

## Dairy Economy Focus at Tug Hill Dinner

Over 140 local, county, and state officials, as well as partners from organizations across the Tug Hill region, attended the Tug Hill Commission's annual dinner on October 9 at the Delta Lake Inn near Rome. After opening remarks from commission chair Gerry Ritter, Sean Hennessy presented the commission with a letter of appreciation from Governor Hochul for its work with Tug Hill communities. Commission executive director Katie Malinowski then gave an overview of the past year's activities, with the powerpoint available at [www.tughill.org](http://www.tughill.org).

The highlight of the evening was remarks given by Katie Howard, Deputy Commissioner at NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets; Allyson Jones-Brimmer, Executive Director of the Northeast Dairy Producers Association; Tom Overton, Program Director at Cornell PRO-DAIRY, and Max Finberg, Vice Presidents of Government Affairs from Chobani, LLC. Chobani's \$1.2 billion investment in a new yogurt plant in the Griffis Business and Technology Park in Rome, NY is expected to break ground later this year. The speakers recognized New York's world class dairy industry, with dairy farmers and processors that care for the land, their animals and the quality of their milk products, as driving the recent growth and investment in dairy processing in the state. By working with partners throughout the industry, in local, state and federal government and beyond, family dairy farms can be positioned to take advantage of these opportunities. Chobani's expansion in New York is a commitment to supporting local farmers, strengthening communities, and advancing the company's mission of bringing good food for all.



Left to right: Gerry Ritter, Allyson Jones-Brimmer, Max Finberg, Katie Howard, Tom Overton, Katie Malinowski.

## Tug Hill Outing at Stone House Preserve

Tug Hill Commission staff, Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust staff, along with a few board members toured the [Stone House Preserve](#) in Vienna last week. Kindly hosted by the preserve benefactor Ruth Norton, the only two organizations who focus specifically on the Tug Hill region were able to reflect on their shared history and opportunities for future collaborations. After a pot-luck lunch, participants enjoyed the well-maintained trail system at the land trust's most recently opened preserve.



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# RACOG Hosts Jefferson and Lewis County Heads

The River Area Council of Governments met on September 25 in Wilna for their fall quarterly meeting. Eleven out of 14 communities were present. Jefferson County Administrator Ryan Piche and Lewis County Manager Tim Hunt both updated the group on initiatives and hot topics in the respective counties.

In Jefferson County, Ryan spoke about Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTs) related to renewable energy projects, and that the county would like to encourage all taxing entities to negotiate PILOTs together to maximize the benefit for local taxpayers. The county's Uniform Tax Exemption Policy (UTEP) is also undergoing some revisions relevant to solar projects. Dog control is a focus, with the county working with the Jefferson County SPCA to expand capacity as the county ends its dog control office. A visitor investment fund will be available to communities likely in March 2026, in partnership with the Thousand Islands Tourism Council, to improve visitor experience related to tourism. The county plans to apply to the next round of state funding for infrastructure related to housing. The county is ramping up its ability to support towns with assessment services. The new terminal at the Watertown International Airport will be completed in October. The county is working on a local law that can support local municipal efforts to address unsafe structures. A Jefferson County housing analysis will launch in the first quarter of 2026. The county has chosen Granicus for its software to support the county's short-term rental registry, and municipalities will have access to that program. Lastly, the county has a new planning director, Hartley Bonisteel-Schweitzer, as long-time county planning director Mike Bourcy has retired.

In Lewis County, Tim spoke about the new Alpine Express bus service at Fort Drum, as well as a new county podcast. Lewis County will also have short-term rental registry information available for municipalities. The county has been working with Watson and Croghan to update zoning laws relevant to the proposed HydroStor energy storage project. Three decommissioned elementary schools in the county are at various stages of redevelopment, including Lyons Falls sold to become 20 apartment units, Glenfield almost closed to become 60 housing units, and West Leyden with an interested developer but nothing finalized yet. Lewis County is about to start an update to the countywide comprehensive plan, as well as a county-wide brownfield assessment. A land bank initiative is starting in the county, as well as an assessment of the current state of emergency management services. BOCES will be expanding their campus in Lowville with the Jefferson Community College Lewis County Education Center as well as a partnership with the Maple Ridge Center. Kraft is in early conversations on a potential new product to take the place of their closed string cheese line. Lastly, the county is about to close on the railroad project, and there is a possible wind farm in West Leyden.

## Protected Lands Increase in Tug Hill Region

The Tug Hill Commission has updated its 2020 protected lands paper, determining that protected acreage has risen from about 249,221 acres in 2020 to 275,165 acres in 2025, an increase of more than 25,000 acres. Nearly 20% of Tug Hill's 1.38 million acres are conserved through state ownership, county and municipal holdings, or private conservation easements.

Most of these lands are state-owned and managed by the Department of Environmental Conservation and the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, but local governments and organizations such as the Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust and The Nature Conservancy also play key roles. Read the full paper here: [Protected Lands in the Tug Hill Region – September 2025](#).

## Alpine Express Ribbon Cutting



Through an Intergovernmental Support Agreement (IGSA) between Fort Drum and Lewis County, the Alpine Express bus service on Fort Drum launched on September 22. Fort Drum soldiers and families will now have free bus transportation to over 50 locations on post. Major General Scott Naumann, commander of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division, was on hand for the celebratory ribbon cutting, along with other Fort Drum officials, local and state elected officials, and Lewis County.

For those on post without a license or a car, or families with only one car, the new bus service is game changer. The two 35-passenger buses are ADA-compliant. The Alpine Express will link people up to Lewis County Public Transit lines that run off-post as well.



# SNOW PLACE LIKE TUG HILL: EXPLORING WINTER'S IMPACT IN A MULTI-USE LANDSCAPE

## WORKSHOP SERIES



Join the Northeast Regional Climate Center and NYS Tug Hill Commission for a two-part workshop series focused on **weather- and climate-related challenges of winter activities** in the Tug Hill region. Explore recent winters in the Tug Hill region and the **tools that are available to help monitor weather and climate conditions**. Those working in the areas of winter recreation, transportation, and forestry may be especially interested in attending. No cost to attend.

### Virtual Session

Wednesday, October 22, 2025, 1:00-2:30 p.m.  
Zoom

### In-person Session

Thursday, November 6, 2025, 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.  
Howard G. Sackett Technical Center, Glenfield, NY

Lunch will be provided.



***Register by October 20!***

<https://tinyurl.com/winterwxtools>

If you have any questions, please contact Jillian Lee at [jillian@tughill.org](mailto:jillian@tughill.org) or 315-785-2406.

# NON-PROFIT BOOTCAMP



Session #2

## FINANCIAL OVERSIGHT FOR NONPROFITS

Join us for a session on Financial Oversight for Nonprofits, designed to help board members, treasurers, and nonprofit leaders strengthen their financial management skills. Topics will include how to properly review financial statements, create and understand budgets, fulfill treasurer responsibilities, implement internal controls and financial policies, and understand the importance of audits and annual reports.

## NOVEMBER 6, 2025

Thursday | 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM

Virtually via Zoom

### TOPIC HIGHLIGHTS

- ✓ Reviewing Financial Statements
- ✓ Understanding & Creating Budgets
- ✓ Internal Controls & Policies
- ✓ Treasurer Responsibilities

### REGISTER



### EXPERT

#### Bowers CPAs & Advisors

A well-established accounting firm with over 40 years of experience, Bowers has become a trusted resource for nonprofit organizations.

### LOCAL CHAMPION

#### Lindsay Baldwin

CFO, Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Organization (FDRHPO)



Northern New York  
Community Foundation



# Planning Board & Zoning Board of Appeals Land Use Training Event

*A seminar hosted by Herkimer-Oneida Counties Comprehensive Planning Program (HOCCPP)  
and presented by New York Department of State*

**Monday, November 10, 2025**  
**5:00pm - 8:00pm**

**Mohawk Valley Community College**  
**Wilcox Hall - Room 225**  
**1101 Sherman Dr. Utica, NY 13501**

**Sign-in & Refreshments**

**5:00 - 5:30pm**

**Training**

**5:30 - 8:00pm**

## HOUSING IN YOUR COMMUNITY

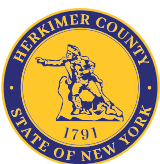
This land use training event provides municipal officials with critical knowledge and tools for informed decision-making in planning and zoning. We'll explore strategies to address the need for affordable housing and legal requirements to provide it. The course also dives into the rise of short-term rentals and their impact on communities, examining regulations and effective responses. Learn to navigate complex regulations and build a better future for your community.

*Registration Fee of \$20.00 includes refreshments*

**Please fill out registration form and return with payment by Monday, November 3, 2025**

*For questions call (315) 798-5710 or email [239apps@oneidacountyny.gov](mailto:239apps@oneidacountyny.gov)*

**This training provides an opportunity for Planning and Zoning Board members to receive 2.5-hours of training credits.**



PETER J. CAMPIONE  
COUNTY CHAIRMAN



ANTHONY J. PICENTE JR.  
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

# Advancing Watershed Health Webinar October 23

Join the Environmental Finance Center Network and various presenters on Thursday, October 23, from 11:00 a.m. to noon, in this free webinar that explores how collaboration and adaptive strategies can drive long-term watershed success. Discussed will be the key takeaways and lessons learned from over 15 years of coordinated watershed management under the Black River Initiative. With notable water quality improvements, this effort shows how sustained partnerships, data-driven strategies, and locally led implementation can deliver measurable results.

Presenters Nichelle Swisher, district manager of the Lewis County Soil and Water Conservation District, Sarah Trick, an environmental resource specialist for the Jefferson County Soil and Water Conservation District, and Emily Fell, the eastern great lakes watershed coordinator with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, will highlight the value of monitoring nutrients, sediment, and phosphorus loading, how nine element (9E) watershed plans help support these efforts, and how these planning tools complement long-term watershed management goals and help sustain local water resources. Click [here](#) for more information or to register.

## NYAOT and SUNY Local Government Education Programs

The [New York Association of Towns](#) (NYAOT), in partnership with SUNY Potsdam, is offering microcredentials in the areas of [public sector grant writing](#) and [spatial data analysis with GIS](#). A microcredential is a short course of study that focuses on a particular skill. All microcredentials are offered online for maximum compatibility with work schedules and will vary from six weeks to two semesters. For more information, please visit the SUNY Potsdam [microcredential website](#). Additionally, in partnership with [SUNY Westchester Community College](#), NYAOT is offering affordable, flexible online courses that focus on various local government roles. Courses are grouped into topics that make sense for board members, bookkeepers, comptrollers, department heads, human resources staff, information technology staff, town officers, and town supervisors.

Learn more about scholarship opportunities [here](#), or contact [Cassidy Rossi](#). Addressing workforce development issues in towns, including retention and recruitment, has been a major focus of NYAOT's work. In a survey of its members, nearly half of the respondents said it can take between one and three months to fill positions and more than 70 percent of respondents asserted that workforce development is an issue for their town.

## Bond Act Grants Announced for Local Projects

The village of Boonville and Lewis County will be receiving [NY Environmental Bond Act](#) funds for two projects designed to enhance community resilience to extreme weather events and flooding. Under the Coastal Rehabilitation and Resiliency Projects Program, Boonville will receive \$344,250 to replace the Summit Street culvert. Under the Inland Flooding and Local Waterfront Revitalization Program Implementation Projects Program, Lewis County will receive \$304,126 for streambank stabilization along Mill Creek. Future grant rounds are expected, so start planning for potential projects early!

## Cybersecurity Grants Available for Local Governments

New York State is offering towns, villages, and other local governments a chance to strengthen cybersecurity through the [State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program](#). Instead of cash awards, successful applicants will receive multi-factor authentication (MFA) tokens, small key-fob style devices or USB sticks that generate a unique code each time they log in. When used along with a password, they make it much harder for nefarious actors to break into emails, remotely access computers, or other critical systems. The State's Office of Information Technology Services will procure the tokens and deliver them to eligible local entities. They will then assist with training, and support recipients with implementing the tokens. Rural communities will receive priority consideration, and all applicants must sign a Local Consent Agreement and apply by October 22, 2025. Specific application instructions available [here](#).

### Contact Us

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