

## COG Leaders Meet in Lorraine

Representatives from the Tug Hill region's five councils of governments (COGs) met in Lorraine on January 29 to facilitate communication and dialogue between COG leadership and the Tug Hill Commission (THC) staff and board. The group reviewed THC's budget, staffing, and board composition, and discussed legislative, planning, and project priorities for 2024. Those include managing additional minimum maintenance road efforts, progressing multiple comprehensive plan requests across the region, and making sure various projects continue forward momentum and secure additional funding.

Each COG provided specific updates relevant to their member municipalities. With the level of activity high in all councils, and increasing numbers of outside region municipalities seeking membership in COGs and service from the Tug Hill Commission, preserving staffing levels and increasing them when possible is important to maintain the quality and effectiveness of the commission program.



*Clockwise around the table from top left: Roger Tibbetts, CTHC chair; Mickey Dietrich, RACOG circuit rider; John Healt, NOCCOG circuit rider; Bob Sauer, NOCCOG chair; Vern Sundet, North Shore COG fiscal officer; Matt Johnson, THC planning director; Jan Bogdanowicz, THC board chair; Katie Malinowski, THC executive director; Jennifer Harvill, THC projects director; Angie Kimball, CTHC circuit rider. Not pictured, Paul Baxter, North Shore and Salmon Rivers circuit rider.*

## Commission 2024 White Paper to Governor and Legislature

The Tug Hill Commission's 2024 *White Paper to the Governor and Legislature* is available on the commission's website and is being distributed over the next month to Governor Hochul, state legislators, and other partners. The full report can also be accessed on the commission's website at [www.tughill.org/strategic-plan/](http://www.tughill.org/strategic-plan/). The paper, as in past years, evaluates the Tug Hill Commission's programs and services through a survey of local elected and appointed officials from the region's 59 towns and villages, four counties, and partner organizations at a variety of levels. Conducted in the spring of 2023, under the guidance of the five councils of governments that operate in the Tug Hill region, the survey achieved a 55.6% response rate. The survey was originally developed by Cornell University over 35 years ago, and remains very similar to the original, which allows for comparison over time.



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The 2023 survey results rated all the commission's core programs – land use planning, training, grant writing, natural resource support, circuit rider services, and technical assistance – as essential or important, as well as effective. Cooperation, expertise, and understanding area needs are the commission's top-rated characteristics. Ninety-nine percent of respondents strongly agree or agree that the Tug Hill Commission should continue its mission.

Article 37 of NYS Executive Law defines the Tug Hill region as a 2,100 square mile, 1 million acre region "lying between Lake Ontario, the Black River and Oneida Lake," encompassing forest, farmland, and waters important to the state. It also establishes the Tug Hill Commission as a non-regulatory state agency that provides technical assistance to the region's towns and villages and to community organizations of the Tug Hill region with the mission of "municipal assistance, conservation, preservation and development in the region." Section 847-e of Article 37 calls for an every five-year report on the results of a survey of local officials "throughout the Tug Hill region in regard to the effectiveness of commission programs."

# Commission Welcomes New Project Specialist



Jillian Lee joined the Tug Hill Commission last week as a project specialist. Jillian, a Sidney, NY native, graduated with her bachelor's degree in meteorology from SUNY Oneonta and her master's degree in water science and policy from the University of Delaware. She grew up hiking, camping, and kayaking throughout the Tug Hill region and Adirondacks. She spent the last four and a half years in Sacramento, California, first as a water resources planner for Stantec Consulting Services where she was focused on water supply reliability, including sustainable groundwater management and surface water storage; aquatic habitat improvement; watershed management; and climate change and wildfire risk resiliency. She was then an environmental scientist for the State of California where she implemented the California Vegetation Treatment General Order. She led site visits throughout the state to ensure wildfire mitigation projects (e.g., prescribed burns, forest thinning practices, and herbicide application) were implemented safely for water quality.

In her spare time, Jillian enjoys riding her horse, Cas, finding new hiking trails with her husband, and lifting weights. She also enjoys spending time with her cats, painting, photography, and baking. Jillian is very excited to use her experience and knowledge to provide support to the Tug Hill region, its people, and environment.

# Wilna, Carthage, and Deferiet Second SWOT Held

The comprehensive plan committee for Wilna, Carthage and Deferiet held a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) session for business owners on January 30. The session, led by Tug Hill staff Christopher Barboza, Mickey Dietrich, and Gabriel Yerdon, targeted the input of planning board members, comprehensive plan committee members, town and village board members, business owners, and local residents. About ten town residents (including board/committee members and business owners) attended the session and provided valuable input.



A SWOT is a type of visioning exercise which helps gather thoughts and opinions about a community'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.

# Clean Energy Communities Webinar February 29

Find out how your community can benefit from \$25 million in new funding now available under NYSERDA's Clean Energy Communities Round 3.0. Register at [tinyurl.com/THcleanenergy](https://tinyurl.com/THcleanenergy) and join a group of speakers and municipal officials at noon on Thursday, February 29 to learn more!

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. Communities with populations under 40,000 can earn up to \$250,000 in funding through the Clean Energy Communities Program. Additionally, regional Clean Energy Communities Coordinators are available for free technical assistance to help your community move through the program.

# Red Flags for Fraud Workshop

Thursday, February 29, 2024, 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Boonville Municipal Building, 13149 State Route 12, Boonville  
or via Zoom



The NYS Tug Hill Commission, in conjunction with the Office of the New York State Comptroller, Division of Local Government and School Accountability, is hosting a municipal fraud prevention and detection workshop.

This session will identify steps local officials can take to help detect and prevent fraud and abuse. Participants will learn about the fraud triangle, which consists of common red flags, organizational vulnerabilities to fraud and how to minimize risks.

Designed to provide practical advice and information, with plenty of time available for questions, **the workshop is free and open to anyone!**

This workshop will be a **hybrid** event – with a live presentation taking place at the Boonville Municipal offices, and a virtual presentation via Zoom. The program will start at 7:00 p.m. Thursday, February 29. **CPE eligible training (1 CPE credit)**

**Registration is required. Register online at [tinyurl.com/FraudFlags](https://tinyurl.com/FraudFlags) or call the Commission office at (315) 785-2380.**

Speaker: Ingrid M. Otto, CPA, Auditor 2  
Office of the New York State Comptroller  
Division of Local Government and School Accountability  
Office: 518-473-0005

[www.osc.state.ny.us/local-government/academy](http://www.osc.state.ny.us/local-government/academy)



**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](https://tinyurl.com/TugHillMarten)



**Contact info: [gabriel@tughill.org](mailto:gabriel@tughill.org) | 315-785-2387**

# Oswego County Tourism Launches New Website

Visitors and residents alike are invited to explore Oswego County Tourism's new website at [visitoswegocounty.com/](http://visitoswegocounty.com/). The re-designed site launched in December, revealing updated content, new features and enhanced accessibility for desktop and mobile devices. The website continues to promote Oswego County's rich history, world-class fishing, unique attractions, charming accommodations and more. New features include an interactive map displaying attraction locations and a blog section with articles written by local experts and tourism staff highlighting various activities, events, restaurants, museums, shops and more.



Visitors can stay up to date on Oswego County happenings by checking the events page or viewing Oswego County Tourism's social media pages, which are linked on the homepage of the website. Weekly fishing reports and winter trails reports are also accessible on the site, as well as Oswego County guides. Users can order physical copies of the Fishing and Hunting Guide and the Visitor Guide online or download the digital versions.

Oswego County guides can also be ordered by calling Oswego County Tourism at 315-349-8322, and fishing and winter trails reports can be heard by calling 1-800-248-4FUN (4386).

# Onondaga County Planning Symposium March 13



Registration is open for the 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Planning Symposium, sponsored by the Onondaga County Planning Federation and rescheduled from 8:00 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. on Wednesday, March 13 at the Marriott Syracuse Downtown. The courses can be used to fulfill annual training requirements for planning and zoning board members if approved by the municipal board.

The daylong training includes numerous options for sessions, including: *Planning and Zoning: An Introduction*, *Developing Town Centers: A How-To Guide; Case Study*, *Comprehensive Planning as a Learning Enterprise*, *Developing Transit Oriented Communities*, *Can Solar Development and Agriculture Work Together?*, *Using Local Land Use Authority to Protect Water Quality*, *A Deep Dive into Onondaga County's Housing Market*, *Map Reading 101*, *Public Meetings and Hearings*, *Overview of the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) Process*, *NYS Department of State Funding Opportunities*, *Empowering Sustainable Communities and Resilient Downtowns*, and *Case Law Update for Planning and Zoning*.

All registrations must be received by March 1. There is a registration fee of \$85 prior to February 23, and \$95 if received after. For more information, including the full program, sessions, presenter biographies and to register, please visit the Onondaga Planning Department's Planning Symposium webpage, [www.ongov.net/planning/ocpf.html](http://www.ongov.net/planning/ocpf.html).

# GPS Tracking Now Available on Oneida County Plow Trucks



The public can now track Oneida County Department of Public Works (OCDPW) vehicles through online GPS technology as they remove snow and ice from their road routes.

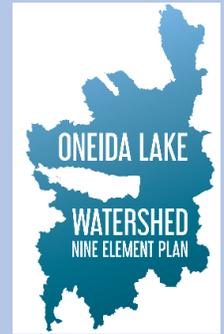
The technology allows residents to see when and where roads are being cleared and salted by county vehicles, which could assist in travel planning during the winter months.

OCDPW operates 28 vehicles that plow and salt over 400 total miles of state-owned roads. It also plows all the county roads in the towns of Augusta and Florence. While OCDPW does not provide snow and ice removal for any municipal-owned roads in villages or towns, the county usually contracts with towns and villages to plow and salt most county roads within their municipalities. GPS tracking is only available on county-owned plows and the routes for which they are responsible.

The GPS tracking map can be found on the county's website [here](#). Tracking is initiated when the vehicle's salt spreaders are active. The map offers an address search function and allows residents to search by day and time. The live function of the map operates on a 10-minute delay.

# Oneida Lake Watershed Plan

## FOCUS GROUP SESSIONS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC



Madison County and the Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board are developing a watershed plan for the Oneida Lake Watershed and we want to hear from you! We are working with our partners at the Tug Hill Commission and the Herkimer-Oneida Counties Planning Program to hold focus group sessions on issues in the Oneida Lake Watershed.

We will be discussing a range of issues, including:

- Flooding
- Stormwater control
- Streambank erosion
- Improvements to farms that improve water quality
- Forestry practices
- Growth & economic development
- Municipal regulations and water quality
- Septic system impacts

Each two-hour session will start with an hour focused on the natural environment and agriculture, followed by an hour focused on the man-made environment, including homes, roads, and future development in the region.

Feel free to attend only the first hour, only the second hour, or the entire meeting.

### OPTION 1

**Thursday, February 29, 1:00 – 3:00 PM**

Central New York Regional Planning and  
Development Board  
126 North Salina Street  
Syracuse, NY

### OPTION 2

**Tuesday, March 5, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM**

Madison County Offices, Wampsville  
Supervisors Chambers, Building #4  
138 North Court Street  
Wampsville, NY 13163

### OPTION 3

**Wednesday, March 6, 1:00 – 3:00 P.M.**

Oneida County Department of Planning  
Union Station, 3rd Floor  
321 Main Street  
Utica, NY

### OPTION 4

**Thursday, March 7, 4:00 – 6:00 PM**

West Monroe Town Hall  
46 County Route 11  
West Monroe, NY

**REGISTER TO ATTEND A FOCUS GROUP  
SESSION TODAY**

<https://forms.office.com/r/8TTdY4D00h>



# Inter-Agency Fire Safety Working Group Draft Recommendations

Following fire incidents at battery energy storage systems (BESS) in Jefferson, Orange, and Suffolk Counties, the Inter-Agency Fire Safety Working Group (Working Group) was created to examine energy storage facilities fires and safety standards. The [Working Group](#) includes the following state agencies: Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services, Office of Fire Prevention and Control, NYS Energy Research and Development Authority, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Department of Public Service, and the Department of State. The Working Group released a draft *Fire Code Recommendations Report* this week and is accepting public comment through 3 p.m. on March 5. To submit feedback, please review the [Request for Public Comment](#) and then email a completed [BESS Code Recommendations Respondent Form](#) to [BESScodeupdates@nyserda.ny.gov](mailto:BESScodeupdates@nyserda.ny.gov) with the subject line 'Response: BESS Code Recommendations Request.'

New York State has also actively engaged with local authorities having jurisdiction and fire departments to provide training and education on BESS and recent code updates and plans to continue efforts to support the safe installation of BESS across the state. This will include clarifying requirements through code language and providing avenues for local jurisdictions to seek independent third-party plan reviews by organizations familiar with BESS safety and code compliance.

Draft recommendations include:

- Require industry-funded independent peer reviews for all projects.
- Expand the requirement for explosion control to include BESS cabinets in addition to rooms, areas, and walk-in units. Additionally, provide design requirements or language for what constitutes a "passable" system.
- Require that qualified personnel are available for dispatch within 15 minutes and able to arrive on scene within four hours to provide support to local emergency responders.
- Extend safety signage requirements beyond the BESS unit itself to include perimeter fences or security barriers and include a map of the site, BESS enclosures, and associated equipment.
- Update the Fire Code to ensure that Battery Management System (BMS) data is monitored by a 24/7 staffed Network Operations Center (NOC). Critical failure notifications should be immediately communicated to the site owner/operator to take corrective actions as necessary.
- Update the Fire Code to incorporate requirements for closed-circuit television (CCTV) systems, specifying their intended use as both a continuous monitoring tool and a post-event analysis resource.
- Remove the Fire Code exemption for BESS projects owned or operated by electrical utilities to ensure that all projects comply with the Fire Code.
- Include a requirement for an Emergency Response Plan (ERP) and annual local first responder training for every BESS installation.
- Include a Fire Code requirement for monitoring of fire detection systems by a central station service alarm system to ensure timely, proper notification to the local fire department in the event of a fire alarm.
- Mandate the installation of fire stops for all BESS enclosure penetrations to prevent the propagation of fires from one BESS unit to another through these pathways.
- Introduce a new provision in the Fire Code mandating industry-funded special inspections for BESS installations to ensure thorough safety and compliance.
- Include "cabinets" in all Fire Code requirements that pertain to rooms, areas, or walk-in units, except for fire suppression requirements, as they may be inappropriate for cabinets.

## Contact Us

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

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