

Lowville Receives DRI Grant

The North Country Regional Economic Development Council announced its winners of the Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) and NY Forward this week, and the village of Lowville is the recipient of a \$10 million DRI award – congratulations!

In the DRI application, Lowville's vision is described as *"Downtown Lowville is a vibrant, rural community destination for the region. It is committed to maintaining a high quality of life, promoting environmental sustainability, and providing unparalleled access to outdoor recreational opportunities. The Village intends to preserve and enhance its small-town charm while diversifying its economic base and encouraging economic development consistent with its unique character. With the creation of an active and walkable commercial corridor, the opening of new and niche businesses, the expansion of downtown housing options, and the enhancement of recreational and quality-of-life amenities, the Village sees itself transforming into a family-friendly and economically viable place for people of all ages to live, work, and visit."*



Governor Hochul Announces North Country Winners of Seventh Round Downtown Revitalization Initiative and Second Round of

RACOG Board Meeting Recap

The River Area Council of Governments (RACOG) held their first board meeting of 2024 on January 24. Officers for 2024 were elected, with Paul Smith, the town of Wilna supervisor, voted in as the new chairperson and Yvonne Boliver, a board member for the town of Croghan, voted in as vice chairperson. RACOG also voted to admit the town of Watson to their council of governments.

Amber Swan was introduced to the RACOG board as their new associate circuit rider. She is originally from the Carthage area, but now lives in Watertown. The board approved their 2024 budget and approved bronze sponsorship of the May 1-2 Tug Hill Local Government Conference. Additionally, the board approved holding the RACOG Economic Visioning Summit at the Carthage Elks Lodge on April 25.

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NorCOG and Economic Study Updates

The North Shore Council of Governments (NorCOG) met on Wednesday, January 17. The two major agenda items requiring attention were the election of officers for 2024, and authorization of COG sponsorship as in past years of the Tug Hill Local Government Conference. Following that, the NorCOG economic study steering committee met to review the high points of the draft final study, available on the NorCOG [website](#), under Projects and Reports.

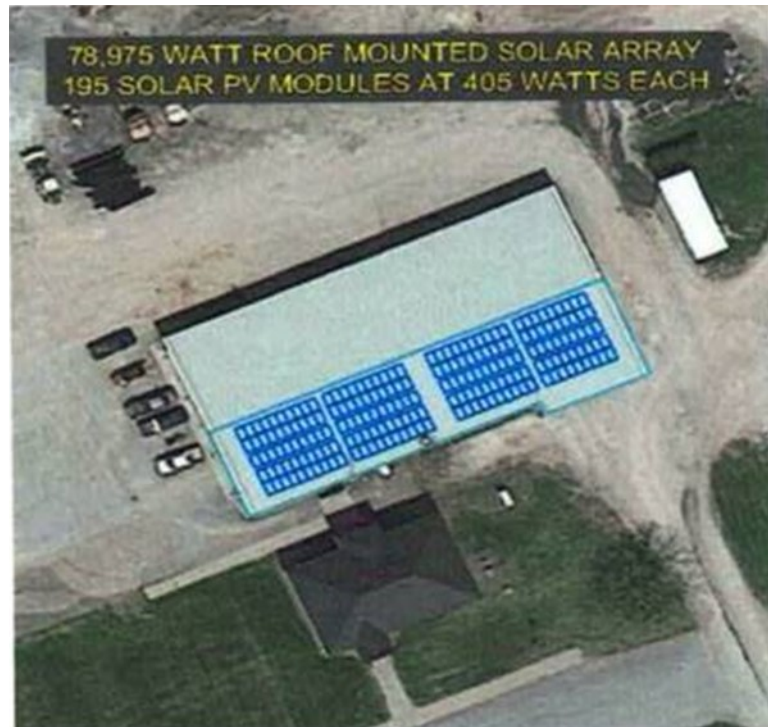
Extensive discussion followed on both the draft and additional aspects that the group identified as important. Tracy Verrier of the MRB Group noted the topics discussed and will be doing additional work to augment the draft study, which will be presented to the public on January 30, at 7:00 p.m. at A.A. Cole Elementary School, 1683 State Route 49, Constantia. The upcoming meeting has been mentioned at the January municipal board meetings of member communities, and NorCOG encourages everyone interested in the study to attend next Tuesday's meeting.

Denmark Solar Array

The town of Denmark accepted a proposal from Fourth Coast Inc., Clayton to install a 78.9 KW roof mounted solar array at their December board meeting. Once installed, the solar panels will generate 100% of the town's projected municipal electrical needs through 2049. The town's electric bill has been steady climbing, with a 48.2% increase in costs for electricity in 2022 with 5000 KW less usage than 2021. The town is on pace for a 28.7% increase in its electric bill in 2023, with a continued decrease in power usage.

The quoted installed price of the project is \$244,000. The town has been approved for a NYSEERDA NY-Sun incentive award of \$27,355. In 2024 the town will apply for a federal Inflation Reduction Act "direct pay" rebate in the amount of \$65,264 to be received in 2025. In total, 38% of the projected cost is funded through grants. After grants, the final cost of the project is expected to be \$151,381, with a little over six year payback period for town taxpayers. The town will utilize the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds of \$118,126 and fund balance to cover the remaining \$33,255.

The project is estimated to save taxpayers more than \$736,000 over the 25-year life of the project. The solar array is expected to be producing power by August 1, 2024. It will eliminate power costs for 25 years. Municipalities can contact the Tug Hill Commission for technical assistance on similar projects.



St. Lawrence Engineering rendition of the Denmark solar array.

West Monroe Route 49 Study Funding

The Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council has published a draft of their 2024-2025 Unified Planning Work Program, which includes a proposal sponsored by West Monroe for a Route 49 Corridor study. The project "will address transportation needs of the area residents and commuters, adequacy, safety, and ease of use, existing transportation infrastructure, access management, and a traffic safety analysis." The study is slated to begin in the first quarter of the state fiscal year 2024-2025, and a final document is proposed to be presented in the second quarter of state fiscal year 2025-2026. There are many steps to the project and public engagement is envisioned as part of the process. As of right now, this is a draft document and is subject to change. Public comments on this document will be taken through February 21, 2024.

View the SMTC website and the 2024-2025 UPWP draft [here](#).

Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council
Unified Planning Work Program

Draft
2024-2025 UPWP for
Public Review

Wilna, Carthage, and Deferiet Hold SWOT for Comprehensive Plan Update

The town of Wilna, and the Villages of Carthage and Deferiet's comprehensive plan committee held a "Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats" (SWOT) session for the general public on January 23, 2024, as part of the comprehensive plan update. The session, led by Tug Hill staff Christopher Barboza and Mickey Dietrich, along with RACOG associate circuit rider Amber Swan, targeted the input of planning board members, comprehensive plan committee members, town and village board members, and local residents. About 15 town residents (including board/committee members) attended the session and provided valuable input.

A SWOT is a type of visioning exercise which helps gather thoughts and opinions about the town's future. All comments will be compiled into a summary for the plan committee to review. Any relevant questions or concerns heard at the SWOT will be incorporated into a community survey to be sent out in the coming weeks.

Tug Hill Winter Wildlife Webinar Series: Part 2 of 4
On the Doorstep: Could American Martens Recolonize Tug Hill?
Tuesday February 20, 2024, 6 p.m.

NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Regional Wildlife Program Manager Paul Jensen will share results of recent research on and discuss the potential for martens to recolonize the Tug Hill region. He will also provide an overview of the Adirondack Inventory & Monitoring (AIM) Network – a collaborative survey effort involving the deployment of camera traps by several regional partners in northern New York, which will contribute to our understanding of marten and other wildlife populations in this region, including the use of important landscape linkages between the Adirondacks and Tug Hill.

Register Here!

tinyurl.com/TugHillMarten



Contact info: gabriel@tughill.org | 315-785-2387



Naturally Lewis 2024 Grants Programs

The Lewis County Development Corporation's Community Economic Development Program recently announced four grant programs available in 2024. A total of \$930,000 will be made available, with program applications opening throughout 2024.

Small Things, Big Impacts

- Eligible: Businesses and Non-profit Organizations
- Focus areas: Enhancing their visibility through creative means in the community
- Grant awards: \$500 to \$1000 per grant
- Applications open: January 15, 2024
- Quarter 1 deadline: March 28, 2024 (Applications accepted on a quarterly basis until funds are dispersed)

Community Connections Fund

- Eligible: 501©3 non-profit organizations, municipalities, and schools
- Focus areas: The program or project must strengthen ties within the community, to develop relationships, and to spur economic growth and development through the creation and enhancement of public gathering places
- Grant awards: Two \$30,000 awards OR one \$60,000 award
- Applications open: April 1, 2024
- Application deadline: June 13, 2024
- Grants determined: July 2024

Stay tuned for more information on two additional grant opportunities: Building Business Fund – Applications open July 1, 2024 and Vacant Property Revitalization Fund – Applications Open: September 20, 2024 Contact Jenna Lauraine, Programs & Partnerships Director, at jenna@naturallylewis.com or visit the Naturally Lewis website [here](#).

NBRC Grant Info Sessions February 5 and February 9

The Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) is holding two information sessions in February, one on general eligibility for its three open grant rounds and another specifically on the Catalyst program. The February 5, 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. session will provide an overview of NBRC funding requirements such as applicant eligibility, NBRC eligible counties, timeline, and important dates along with a brief overview of each of the three programs that have announced funding in 2024 – Catalyst, Forest Economy, and Timber for Transit. The program overviews will highlight the core focus areas of the programs, differences between the programs, and immediate next steps for interested applicants. Registration required, register [here](#).

The February 9, 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., session will provide a more in-depth presentation of the Catalyst Program including changes in 2024, review of eligible project purposes, award sizes, pre-application process, evaluation of pre-applications, and NBRC and state program priorities for 2024. The goal is for participants to leave these sessions with the information needed to prepare for the pre-application phase. Registration required, register [here](#).

In addition to these information sessions, NBRC will be scheduling additional program specific “office hour” sessions as well as special Grants Management System training sessions in late February/early March. Stay tuned for these details in the coming weeks. If your Tug Hill community has a potential project and would like to brainstorm with commission staff, please call the office at 315-785-2380.

Broadband Municipal Infrastructure Program Webinar February 1

Empire State Development's ConnectALL office has launched the Municipal Infrastructure Program with \$228 million to support the construction of new fiber for tens of thousands of homes statewide. Priority will be given to unserved and underserved locations. There will be an information session on **Thursday, February 1 from 1:00 p.m.- 2:30 p.m.** [Click here to register](#).

The Municipal Infrastructure Program will provide grants for open-access broadband infrastructure that is predominantly publicly controlled. The last mile fiber deployments will connect homes to reliable high-speed internet service. The program will facilitate a variety of models of municipal broadband and public-private partnerships. Eligible public entities, Tribal Nations, municipal utilities, and utility cooperatives can partner with private partners like ISPs, MSPs, and broadband infrastructure builders and owners. Visit the [Municipal Infrastructure Program](#) webpage to learn more and review the Request for Applications.

NYSERDA'S CLEAN ENERGY COMMUNITIES PROGRAM 3.0 WEBINAR

Find out how your community can benefit from \$25 million in new funding now available under NYSERDA's Clean Energy Communities Round 3.0. The program recognizes local clean energy leadership, provides match-free grants, helps reduce municipal energy use, lowers costs, and offers additional support for projects located in disadvantaged communities. Additionally, Clean Energy Communities Coordinators are available for free technical assistance to help move through the program.

For more information, contact Jill Henck jhenck@adirondack.org

**Join NYS Tug Hill
Commission and Partners**



**Thursday February 29th
12-1:30 PM**



[Click here to register](#)



NYSERDA



Central New York Regional Planning & Development Board



MVEDD
Mohawk Valley Economic Development District, Inc.

2024-2025 Records Management Grant

The New York State Archives has announced that they are now accepting applications for the 2024-2025 Local Government Records Management Improvement Fund (LGRMIF) grant cycle.

The Local Government Records Management Improvement Fund provides grants to local governments. These grants assist local governments to establish records management programs or develop new program components. It is a competitive program, awarding grants based on the merits of applications.

If you plan to apply for an LGRMIF grant, your Records Management Officer (RMO) must have a NYS Directory Service (NYSDS) account by **February 26, 2024**. If you do not have a NYSDS account, please complete the [online registration form](#).

The 2024-2025 application due date will be **March 11, 2024, at 5 p.m.** For more information, and to access the guidelines, please visit the [LGRMIF webpage](#). Interested applicants can also view the recorded [LGRMIF webinars](#) that cover topics such as navigating the eGrants portal, writing the grant narrative, budgeting the grant and grant closeout and more.

NYS DEC Wetlands Webinar February 1

The Hudson River Estuary Program is hosting a webinar on Thursday, February 1, from 1:00-2:30 p.m. with Krista Spohr from the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). She will provide an overview of NY's current freshwater wetlands regulations, how they are enforced, and explain forthcoming regulatory changes and their effective dates.

Revisions to New York's Freshwater Wetlands Act were made in 2022. Currently, DEC's jurisdiction is limited to wetlands that are equal to or greater than 12.4 acres (and certain wetlands of unusual local importance) and identified on the state's freshwater wetlands map. The new legislation will eliminate the map requirement beginning in 2025, and in 2028 DEC's jurisdiction will expand to wetlands as small as 7.4 acres. The reforms will allow DEC to protect over one million acres of critically important freshwater wetlands that are currently unmapped and thousands of additional acres of smaller wetlands.

[Click here to register](#). Webinar attendees will receive an email confirming attendance, which may be submitted locally for one hour of municipal planning or zoning board training credit. Webinars are held using the WebEx platform.

Freshwater Wetland Regulations Input Now

Earlier this month, DEC published an [advanced notice \(PDF\)](#) of proposed rulemaking, inviting public comment on potential updates to freshwater wetlands protection and classification regulations.

The DEC is looking for answers to specific questions as well as general input and suggestions which may inform the potential revisions, including:

- criteria for "wetlands of unusual importance" including significant flooding, rare animals, vernal pools, and local and regional significance
- criteria for extension of regulated adjacent areas
- procedures for jurisdictional determination.

To view the draft proposed regulatory updates, visit [DEC's Freshwater Wetlands Program webpage](#). Submit written comments to DEC by close of business February 19, 2024 to NYS DEC – Division of Fish and Wildlife, 625 Broadway, Albany NY 12233-4756 or email WetlandRegulatoryComments@dec.ny.gov.

Betsy Mack Day in Trenton

When longtime town councilwomen Betsy Mack celebrated her 90th birthday this past November, she received a unique gift in the way of a county proclamation officially declaring the day as "Betsy Mack Day."

Betsy has been a staple of the Trenton community for decades, serving on various boards, including the Town of Trenton board for over 20 years. While she decided to "retire" from local politics this year, she continues as the town historian and as the fiscal officer for the NOCCOG board.



Betsy Mack with Oneida County Executive Anthony Picente, left, and NYS Senator Joe Griffo, right.

2024 Local Government Conference

Turning Stone Conference Center – 5218 Patrick Road, Verona, NY 13478

Thursday, May 2, 2024 from 7:30 am to 4:15 pm



Infrastructure Roundtable on Wednesday, May 1, 2024 from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Reception on Wednesday, May 1, 2024 from 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

All of this and more can be found at www.tughill.org/localgovernmentconference

Wednesday May 1, 2024

1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Infrastructure Roundtable

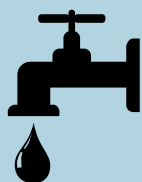
Interested in learning more about funding and financing for municipal infrastructure in your town or village? Come meet representatives from funding agencies and learn about funding opportunities for drinking water, wastewater, road-related projects, and other community investments. Have one-on-one opportunities to discuss your current ideas, projects, and funding needs.

\$25

if postmarked by 4/1/2024

\$50

if postmarked 4/2/2024 or later



Wednesday May 1, 2024

5:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.

Reception

This is your opportunity to mingle with exhibitors, sponsors, speakers, agencies, and other conference attendees.

Hearty appetizers are included and there will be a cash bar available.

\$15

if postmarked by 4/1/2024

\$30

if postmarked 4/2/2024 or later



Thursday May 2, 2024

7:30 a.m. - 4:15 p.m.

Full Day of Training Session Descriptions Here

This year's conference features four concurrent sessions, an individual class for assessors, breakfast and lunch, and a printed program.

Certificates of Attendance (5 hours) will be given to all attendees at the conclusion of the conference.

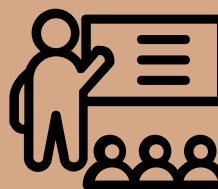
Free parking in the garage.

\$85

if postmarked by 4/1/2024

\$170

if postmarked 4/2/2024 or later



Two Ways to Register

Register Online (credit card only)

lgc2024.eventbrite.com

Open through
April 8, 2024.

or

Register by Mail (check only)

Complete this form and
mail
it back with your check.

Registrations will not be
accepted over the
phone or by fax or email.

Please call the Tug Hill
Commission at
(315) 785-2380 with
any questions.

TURNING STONE HOTEL INFORMATION

To receive the New York State rate of \$107 per night, you must book your room by 5:00 p.m. on Monday, April 1, 2024. Call (800) 771-7711 and state that you are with the NYS Tug Hill Commission or give the code HTUG24. Rooms are limited, so please book early.

Refunds will not be issued after April 1, 2024. No exceptions!

We are required to reserve food quantities with the venue before the event.
If you cancel for any reason, we are still obligated to pay for food ordered.

Highway Foundational Webinars Continue

Join the New York State Local Technical Assistance Program Center (NYS LTAP) for their ongoing series of free foundational webinars focused on the important principles key to local highway agency operations and management. Focusing on why highway departments do what is done, each webinar offers a convenient way to learn the basics of a particular topic. Taken together, they cover the foundation of local highway issues. Many webinars will be repeated yearly or every other year to give attendees the opportunity to attend the full series. These webinars run from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. on most Tuesdays.



January 30 - [Worker Safety](#)

Everyone should get home safely every day. Worker safety can improve productivity and employee morale as well as save lives. In this webinar, Phil Spiezio will provide the basics of why worker safety is important to a well-managed department.

February 6 - [Culverts*](#)

In this webinar, Willy Grimmke will discuss maintenance and repair techniques for common culvert distresses and deterioration as well as covering maintenance techniques for correcting those issues.

February 13 - [Finding, Retaining & Motivating Employees](#)

Good employees are vital to any highway and public works department. It is more critical than ever to find, retain, and motivate employees. Jim Sheridan explains why this is so critical and sheds some insight on how to have the best employees possible.

February 20 - [Work Zones *](#)

Work zones can be very dangerous places but are vital to the maintenance and construction of our roads and streets. Discussed in this webinar, is what makes a good work zone and the critical components to make the work zone safe for both the highway agency and the traveling public.

February 27 - [Purchasing & Financing](#)

Proper financing is crucial to successful highway and public works departments. In this webinar, Tim Hunt will discuss the underlying basis for purchasing and finance and help you understand the role these funds play in a well-run department.

March 5 - [Surface & Subsurface Drainage*](#)

The key to good roads is drainage. The key to good drainage is controlling potential drainage problems before they become serious. This webinar, David Orr will cover the most common drainage problems on highways and offer some simple solutions.

March 12 - [Pavement Maintenance*](#)

You can pay me now or you can pay me later. In this webinar, John Rondinaro will review the basics of pavement maintenance and why timing and the correct choice of maintenance action is vital to good roads and streets.

*Anticipated to be worth 1 PDH for engineering continuing education.

All online webinars and virtual workshops are worth Road Master credit based on the length of the session.

Fisher Recording Available

Over 70 people tuned in earlier this month to learn more about the fisher, an animal in the mustelid family that is native to the Tug Hill region. Tim Pyszcynski, a Regional Furbearer Biologist with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) delivered a fascinating presentation on the ecology of fisher on Tug Hill and DEC's recent survival and reproduction study, shedding light on the unique dynamics of fisher populations on both Tug Hill and in the Adirondacks. You can view a recording of the presentation [here](#).

Contact Us

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Instagram: [Instagram](#)

YouTube: [YouTube](#)

To request our newsletter electronically please email gwen@tughill.org.

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