

ATV Recreation Considerations for Municipalities Workshop Postponed to January 8

The session originally scheduled for Thursday, December 11 has been postponed to Thursday, January 8, 2026, due to scheduling conflicts. The workshop will still be held at the Boonville Municipal Building, 13149 State Route 12, Boonville at 7 p.m., and will include both a presentation and question and answer session on the commission's recently published *ATV Recreation: Considerations for Municipalities* issue paper. Commission staff will walk attendees through the content, including the impetus for writing the document, the approach taken to research local laws and relevant court cases, and best practices municipalities may want to consider when opening roads for ATV recreation in their town or village. There will be plenty of time for questions and answers.

Please RSVP to John Healt at the Northern Oneida County Council of Governments, jhealt@tughill.org or 315-942-2818. The paper can be downloaded from the commission's website [here](#), or by contacting either your circuit rider or the Tug Hill Commission for a hard copy.

A Snow-Stopping Success: Tug Hill Winter Workshop Series

The Tug Hill Commission worked with the Northeast Regional Climate Center (NRCC) to host a two-part workshop series, *Snow Place Like Tug Hill: Exploring Winter's Impact in a Multi-Use Landscape*, on October 22 and November 6. This workshop series explored recent winters in the Tug Hill region and the tools available to monitor weather and climate conditions.



The first workshop was held virtually and provided an overview of NRCC and its services, with a special focus on winter-season tools. NRCC hosts monthly webinars and writes blogs about current conditions in the northeast. The website is very informative, providing data and information to help understand past and current weather and climate conditions. Some of the tools discussed in this first workshop included the Applied Climate Information System, the New York Community Collaborative Rain, Hail, and Snow Network (CoCoRaHS), snow-survey maps, northeast drought information, and information on roadway freezing and thawing and snow-load research.

The second workshop was held at the Howard G. Sackett Technical Center in Glenfield, where more collaborative discussions took place



on winter weather and its impacts on recreation, businesses, highways, and other areas. Commission project specialist Jillian Lee spoke about [how winter is changing in the Tug Hill region](#), and NRCC staff presented on information we can learn from other states, current conditions, and a fall/winter outlook. The afternoon was filled with great discussion about how to apply winter and climate tools during the winter months and how that influences decision-making. Discussions also included the need for more ground-truth data with increased observations, more research on lake-effect snow band climatology, how frozen soils change over time, more information on how freeze-thaw cycles are changing, and more data for hazard mitigation plans.

The commission thanks everyone at NRCC for their dedication to making this workshop a success. All workshop information, including the virtual presentation and in-person presentations, can be found on [NRCC's website](#), specifically under "Webinars & Workshops" and then "[Challenges of Winter Activities](#)." If you have any questions, please reach out to Jillian Lee at jillian@tughill.org or 315-785-2406.

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Volunteer Fire Capacity Grant Funding Now Available

The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is now accepting applications for \$851,255 in Volunteer Fire Capacity grants to help rural fire departments protect public safety and natural resources. The application deadline is December 22, 2025. The Volunteer Fire Capacity grant program is funded by the U.S. Forest Service and administered by DEC's Division of Forest Protection. Eligible fire departments will receive 50/50 matching funds up to \$3,500, a \$1,000 increase from last year. In 2024, the program provided grants to 345 fire departments.

Eligible fire departments include those that are at least 80 percent volunteer and provide wildland fire protection to a rural area within their jurisdiction. Fire departments that receive a grant award must complete all grant process paperwork. Only expenses directly related to wildland firefighting suppression efforts are eligible for funding. These include the purchase of protective fire clothing and PPE, modern communications supplies for more effective action on incidents, firefighting supplies such as nozzles and hoses, tools and other smaller scale supplies, and water delivery systems such as cisterns and dry hydrants.

For applications and additional information about the grant program, visit the [DEC website](#).

Did You Know...Oaths of Office

Public Officers Law Section 10 and Town Law Section 25 require that every public officer "...take and subscribe" an oath of office "before an officer authorized by law to administer oaths..." and to file that oath of office before he or she performs any official duties. The oath of office for an elective office must be taken and filed before duties are performed and within 30 days after the commencement of the term of office. The oath of office for an appointive office must be taken and filed within 30 days after notice of appointment or within 30 days after the commencement of the term of office. All "town officers" are subject to this requirement – any position where the functions and duties directly affect the citizens of the town and involve the exercise of the powers of the town, would be considered a town officer (including deputies, planning and zoning board members, assessment review board members etc.).

The above cited section of the Public Officers Law also outlines who may administer an oath of office. These include notary publics, town councilmen or town justices in the town they serve, town supervisors or town clerks if they have taken their oath of office, justices of the State Supreme Court or Court of Appeals and several others (see Public Officers Law Section 10). Once the oath has been completed, the oath of office needs to be filed with the town clerk's office, and town justices and court clerks must additionally file an oath of office with the county clerk and the Office of Court Administration. The oath of office is good for the term of the office for which it is taken.

Taking and filing an oath of office is very important because if an individual refuses or fails to file in the time limit established by law, the office automatically becomes vacant per Public Officers Law Section 30 (1)(h). Taking and filing the oath late does not cure the vacancy. If the appointing body so desires it may fill the vacancy that occurs in this instance. The only exemption to this time frame deals with members of the Armed Forces who are absent from the county they reside in at the time of appointment and this case has its own time requirements. The actions of officers who continue to serve in their positions after a failure to file their oath are still considered valid under Public Officers Law Section 15, but the officer can be notified of the vacancy by the town and then replaced at any time.

Real Property Tax Law §575-b Amendments Finalized

On December 3, 2025, [Senate Bill S8012](#) was signed by Governor Hochul, amending Real Property Tax Law §575-b. The amendments to the law give more detail about what will and will not be included when calculating the appraisable value of solar and wind facilities through the discounted cash flow valuation method. Host community benefit payments, expenses associated with the decommissioning of solar and wind energy systems, and community solar subscriber costs associated with solar energy systems shall be included as expenses. Intangible assets that will not count as revenue streams for the calculation will include federal investment and production tax credits granted by the federal Internal Revenue Code, such as renewable energy credits (RECs). As stated in the justification of the bill, these changes were made to incentivize and encourage the expansion of wind and solar projects across the state by creating more predictable and stable taxation for renewable energy project developers. Municipalities may want to take this into account when negotiating agreements and budgeting, as this model could result in a lower valuation for renewable energy projects, lowering the taxable value of the project. For more information, please visit the NYS Department of Taxation and Finance webpage [here](#).

EXPLORE THE NORTH SHORE: COMMUNITY INPUT SURVEY

North Shore
Council of
Governments



Scan here
for survey



The communities along the north shore of Oneida Lake are developing a regional community guide to highlight local parks, outdoor assets, cultural features, events, scenic locations, and visitor-friendly activities.

Contact Us



Visit Our Website
NorCOG.org



Circuit Rider
Heidi Tompkins -
Heidi@tughill.org



Upcoming NYCOM Trainings and Meeting

The New York Conference of Mayors (NYCOM) is offering training for planning and zoning board members in December. The remaining sessions in the series are:

- **Thursday December 11, 11:00 a.m. to noon, “Understanding and Dealing with the Special Land Use Laws Governing Religious and Educational Properties”.** This webinar will provide an overview of both the federal Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA) as well as NY’s own special protections for religious and educational properties. The webinar will highlight common pitfalls local officials fall into when dealing with religious and educational land uses.
- **Thursday December 18, 11:00 a.m. to noon, “Signs, Signs, Everywhere are Signs”.** This webinar will start off with a primer on First Amendment jurisprudence before delving into an overview of legal and effective sign regulations. The session will conclude with a discussion of the importance of having well-crafted sign regulations that are administered and enforced by properly trained municipal officials.

These webinars are open to NYCOM members or non-members, \$20 for members and \$50 for non-members. If approved by your municipal board, attendance at these webinars would count toward the four-hour annual training requirement for planning and zoning board members. Click [here](#) for more information.

Additionally, NYCOM’s Winter Legislative Meeting will be held February 1-3, 2026, at the Marriott Albany. The initial cost for the conference plus meals is \$375. Early registration for the meeting runs through January 16 after which the cost increases by \$15 for member municipalities and \$30 for non-members. Reservation deadline for the hotel block pricing is January 23. The agenda includes a new official’s workshop and a welcome dinner on Sunday; a full day of workshops and possible other events on Monday; and a “Lobby Day” on Tuesday which includes a press conference and lobbying meetings with legislators. Click [here](#) for more information.

Open Space Conservation Grants Due February 18

The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation’s [Open Space Conservation](#) grant is open, with applications due by 3 p.m. on Wednesday, February 18, 2026. Eligible projects are acquisitions of land that align with the NYS Open Space Conservation Plan and possess at least one of the following seven resources defined in the [2022 Environmental Bond Act](#) as protecting lands or waters and/or providing recreational opportunities for the public:

1. Possess ecological, habitat, recreational or scenic values;
2. Protect the quality of a drinking water supply;
3. Provide flood control or flood mitigation values;
4. Constitute a floodplain;
5. Provide or have the potential to provide important habitat connectivity;
6. Provide open space for the use and enjoyment of the public; or
7. Provide community gardens in urban areas.

Eligible applicants include not-for-profit organizations, Indian Nations or Tribes, and municipalities. Eligible expenses include the purchase price of the land; appraisal, survey and boundary marking; title search; legal fees; environmental assessment; and site improvements to improve recreational access. There is \$25 million in grant funding available from the Bond Act and the Environmental Protection Fund. Applicants may apply for a minimum grant amount of \$50,000 and up to a maximum of \$3,500,000.

There is no match requirement for this grant. This is not a reimbursement grant. Grantees will receive payments based on successful performance of standardized steps in the land acquisition process. Immediate submittal of receipts will not be needed to receive payment.

All applications must be filed through [NYS SFS Grants Management System](#). Register at [SFS Grants Management](#) to apply. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit their applications well in advance of the application deadline. Late applications will not be accepted. If you do not have a login and if you are new to the SFS Vendor portal and would like to establish an account for the purposes of doing business with the State of New York, contact the SFS Help Desk at 518-457-7717, 855-233-8363 or HelpDesk@sfs.ny.gov for more information.



Division of Local Government Services

2025-2026 Winter Webinar Series

When:

December 2025 and January 2026

Where:

Attend on WebEx from wherever you are. You will need a computer with speakers or a mobile device.

Courses:

State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) Basics, Zoning Basics for Enforcement Officials & Board Members, Planning Board Overview, Zoning Board of Appeals Overview, Essentials for Planning & Zoning Board Staff.

Who:

Planning Board Members, Zoning Board of Appeals Members, Governing Board Members, Planning Staff, Code Enforcement Officers, Other Local Officials.

Training Schedule:

<https://dos.ny.gov/local-government-training-schedule>

To Register:

Click on each course below to register. Once registered, you will receive a confirmation email with instructions for joining each session.

December 15, 2025

State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) Basics
6:00 PM – 8:00 PM
2 hours training credit

December 22, 2025

Zoning Basics for Enforcement Officials and Board Members
6:00 PM – 8:00 PM
2 hours training credit

January 5, 2026

Planning Board Overview
6:00 PM – 8:00 PM
2 hours training credit

January 12, 2026

Zoning Board of Appeals Overview
6:00 PM – 8:00 PM
2 hours training credit

January 22, 2026

Essentials for Planning and Zoning Board Staff
2:00 PM – 3:30 PM
1.5 hours training credit

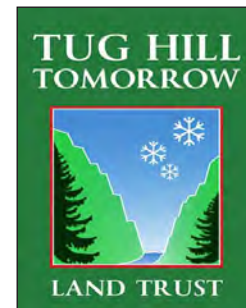
December Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust Events

[Whooo's Up for an Owl Prowl?](#) Friday, December 12, 4:00 to 5:30 p.m.

Come along on a guided twilight adventure, looking and listening for owls during a leisurely walk at THTLT's French Settlement Road Public Conservation Area, 3836 French Settlement Road, Lorraine, NY. At stops along the way, you'll learn about the ways that nocturnal animals live their lives without light. Free to attend, and [registration](#) is required.

Winter Solstice Candlelit Forest Walk, Friday, December 19, 7:00 to 8:30 p.m.

Celebrate the longest night of the year by candlelight with a self-paced hike or snowshoe along our magical forest trail loop at the Joseph A. Blake Wildlife Sanctuary, 31241 Middle Road, Watertown. Stop along the way to learn about how people have spent this time of reflection through the ages, decorate a tree for wildlife, and depart with positive intentions for the coming year. Free to attend, and [registration](#) is required.



Upcoming Cornell Local Roads Trainings

The NYS Local Technical Assistance Program (NYS LTAP) hosted by Cornell Local Roads Program (CLRP) has many webinars and online training courses available for those unable to attend in-person training programs. Their "Foundational Webinar" series, an ongoing series of free webinars focused on important principles key to local highway operations and management is beginning a winter session run now. Each webinar offers a way to learn the basics of a particular topic and with all subjects taken together they cover the foundation of local highway issues. Many of these webinars are offered yearly or every other year to allow people to access the entire series. The current series started on December 2 and continues through March 10, 2026. The webinars are on designated Tuesdays from 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. For information click [here](#).

The Best and Worst of 2025 Webinar, December 18

On Thursday, December 18, from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., the MRB Group and Hancock Estabrook will present their final training webinar of the year, *Santa's Naughty and Nice List: The Best and Worst of 2025*. This last session of their no-cost annual training program will close out the year with a fun session on who got it right and who might have missed the boat in 2025. Discussed will be case studies on the best examples of great development



review, and a few pitfalls discovered by your neighbors that should be avoided going into the new year.

These sessions are geared to assist local governments, town officials, and planning and zoning boards.

To register for this webinar, click [here](#). For more information, or to view the 2025 Municipal Bootcamp Program, visit the MRB Group Bootcamp [webpage](#).

Contact Us

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