

TUG HILL COMMISSION

MINUTES OF MEETING

June 16, 2025

Town of Champion, 10 N. Broad St., Carthage NY 13619

Chair Ritter opened the meeting at 10:11 a.m.	Opened
Commission members included Messrs. Bogdanowicz, Scriber, Keller, and Mdms. Ritter and Cheresnoski. Staff included Katie Malinowski, Gwen Decker, Mickey Dietrich and Taylor McKinney. Guests – Paul Smith town of Wilna supervisor, Lee Willbanks.	Attendance
On a motion made by Commissioner Scriber and seconded by Commissioner Cheresnoski members approved the agenda as presented.	Agenda Approved
On a motion made by Commissioner Bogdanowicz and seconded by Commissioner Ritter, members approved the minutes of May 19, 2025.	Minutes Approved
Chair's report:	Chair's Report
Chair Ritter welcomed everyone and thanked Champion for hosting. There has been a lot of scary activity in our nation over this past weekend with state officials being targeted. Some being murdered in Minnesota and others attempted murder. The Governor of Minnesota relayed that we need to reduce rhetoric.	Welcome
The personnel subcommittee, including Chair Ritter and commissioners Boxberger and Scriber, was formed at the May 19 board meeting, and met with Mrs. Malinowski on June 3 regarding proposed salary upgrades that were introduced to commissioners at the meeting. Commissioner Boxberger did research on civil service, however, the commission is not civil service but is management confidential. Management confidential is different than civil service and the New York State system is not the easiest to understand. The meeting provided the subcommittee with understanding and clarity for the salary upgrades presented at the May 19 board meeting to be appropriate.	
Executive Director's report:	ED Report
Ms. Malinowski shared the Local Government Conference 2015-2025 exhibitor and sponsorship report (handout). The report provides a list of exhibitors, and the years attended and not. Those on the list that do not pay and are complimentary, which includes state agency partners, and the Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust are highlighted. The exhibit fee was increased this year. The list of sponsorship shows sponsors and the level of sponsorship for each year. The Development Authority of the North Country has not exhibited since the conference has been held at Turning Stone but are consistent sponsors. A discussion took place with members regarding participation. Commissioner Scriber shared that there should be attendance by the Northern Border Regional Commission, NYS DOT and all state agencies. He suggested reaching out to DOT and highway superintendents association. Another idea for Cornell Cooperative Extension, if Lewis and Onieda County could share a table.	LGC
Turning Stone payment was made. An invitation for bid has been put out for the 2026 LGC as DOS has advised us to do. Turning Stone has been the only bid we have received. The deadline to submit a bid is the end of day today.	
Beeches in Rome is holding the October 9 date for us for now. Mrs. Malinowski is working on confirming a speaker. She reached out to Chobani but didn't hear back. She is also	Annual Dinner

pursuing leads at Mohawk Valley EDGE and Ag & Markets. Ag and Markets could speak about the bigger picture and the impact on the area. She is also trying to get a meeting with the Oneida County planning director. A discussion took place with members regarding other counties in the region will also need to provide milk for Chobani.

We are implementing a new email management platform for Tug Hill Times and other large email distributions. The new platform will allow us to do mass emailing more efficiently and effectively. We will be able to track open rates, item clicks, etc. It shouldn't look much different on the receiver's end.

Email Distribution Platform

The Woodmen's Field Days are August 15-17. We received information from them about participating with a cost of \$1000 for a booth. Mrs. Malinowski reached out to them as the commission had a complimentary last year, and we would participate this year if it was complimentary.

Woodsmen's Field Days

Ms. McKinney provided a review of the second draft ATV Recreation paper (handout) that she continues to research. This draft includes referencing publications such as our recent issue paper, How Winter is Changing in the Tug Hill Region. She is gathering information from NYMIR on insurance. Information on law enforcement was gathered using the NYS Clear System, based on happenings in four counties and common factors. Looking for some information from DEC but have not heard back from them. The map is still a work in progress. A discussion took place with members on road regulations, laws, connector roads and insurance. Commissioner Bogdanowicz suggested finding out what the tickets are being written for in all the counties. The noise level is also a concern. Commissioner Scriber suggested ATVs on non-designated roads could be added under Liability issues page 17.

ATV

Ken Ayers has been providing us with advice on implementing HL205(c) and feels Lorraine already has the state law and doesn't need their existing local laws. He advises that Lorraine repeal the three local laws they have and pass a new local law that references the state authority. He has been working with staff on the language for the new law to be clear on defining the standards for the state law. A discussion took place with members and Mr. Willbanks regarding the minimum maintenance road laws and zoning.

Ayers Update

Mr. Ayers is also working with the commission to understand the laws pertaining to transferring town roads to a county. Mrs. Malinowski and Tim Hunt, Lewis County Manager, are in conversation regarding the subject.

Staff have completed technical and issue papers, and they are available on our website. ***Understanding the New Regulatory Standard for Animal Shelters*** as new standards have come out from Ag & Markets; ***Short-Term Rentals*** was updated as the new registry is going into effect; ***Writing RFPs for Professional Services***, we worked with GYMO on this.

Issue Papers

Mrs. Malinowski received information last Friday from Energywerx that the agrivoltaics funding was pulled back and American Farmland Trust will likely not receive their \$50,000.

Agrivoltaics

The Black River Watershed Conference was a success. The conference was held on June 3 at the Hilton Garden Inn, Watertown, and was well attended.

Black River Watershed Conference

G&W bridge is gated again, the gate is not locked, and you can cross at your own risk. The next East Branch Fish Creek working group meeting is tentatively scheduled for October 2, 2025.

East Branch Fish Creek

We purchased a second Metrocount unit due to the demand. Work has been done for Lowville Academy, Amboy, West Monroe, and Constableville. Lorraine is scheduled for work soon. We are maxed out with requests for the season.

Metrocount Update

We submitted two playground grants in May for the towns of Lee and Trenton; one for Port Leyden to Pratt Northam earlier this year; three salt sheds; and two groomers for CFAs.

Grants

Mr. Dietrich reported the next RACOG board meeting is September 26 at 6:00 p.m. in Wilna. Lewis County Manager Tim Hunt will be coming, and we are trying to get Jefferson County Administrator Ryan Piche as well. The Economic Vision Summit was held in April at Howard G. Sackett Technical Center in Glenfield. Chris Eastman from DOS attended. Next year's summit is planned for March. RACOG has added a student board to give students an opportunity to review and provide input on projects. Students attended the Civic Service Student Activity program that engages local youth and encourages involvement in local government. We are working with BOCES to offer Wastewater Operator training, and we received some DEC and Jefferson County Workplace funding. BOCES is working to have this become a program to be offered with the state's Department of Education.

COG Report

Paul Smith, Wilna Supervisor shared that their wastewater cost has increased. Wilna received a grant from DEC to purchase wastewater tablets from April to October. The reason given for the cost increase was due to the lack of having enough wastewater operators.

Mr. Dietrich - Municipalities looking toward shared services include Copenhagen and Castorland; Wilna and Deferiet; West Carthage and Champion. The town of Rutland is interested in joining RACOG. There has been a lot of growth in RACOG from Lewis County. Croghan and Greig are outside the region but have associates covering those. Makenzie Judd is the new associate, but she will be gone during July and August, so the board approved to contract with another emergency associate. The board approved to apply for a funding grant in September through Naturally Lewis. Municipalities are converting websites over to .gov. RACOG has an IT provider that handles the website.

The 2024-25 financial statement for the end of year has not been finalized. We haven't been able to reconcile some items yet. The 2025-26 financial statement (handout), personal services are the most, payment to Mr. Willbanks for legal fees, Microsoft Office 365 cost, Turning Stone payment \$53,000, vehicles insurance, car rentals for the Local Government Conference, and Metrocount cost.

Finance Report

Mrs. Malinowski asked for approval of the salary increases. On a motion made by Commissioner Scriber and seconded by Commissioner Ritter, members approved salary increases as presented to commissioners at the May 19 board meeting.

Chair Ritter opened the floor for public comment. No comments were made.

Public Comment

There being no further business, on a motion made by Commissioner Scriber and seconded by Commissioner Chereshnoski members adjourned the meeting at 11:44 a.m.

Adjourn

These minutes were approved by the Board of Commissioners.

Tom Boxberger
Secretary