

North Shore Council of Governments Fall Meeting

The North Shore Council of Governments (NorCOG) held a meeting on Wednesday, October 30, 2024, at the West Monroe Fire Department. The event drew 50 attendees, including guests Brittany Jerred from Assemblyman Will Barclay’s office, Krista Spohr, the DEC wetlands outreach coordinator, David Turner and Tim Stahl from Oswego County Community Development, Tourism, and Planning (CDTP), and Austin Wheelock, executive director of Operation Oswego County (OOC).

NorCOG Chairman Richard Colesante opened the meeting by addressing regular business items, including the preliminary 2025 budget and a draft of the intermunicipal agreement.

David Turner and Tim Stahl provided updates on two key initiatives. Tim discussed recent maintenance on the Oswego County Rail Trail, but noted hesitation in committing further resources due to ongoing uncertainty about the trail’s future. He also mentioned the county’s efforts to improve infrastructure for towns and villages in need. David reported that a feasibility analysis is underway for a potential sewer trunk line connecting Hastings and Fulton. This project could create significant opportunities for communities along the North Shore and throughout the route, offering a more cost-effective alternative to constructing and funding new wastewater treatment plants. The DEC is supportive of the project and views it as a model of intermunicipal cooperation.



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Commission Board Meeting

Monday, December 9 at 10:00 a.m. at the Town of Watertown Municipal Building, 22867 County Route 67, Watertown, NY 13601. The public is welcome to attend.

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Welcome Heidi Tompkins

Heidi Tompkins is the newest staff member at the Tug Hill Commission, starting full-time last week after over a year as a contract circuit rider with the North Shore and Salmon Rivers Councils of Governments, as well as the Cooperative Tug Hill Council. Heidi is taking over as the full-time circuit rider for North Shore and Salmon Rivers, as veteran circuit rider Paul Baxter retires in the first quarter of 2025.

Heidi is a lifelong resident of the Tug Hill region, where she grew up along Fish Creek and the Salmon River. She has a passion for outdoor recreation and woodworking, enjoys coaching softball, and proudly serves in the Redfield Volunteer Fire Department. Heidi and her husband live in Redfield, where they run a hobby farm together.

Paul and Heidi will work closely together and with COG leadership over the next few months to transfer knowledge and files. Welcome Heidi!

Fall Meeting (cont. from page 1)

Commission executive director Katie Malinowski provided an update on recent federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) changes affecting fire brigades, noting that according to a September 2024 statement on the OSHA website, OSHA aims to minimize adverse impacts on volunteer fire departments. In a letter from OSHA, it was indicated that they are considering a full exemption for volunteer emergency response organizations based on the concerns that have been raised. Katie also introduced Heidi Tompkins, the newest member of the Tug Hill Commission staff, who will succeed Paul Baxter, the long-standing circuit rider for the North Shore and Salmon River Councils of Governments for the past 45 years. Heidi briefly reported on the bridge closure on State Route 49, sharing that NYS DOT Region 3 has scheduled paving for the temporary bridge, with an expected reopening around November 12 if everything proceeds as planned.

OOC executive director Austin Wheelock provided insights into the Oswego County Housing Study, which involves an assessment of the current housing stock across the county and an exploration of development opportunities. The first steering committee meeting was held in mid-October, during which the county was divided into several regions with dedicated focus groups to gather and share feedback on each area. The study is expected to conclude by March 2025.

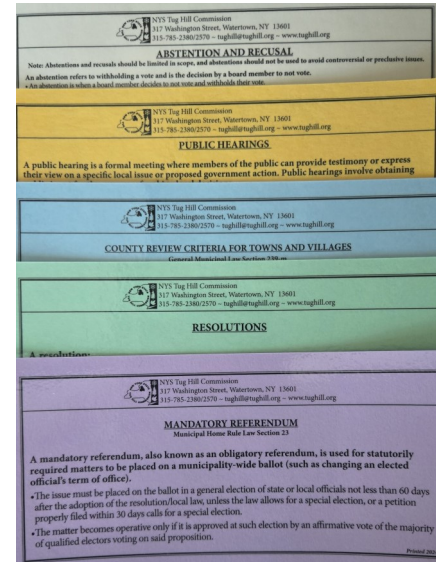
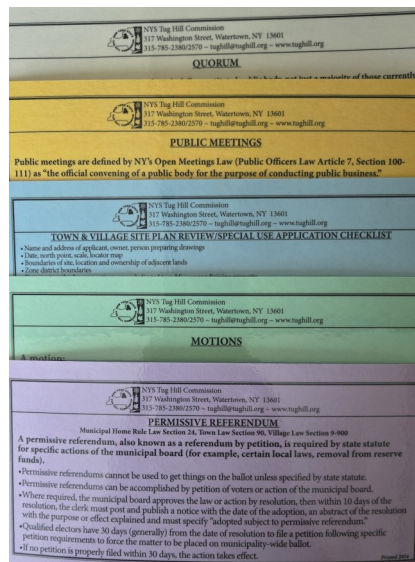
Finally, Krista Spohr from the DEC was invited by NorCOG to present information and address questions regarding the proposed regulation changes to freshwater wetlands. Krista explained that public hearings were held in September, and the comment period closed in November. The DEC is currently reviewing over 400 comments and hopes to finalize the regulations for adoption in early December. Informational wetland maps and standard operating procedures will be posted online in December, with the statutory amendments taking effect on January 1.

New Quick Reference Cards Available

Tug Hill staff receive dozens of technical assistance requests each month, and the requests often follow similar themes. Many years ago, staff developed two double-sided quick reference cards based on commonly asked questions: executive session guidelines and notification of meeting guidelines; and area variance criteria and use variance criteria. Staff recently worked on developing five additional quick reference cards, pictured below and available from your circuit riders! We hope these will help local officials as they serve their communities.

As always, please consult with your municipal attorney for additional information and for situation specific advice.

- ◆ Quorum/Abstention and Recusal
- ◆ Motions/Resolutions
- ◆ Public Meetings/Public Hearings
- ◆ Town and Village Site Plan Review and Special Use Application Checklist/County Review Criteria
- ◆ Permissive Referendum/Mandatory Referendum



Ava Comprehensive Plan Update SWOT

The town of Ava planning board held a “Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats” (SWOT) session on November 6, as part of their comprehensive plan update. The session, led by Tug Hill staff Christopher Barboza, Jillian Lee, and Gabriel Yerdon, solicited input from planning board members, town board members, and local residents. About 15 town residents (including board 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 planning board 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.

Florence Settlement Added to National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program

A local historic landmark has received a big boost to its status nationally, and students and staff at Camden High School played a role in making it happen. The National Park Service recently announced that the Florence Settlement of 1848 is one of 14 new landmarks added to their *National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom* program. The program is a list of over 800 historical sites, facilities, and programs integral to preserving the legacy of the Underground Railroad and the many individuals who bravely escaped slavery in pursuit of freedom.

The Florence Settlement, also known as the Florence Farming Association, presented a groundbreaking clean slate for free Black people to create sustainable and self-sufficient economic and social mobility for themselves. It began in 1848 with abolitionist Stephen Meyers arranging for settlers to live there on land gifted by abolitionist leader Gerrit Smith. The settlers had the opportunity to own their own land, farm, and create a community they could call their own. Smith had established Central New York as a vital haven for freedom seekers and freedmen.



Article adapted from Camden High School [article](#) with permission.

An archaeological study has been taking place consistently for about a decade, with Camden teacher Jessica Harney participating from the beginning. Harney attended a workshop at Madison-Oneida BOCES about historical research skills with current Camden Middle School librarian Jennine Bloomquist. That multi-day event sparked what has become a long-running odyssey into the Florence site's past.

For six of those ten years, over 150 of Camden High School's Mohawk Valley Community College dual-credit US History and New York State History students have participated in immersive and eye-opening research experiences at the site, as part of a long-term study where each visit builds on the previous outings. Students also complete document-based study in the classroom before heading out into the field. The students, and teacher Jessica Harney, work directly with real-world archaeologists and historians from organizations like Hartgen Archaeological Associates, the Stephen Meyers Residence, the Underground Railroad Education Center, and the New York State Museum to discover new evidence and develop a greater understanding of the activities that took place in Florence. The effort has discovered long-forgotten cellars, wells, and foundations that validate much of the known information about the site and its story.

The application process began during hybrid learning at the height of the pandemic, when the challenges of the time brought educators and students to consider new ways of hands-on learning. Two students, Haley Tanner '21 and Evan Youngs '21, were among the first to get the wheels in motion toward this important milestone. Tanner and Youngs contributed specific research on the front end of the application and assisted with annotated bibliographical research of the many documents that have been assembled over the years. They also worked on early biographical narratives of some of the people involved.

Sewer and Water Infrastructure Grants Announced

The NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC) recently announced clean water and drinking water grants. Several Tug Hill communities were awarded funds for their projects. Congratulations!

Village of Boonville	Wastewater Treatment Plant and Mill Cree Interceptor Improvements	\$7,000,000
Village of Lyons Falls	Wastewater Treatment Facility Disinfection	\$101,156
Village of Parish	Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvements	\$1,065,500
Village of Port Leyden	Wastewater Collection and Treatment Facilities Improvements	\$178,250
Village of Sylvan Beach	Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade and Priority 2 Improvements	\$19,666,668
Town of Trenton	Hamlet of Barneveld Water System Improvements	\$5,000,000
Town of Wilna	Herrings Wastewater Treatment Facility Upgrades	\$154,527

Funding Opportunity: Plus One ADU Program

The NYS Homes and Community Renewal (HCR) has announced a third round of funding for the New York Plus One ADU program. Up to \$25 million will be available for the administration of this program. Local units of government (e.g. a county or a municipality) and local nonprofit housing organizations **in partnership** with each other are welcome to apply.

The “Plus One ADU” is an initiative designed to support local governments and community development partners with the development of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) throughout the state, where municipalities allow for ADU development. This program may assist eligible entities in constructing new ADUs or converting existing ADUs to meet legal codes. Award requests should not exceed \$2 million, or applications with a request of over \$125,000 per unit.

The deadline for funding applications is **Wednesday, January 15, 2025**, by 3:00 p.m. EST. An informational webinar on this program will be held **Tuesday, December 10, 2024**, at 11:00 a.m. Register for this webinar at the following link [here](#).

More information on the PLUS One ADU program, including the full Round 3 NOFA can be found on the HCR website [here](#).

1000 Islands Binational Tourism Summit: A Great Success

On November 13, elected officials, tourism partners, business owners, and other participants gathered at the newly-remodeled Doubletree by Hilton Kingston, Ontario, for the 1000 Islands Binational Tourism Summit. This conference was the first binational tourism summit to be held in six years by the 1000 Islands Tourism Council and its partners since the COVID-19 pandemic.



With a lineup of impactful speakers, presenters included the following: members of the 1000 Islands International Tourism Council and members of Tourism Kingston; “The Sherpa of New York,” Josiah Brown, of Famous Destinations; Mark Door, the New York State Hospitality and Tourism Association, Andrew Siegwart of Tourism Industry Association of Ontario, and Krista LeClair of Kingston Accommodation Partners regarding short-term rentals; James Sauter, of Rove; Krut Tennant of U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Port of Alexandria Bay, and Andrew Winship of Canadian Border Services Agency, Lansdowne, Ontario; Michelle Capone of the Development Authority of the North Country and Mia Robertson of the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Gaming; and finally, Corey Fram, Director of Tourism of the 1000 Islands International Tourism Council, with an update from his organization.

Special networking sessions between speaking events included a “Border-Crossing Activity,” designed to shuffle attendees around at different tables and impart exciting things that each side of the border wanted to share about their region to their counterparts.

Discussions focused on the economic strength and potential of the tourism industry, sustainable tourism, placemaking for both residents and visitors, and fostering understanding and knowledge to facilitate tourism across the border.

November 19 Webinar for Solar Energy for Small Wastewater Systems

The Environmental Finance Center Network is offering a webinar, *Solar Energy for Small Wastewater Systems: Savings, Sustainability, and Incentives*, on Tuesday, November 19 at noon.

Small wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs) face unique challenges when it comes to energy consumption and its associated costs. The webinar will provide an overview of energy use in small WWTPs and explore solutions for reducing energy costs while enhancing sustainability. The breakdown of energy consumption in small WWTPs, the significant role solar power can play in cutting down electricity expenses, and how direct pay provisions under the Inflation Reduction Act and other incentive programs can make solar adoption more affordable for tax-exempt and governmental entities will all be covered.

Register [here](#).

Taking the Bench Certification Course for Justices

The Office of Court Administration is offering an in-person fall 2024 *Taking the Bench* certification course for newly elected or appointed town and village justices at the Third Judicial District Administrative Office, 2500 Pond View, Castleton-on-Hudson, NY, December 9 through December 13. The program classes are required for non-attorney justices prior to taking the bench, but new attorney judges are welcome and encouraged to attend as well.

Registration must be completed online, is open and will close on Friday, December 6, 2024, at 12:00 p.m. To register, the newly elected/appointed justice must [click here](#). The “account name” is ‘court’ and the “password” is ‘court’. Please distribute this information to any newly elected or appointed justices as soon as possible, and contact the Office of Justice Court Support at 1-800-232-0630 or by email at ojcs-edtrain@nycourts.gov.

Upcoming Webinars from the Office of the Comptroller

The NYS Office of the Comptroller Academy for Local Officials has announced no cost accounting related webinars. Click [here](#) for more information.

December 4, 10:00 - 11:00 a.m., [Accounting for Length of Service Award Programs](#)

This session will discuss accounting principles and work through journal entry examples to ensure the proper recordkeeping for length of service award programs (LOSAP). Participants will also learn about the establishment of the programs, applicable GASB criteria and reporting requirements.

December 11- 12, 8:45 a.m. – 3:00 p.m., [Accounting Principles and Procedures](#)

This multi-day school is designed to familiarize participants with accounting and financial reporting requirements for local governments in New York. The course provides guidance on certain operational issues, such as cash management, purchasing, processing claims for payment, accounting for capital projects and utilizing reserve funds.

Upcoming Flood-Related Trainings

The New York State Floodplain and Stormwater Managers Association (NYSFSMA) is hosting two upcoming trainings.

On Thursday, November 21, *Duties of a Floodplain Administrator and Preparing for a Community Assistance Visit* will be held virtually from 12:00 - 2:00 p.m. The cost for NYSFSMA members is \$30 and non-members is \$80. Two certified floodplain manager credits will be offered as well. This workshop provides an overview of the responsibilities of local floodplain administrators and how to prepare for a community assistance visit under the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). This training is designed for both new administrators and those looking to refresh their knowledge of NFIP’s requirements and resources available to support their duties. If you have questions, contact Bill Nechamen at billnechamen@gmail.com or 518-7707-6516.

On Thursday, December 5, *Flood Problems Start on the Hilltops: Managing Runoff on Steep Slopes* will be held virtually from 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. The cost for NYSFSMA members is \$20 and non-members is \$75. One certified floodplain manager credit will be offered as well. This webinar will discuss practices for managing drainage on steep slopes to minimize adverse impacts, with an emphasis on planning practices in New York State stormwater management and erosion control standards. If you have questions, contact Cristen Crew at cqcrew@syr.edu.

Contact Us

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

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