

## NOCCOG Annual Meeting in Western

The Northern Oneida County Council of Governments (NOCCOG) held their annual meeting Thursday, October 23, at the Woods Valley Ski Area in Westernville. Over 70 local government officials attended the event, including Cheryl LaValley, representing



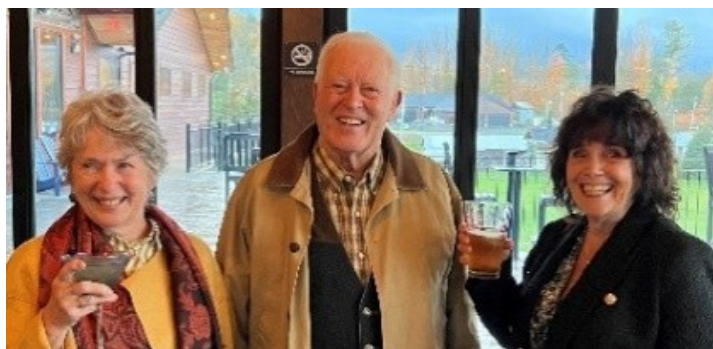
Keynote speaker Sarah Foster Calero presents to NOCCOG members.

Assemblymember Marianne Buttenschon (Dist. 119) and Tammie Nabywaniec, chief of staff for Assemblyman Ken Blankenbush (Dist. 117). Present from the NYS Tug Hill Commission were Chair Gerry Ritter, Commissioner Bob Keller, associate director of community and regional projects Jennifer Harvill, and project specialist Taylor McKinney. Oneida County legislators Steve DiMaggio (Dist. 17) and David Buck (Dist. 9) attended, as well as Lt. Carey Phair from the Oneida County Sheriff's Department.

The budget for 2026 was reviewed and approved, as were the minutes from the 2024 annual meeting. The current directors were re-elected by all of those in attendance. Returning for another year are Robert Sauer, Camden, chair; Thomas McDonald, Remsen, vice chair; Betsy Mack, Trenton, fiscal officer; Lawrence Meirek, Western, director; and Pamela Dibble, Annsville, as director. Special recognition was given to long time town of Lee Supervisor, John Urtz, who has served as supervisor for a remarkable 51 years.

The keynote speaker was Sarah Foster Calero, president of Oneida County Tourism, the official destination marketing organization for Oneida County. Sarah highlighted the economic impact of local tourism, that it is a growing industry, and how tourism touches every corner of Oneida County. Sarah also presented on a county wide rebrand and plans to host the New York State Tourism Conference in 2026. For more information on Oneida County Tourism, please visit their website, [www.oneidacountytourism.com](http://www.oneidacountytourism.com).

The Northern Oneida County Council of Governments is a coalition of 17 towns and villages in the northern half of Oneida County. Situated at the southern side of Tug Hill, NOCCOG provides an outreach of technical and planning assistance to these communities.



Former NOCCOG municipal advisors, from left to right: Sue Martin, Harlan Moonen, and Gerry Ritter.

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### Commission Board Meeting

Monday, December 8 at 10:00 a.m. at the town of Watertown office, 22867 County Rd 67, Watertown, NY 13601. The public is welcome to attend.

# North Shore and Salmon River Meeting October 30

Over 60 local officials, community leaders, and regional partners gathered for the joint annual dinner meeting of the North Shore (NorCOG) and Salmon Rivers (SRCG) Councils of Governments on Thursday, October 30, at North Riding in Cleveland. Welcoming remarks were given by NorCOG chair Richard Colesante, who emphasized the enduring spirit of collaboration and shared purpose among municipal leaders and stakeholders throughout the Tug Hill region. Ten of the eleven member municipalities were represented. The members of North Shore are Cleveland, Central Square, West Monroe and Constantia, while Salmon River's members are the villages of Pulaski and Parish and the towns of Amboy, Albion, Orwell, Richland and Parish.



*Community members from the North Shore and Slamon Rivers councils gather in Cleveland.*

During the formal business portion of the meeting, both councils conducted roll call, approved summer meeting minutes, adopted their respective 2026 budgets, and held officer elections. NorCOG officers will remain chair Richard "Rip" Colesante, vice chair Millard "Mudd" Murphy, and fiscal agent Vern Sundet (town of West Monroe). SRCG elected its leadership as chair Jan Tighe, vice chair Mike Faulkner, and fiscal agent Kevin Dwyer (village of Parish).

Circuit rider Heidi Tompkins delivered an annual reflections & looking ahead presentation, offering a comprehensive overview of regional progress and collective accomplishments achieved over the past year. Highlights included beginning a partnership with CiTi BOCES on student civic engagement, ongoing comprehensive planning initiatives, advancement of grant efforts, collaborative work surrounding Micron-related economic development opportunities, and continued review and participation for the Route 49 study, Oneida Lake 9E watershed plan, and the Southern Oswego County Regional Interceptor Sewer. Significant improvements were also completed to the websites for [NorCOG.org](http://NorCOG.org) and [SalmonRivers.org](http://SalmonRivers.org).

The latter portion of the program featured updates from a variety of speakers. Katie Malinowski, executive director of the NYS Tug Hill Commission, provided a regional outlook. Tug Hill Commission planning staff members Matt Johnson and Maria Covey, with CTHC circuit rider Angie Kimball, presented on the Tug Hill Reserve Act. Austin Wheelock, executive director of Operation Oswego County, shared current economic development initiatives and project updates throughout the county. Samuel Gordon, AICP, planning practice leader with EDR, reported on the ongoing Oswego County Comprehensive Plan. Additionally, updates were provided by Senator Christopher Ryan and by Brittney Jerred representing Assemblyman William Barclay's office. Jan Tighe ended the evening by thanking all for continued commitment to working together for the benefit of all member communities.

## Companion Animal Capital Projects Grant Applications Due January 30

The NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets has announced the opening of the 2025-2026 [Companion Animal Capital Projects Fund](#), which provides funding for capital projects that support the secure containment, health, and adequate care of sheltered dogs and cats. Eligible applicants include municipal pounds and shelters established and maintained pursuant to Section 114 of the Agriculture and Markets Law, as well as incorporated not-for-profit shelters and humane societies that are registered with Ag and Markets and operate physical shelter facilities. Interested applicants must submit their proposals no later than January 30, 2026, at 4:00 p.m.

Funding is available for capital expenses related to the construction, renovation, rehabilitation, installation, acquisition, or expansion of buildings, equipment, or facilities used for the care of sheltered animals. Examples may include improvements to kennel areas, ventilation and heating systems, drainage, and flooring systems, or the addition, construction, or expansion of shelter space. Applicants may request between \$20,000 and \$500,000, with a 10% match required. Applications must be submitted through the Statewide Financial Systems (SFS) Vendor Portal, and not-for-profit organizations must also be prequalified in SFS at the time of the submission. Entities awarded funds in previous rounds can apply again if their projects are completed.

The Tug Hill Commission is available to assist municipalities in reviewing eligibility, developing project scopes, and navigating the SFS application process. Local governments considering facility upgrades or capital improvements to their animal shelter facilities are encouraged to contact commission staff for guidance.

# Cornell Cooperative Extension Annual Meetings in Jefferson and Lewis Counties

On October 29, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Lewis County held its annual business meeting at the Lewis County Education Center in Lowville. After conducting business, including minutes approval, review of annual finance report, and board member elections, executive director Michele Ledoux presented their [2025 Annual Program Report](#). Activities over the past year have included food safety, container gardening, beef agriculture, farm safety and solutions, beekeeping, maple production, 4-H, and youth programming. Guest presentations included an overview of new programming offered this summer at Camp Aldersgate with a 4-H day camp, and the [changing energy landscape in NY](#) presented by Tug Hill Commission executive director Katie Malinowski and planning director Matt Johnson.

On October 30, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Jefferson County held its annual dinner meeting at The Strand in Watertown. Attendees received a copy their [2025 Annual Impact Report](#), which included information on people serving in the various programs and practices concerning agriculture and local food production education and support, reducing nutrition insecurity through education and action, educating communities on clean energy, building youth resiliency and teaching life skills, and supporting the military community. CCE Jefferson County thanked staff, residents, elected officials, funders, community stakeholders, partnered agencies, and volunteers from its many programs for helping conduct this important work. Focus areas of the organization in 2026 will include 4-H programming, Camp Wabasso, workforce development to meet growing market needs, farmers markets, and a shared-use kitchen facility.

## Students Tackle Real-World Challenges at Civic Service Student Activity Program

On October 23, the Tug Hill Commission, in partnership with the River Area Council of Governments (RACOG) and Jefferson-Lewis BOCES, hosted the second annual Civic Service Student Activity Program (CSSAP) at the Howard G. Sackett Technical Center in Glenfield.

A total of 11 students participated, representing Copenhagen Central School, Lowville Academy, and South Lewis Central School. Throughout the day, the students engaged in hands-on activities designed to mirror real-world issues faced by local governments.

The first session focused on emergency response, with an emphasis on flood management, which was an issue that hit close to home following recent regional flooding. In the second session, students explored the NYS Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI), deciding how they would allocate grant funds to support community projects. Many students expressed enthusiasm for the idea of creating a youth center, envisioning a place where teens could gather, play games, and participate in art activities.



The final session challenged participants to design a land use zoning plan for a new community from scratch, determining ideal locations for parks, schools, businesses, residential areas, and agricultural zones.

Students were divided into two groups, each guided by at least two mentors. The day's mentors included Debbie Atkins (Carthage Area Chamber), Joseph Austin (Lowville Fire Department), Jenna Lauraine (Naturally Lewis), Linda Nortz (village of Croghan), and Patrick Shumate (Lewis County Search and Rescue). Lunch for participants was provided by RACOG and prepared by the BOCES culinary arts class. For more information about the CSSAP, contact Patrick Brady, planner/local government specialist with the Tug Hill Commission, at [patrick@tughill.org](mailto:patrick@tughill.org) or (315) 785-2380.

# Even Year Election Changes Upheld by NYS Court of Appeals

In mid-October, the NYS Court of Appeals (the highest court in NY) upheld the 2023 law that requires counties and towns to hold most elections in even number years rather than the traditional odd numbered years. This exhausted the final appeal of the law in NYS although a new lawsuit has been filed in federal court claiming the law violates the first and fourteenth amendments of the US Constitution, as well as Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act. The current even year election law does not apply to town justices, and some county offices including judges, sheriffs and district attorneys as those office terms are constitutionally set. City and village elections are also not covered by the current law.

This change will affect the November 2025 election and the terms of office for town officials elected then and taking office January 1, 2026. Officials elected to what would normally be a four-year term (town council members) this November will have their term reduced by one year, making their next election in November 2028. Officials elected to what would normally be a two-year term (most supervisors, town clerks, tax collectors, highway superintendents) will also have their term reduced by one year, so they will have to run again in November 2026. To complete the cycle, officials whose four-year term is up for election in 2027 will also have their term reduced by a year, meaning they would run again in 2030.

For more information on this subject see the Association of Towns FAQ sheet [here](#). There is a chart on the FAQ which outlines the altered timeframes.

## Community Collaborative Rain, Hail, & Snow Network

The Community Collaborative Rain, Hail, & Snow Network (CoCoRaHS) is a network of volunteers across the country who submit rain, snow, and hail measurements for their local communities. This data can then be used for education and research. Currently, there are not many volunteer sites in Tug Hill, despite the region's unique weather. Becoming a volunteer involves a one-time purchase of a CoCoRaHS-approved rain gauge to record precipitation, and then you can start submitting daily data from your front yard, allowing scientists to learn more about the weather we experience every day. For more information, please reference the [CoCoRaHS FAQ page](#) or contact your [county coordinator](#).

Website links if needed:

FAQ <https://www.cocorahs.org/Content.aspx?page=Help>

Coordinators [https://www.cocorahs.org/Content.aspx?page=coord\\_ny](https://www.cocorahs.org/Content.aspx?page=coord_ny)

## Feeding New York - Venison Donation

Each year, the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) partners with Feeding New York State to facilitate the donation of 50 -70,000 pounds of venison from deer harvested by hunters to those in need.

To donate a deer:

1. Drop off any legally harvested, tagged, and reported deer at one of Feeding New York State's [participating deer processors](#).
2. Call the processor ahead of time to ensure they can accept the deer.
3. Complete the processor's log sheet indicating desire to donate the deer.

NYSDEC and Feeding New York State will cover the processing costs for donated deer so that the venison can be distributed to food pantries and food banks throughout the state; however, funding is limited. For those that do not have a deer to donate but still want to support the program, financial donations are accepted by clicking the "Donations" link at the top of the [DEC Automated Licensing System page](#), or when hunting licenses are purchased. [Learn more about the NYS Venison Donation Program](#).

### Contact Us

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