

TUG HILL COMMISSION

MINUTES OF MEETING

May 19, 2025

Annsville Municipal Building, 9196 Main St, Taberg, NY 13471

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| Chair Ritter opened the meeting at 10:10 a.m. | Opened |
| Commission members included Messrs. Boxberger, Bogdanowicz, Scriber, Keller, and Mdms. Ritter and Chereshnoski. Staff included Katie Malinowski, Gwen Decker, John Healt and Heidi Tompkins. Guests – NOCCOG chair Bob Sauer, NOCCOG Associate Circuit Rider Joe Rowlands, Remonia Falk and Shawn Salsman town of Annsville, Mike Thompson, Melissa Snavlin. | Attendance |
| On a motion made by Commissioner Boxberger and seconded by Commissioner Chereshnoski members approved the agenda as presented. | Agenda Approved |
| On a motion made by Commissioner Keller and seconded by Commissioner Scriber, members approved the minutes of March 17, 2025. | Minutes Approved |
| Chair's report: | Chair's Report |
| Chair Ritter welcomed everyone and thanked Annsville for hosting. Introductions were made. Chair Ritter and Mr. Healt attended the Oneida County Tourism Legislative Lunch last week. Topics included Chobani coming to Rome, which will bring more jobs and people to the area, and the Nexus Sport Complex in Utica, which hosts several events also bringing people to Oneida County. There were discussions on state legislation, short-term rentals, hotels and restaurants. | Welcome |
| Chair Ritter also reminded members that financial disclosure statements are now past due if not submitted. Executive Director's report: | ED Report |
| Ms. Malinowski shared that Mr. Baxter officially retired May 15. A retirement party will be held June 27 (handout). RSVP to Ms. Tompkins. We plan to contribute toward a framed picture as a gift. | Administration |
| Mr. Brady will start on Thursday, May 22. | |
| The commission budget in the state's budget was finalized (handout). There is an increase of \$110,000 in personal services. More discussion later in the meeting. Other highlights include inflation rebate checks, and a provision that would allow the Governor to adjust the state budget up to \$2 billion given uncertainty at federal level. EPF increased to \$425 million, and includes \$250,000 to THTLT ACUB. | |
| The LGC survey and analysis (handout) shows attendees like the venue and Turning Stone. There was more attendance from inside the region than outside this year. The finance summary shows that we came out ahead this year after a loss last year. We increased the attendance fee this year, had several that registered at the late registration rate, and the hotel rooms were less expensive. This information will help in our 2026 planning. Turning Stone has not been paid yet due to the late state budget, we are working to process their payment now. A discussion with members took place on promoting the LGC at Turning Stone and sales. | LGC |

We are looking into switching from .org to .gov for our website and email given new emphasis on .gov. Mrs. Malinowski reached out to the Hudson River Black River Regulating District executive director John Callaghan, who provided information on changing to .gov to work with our existing website and email addresses. We are taking it slow and doing more research before making any changes. Municipalities are already starting to change to .gov.

.gov Requirements

The new online database conversion is completed and working through the Caspio platform. This replaces the previous Microsoft Access version that was on a separate stand-alone server. Staff can access the online version to search and submit change requests to Ms. Decker. Our consultant has done a great job designing the new online version.

Database

Ms. Malinowski provided a review of the draft ATV Recreation paper and map (handout) that Ms. McKinney has been compiling. We are still talking with partners on a few of the sections, for example Mr. Rivers at DEC on connections with state roads. Things to consider include municipal enforcement, vehicle and traffic laws, fees, court cases, and insurance. Ms. Malinowski will pull the 2004 review for reference. Commissioner Scriber suggested an excel spreadsheet could be attached with a legend to specifically show local laws related to road openings. Commissioner Bogdanowicz suggested changing some wording as well. A discussion with members took place regarding ATVs.

ATV

There is much activity related to economic development in the region, including Chobani coming to Rome in Oneida County, Micron in Onondaga County just over the Oswego County line, and Fort Drum's impact on Jefferson and Lewis Counties. The National Grid Upstate Upgrade project involves much of the region as well. Joe Nehme from Micron provided a presentation at the Oswego County Mayors Association meeting last week.

Regional

WEB Renewable Energy, a group from Boston, continues to work on the development of a large-scale wind project in the town of Worth.

Worth Wind Project

Mr. Healt reported that he and Chair Ritter attended the Oneida County Tourism breakfast. The Women's World Championship Soccer Tournament held at the NEXUS Center brought in over a million dollars to the Utica/Rome area. Oneida County is one of the few counties in the state that gives a percentage of collected sales tax back to the municipalities. 2025 is the 150th anniversary of the Erie Canal. NOCCOG completed the first segment of the new Municipal Reference Guide and is distributing it to member municipalities. The guide includes standard terms, responsibilities, and procedures required in local government, with plans to expand to include planning and zoning boards, and town clerk information. The NOCCOG scholarship program is underway at four local high schools. The GPS Program is underway in the village of Remsen and town of Forestport. Mike Thompson, NOCCOG GPS mapper shared the mapping can help in many ways to include fire hydrants and water shut offs. Northern Oneida County had numerous building collapses from the heavy snowfall this winter. Some towns are waiving permit fees for demolition, and others are working with the Oneida-Herkimer Solid Waste Authority and can offer discounted tipping fee for disposing of demolished buildings. Vacant and abandoned properties continue to be an issue. NOCCOG and the commission hope to meet with the Oneida County Planning department to discuss complementary planning efforts. Ava is working on a comprehensive plan, Annsville is working on changes to fire protection delivery in the town. The town and village of Boonville continue ATV discussions and Oneida County provided them with a copy of the proposed law which would allow ATV traffic on specific roads. The village of Boonville finalized the projects for their NY Forward award. The village of Camden's sand and salt shed collapsed during the winter. The town of Camden is almost done with their comprehensive plan. Floyd has a new attorney who is also the attorney for Western and Trenton. Lee supervisor John Urtz is not running for re-election. John was supervisor when NOCCOG was formed in the early 1980's. The town of Remsen is close to completing renovations of their new town offices, and the village of Remsen is undecided if they will

COG Report

move to the new building. Forestport is utilizing the NOCCOG GPS mapping program and is close to completing an updated comprehensive plan. Western started their comprehensive plan. Sylvan Beach received over \$50 million in grant funding for their wastewater upgrades and has completed a new welcome center and bath houses.

The 2024-25 financial statement (handout) is almost an end of the year statement but there are a few outstanding expenses to reconcile; however, we were under budget for 2024-25. Funds allocated for the database consultant were not used, the consultant did charge us and preferred to volunteer her time. There hasn't been much expended for GTSC, the process has been complicated, and we will end the contract when the year is up.

Finance Report

The proposed budget for 2025-26 (handout) has an increase in personal services based on the final state budget. Mrs. Malinowski passed out a salary upgrade document confidentially for commissioners only with proposed salary upgrades for several staff, including proposing employees hired at Grade 14 move to Grade 18 after a one-year probation period. Administrative titles for Ms. Passino and Ms. Decker do not exist in the system anymore, those would move up, and the two directors would move from Grade 23 to M1 salaries. While the executive director is responsible for all hiring and salary decisions, given the number of upgrades being proposed she would like commissioner input. Commissioner Scriber asked several questions as he is not familiar with the state salary system and the commission's past practice. He would like to understand the proposed upgrades better before approving, to ensure they are being done appropriately.

Members agreed to a personnel committee to include Commissioner Ritter, Boxberger and Scriber to discuss the salary upgrades.

Mrs. Malinowski reported that Mr. Willbanks, Mr. Petrie, and Mr. Street have all agreed to renew their contracts for another year.

On a motion made by Commissioner Keller and seconded by Commissioner Bogdanowicz members approved the budget as presented.

On a motion made by Commissioner Scriber and seconded by Commissioner Bogdanowicz, members approved the contract for Mr. Willbanks.

On a motion made by Commissioner Scriber and seconded by Commissioner Bogdanowicz members approved the contract for Mr. Petrie.

On a motion made by Commissioner Boxberger and seconded by Commissioner Keller members approved the contract for Mr. Street.

Chair Ritter opened the floor for public comment.

Public Comment

Melissa Snavlin thanked the commission for addressing ATV issues.

There being no further business, on a motion made by Commissioner Scriber and seconded by Commissioner Cheresnoski members adjourned the meeting at 11:35 a.m.

Adjourn

These minutes were approved by the Board of Commissioners.

Tom Boxberger
Secretary