, and a giant Beech tree, the highlight of that portion of the trail.



Bob McNamara directs volunteers.

Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust has partnered for several years with the Black River Chapter of the Adirondack Mountain Club to establish this historic 20-mile north/south hiking trail through the heart of Tug Hill. The Tug Hill Traverse Trail extends from the DEC's Tug Hill Wildlife Management Area on the north to the West Leyden Osceola Rd. on the south, and generally follows the East Branch of Fish Creek. Interim trailheads are located on the G&W and Michigan Mills Roads, respectively.

WPBS also recently did a news story on the effort, viewable [here](#).

Grants Available for Invasive Species Projects

The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has \$3 million available in the third round of the state's Invasive Species Grant Program. This grant program, supported by the Environmental Protection Fund, is designed to advance projects that target both aquatic and terrestrial invasive species, with six funding categories that address invasive species spread prevention, early detection and rapid response, research, management planning, and education and outreach. Grant applications are due November 1.

The grant announcement highlighted New York as an international center for trade and tourism, making it extremely vulnerable to the threat of invasive species. Once established, species such as hydrilla, oak wilt, emerald ash borer, and Japanese knotweed spread rapidly, causing harm to our environment, agriculture systems and economy. The spread of invasive species can cause significant damage to our farms and agricultural crops, as well as our natural resources, wildlife, and ecosystems.

Municipalities, academic institutions, and not-for-profits may submit applications for funding for eligible projects in up to two categories. Grant awards range from a minimum of \$11,000 to a maximum of \$200,000, with a required 25% match. Project locations must be located wholly within New York State and priority will be given to projects that include opportunities for public participation, are on or close to public lands or waterbodies, and emphasize long-term success. For full details, visit the [Invasive Species Grant Program Page on DEC's website](#).

First Amendment Audits Workshop August 29

"Citizen journalists" have been conducting "First Amendment" audits for years. However, the proliferation of video cameras on mobile devices coupled with growing online political activism have 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 frequently include scenes of altercations with distressed municipal employees who 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 appropriately respond to such activities.

Join presenter Wade Beltramo, NY Conference of Mayors (NYCOM) General Counsel, on Tuesday, August 29 from 7:00 - 8:00 p.m., at the Whitesboro Fire Department, 171 Oriskany Blvd., Whitesboro, NY, in this NYCOM and the village of Whitesboro sponsored workshop.

There is no charge, but registration is required. Please RSVP to: Lisa Langdon, Treasurer (315) 736-11131 or by email treasurer@whitesboro.us.

NYCOM Fall Training School September 18-22, 2023



Join the New York State Conference of Mayors Fall Training School at the Conference Center in Lake Placid from September 18 - 22. A wide array of sessions will be covered, including overview of governmental accounting, a local government primer for city and village officials, municipal finance fundamentals, understanding and conducting village elections, terms of office, vacancies, resignations and removal, adopting local laws and referenda properly and effectively, investing and protecting public funds, first amendment issues, duties and responsibilities of the Chief Fiscal Officer, administering public water and sewer systems, code enforcement and much, much more.

Registrations received after August 28 will increase by \$30 for members and \$50 for non-members. There are options that include the full program, one day and meals.

For more information, to view the full agenda, or to register, visit the NYCOM Fall Training School website [here](https://www.nycom.org/fall-training-school).

Upcoming Cornell Local Roads Classes Near You!

Tools for Practical Communication: September 21, 2023, 8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m., Jefferson County Cooperative Ext, 203 N Hamilton St, Watertown. [Here's a link](#) to a video describing the workshop.

Work Zone Traffic Control: October 5, 2023, 8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m., Oneida County Cooperative Ext, 121 2nd St, Oriskany.

Solutions for Safer Roads and Streets: October 11, 2023, 8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m., Lewis County Cooperative Ext, 7395 East Rd, Lowville. [Here's a link](#) to a video describing the workshop.

Payment & Confirmation

The cost of each workshop is \$50 per person and includes a boxed lunch. You will receive a confirmation email when you register along with a map to the workshop site. If you have not received confirmation at least one week before the workshop, please call (607) 255-8033 or email clrp@cornell.edu.

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For upcoming trainings, grant