

TUG HILL COMMISSION

MINUTES OF MEETING

December 8, 2025

Town of Watertown, 22867 County Route 67, Watertown, NY 13601

Chair Ritter opened the meeting at 10:17 a.m.	Opened
Commission members included Mdms. Ritter and Chereshnoski, Messrs. Boxberger, Keller, Bogdanowicz, Yerdon, Munk, and Scriber. Staff included Katie Malinowski, Gwen Decker, Felicia Passino, Matt Johnson, Chris Barboza, Maria Covey, Jillian Lee, Patrick Brady, Jennifer Harvill, Mickey Dietrich, John Health, Angie Kimball and Heidi Tompkins. Guests - Lee Willbanks, Paul Baxter, Christine Healt, Rod Campbell, Lisa Bellinger, Joe Rowlands and Sayer Colwell.	Attendance
On a motion made by Commissioner Yerdon and seconded by Commissioner Boxberger members approved the agenda as presented.	Agenda Approved
On a motion made by Commissioner Munk and seconded by Commissioner Yerdon, members approved the minutes of September 22, 2025.	Minutes Approved
Chair's report:	Chair's Report
Chair Ritter welcomed everyone and thanked the town of Watertown for hosting, and reflected on the interesting year we have had. The commission's longest serving staff member Paul Baxter retired in the spring, we welcomed new board member Fred Munk, and now the longest serving board member, Leona Chereshnoski, is retiring. Today is her last board meeting. Chair Ritter paid tribute to Ms. Chereshnoski, speaking about her public service over the 42 years with some memorabilia and photos.	Welcome
Commissioner Ritter attended the annual dinners for the commission and for all the COG's.	
The 2026 Commission board meeting calendar (handout) was reviewed by members. Commissioner Boxberger suggested the meetings be changed from the third Monday of the month to the third Wednesday. Members discussed and agreed to the change.	
On a motion by Commissioner Boxberger and seconded by Commission Bogdanowicz members approved the 2026 meeting calendar with changes.	
Executive Director's report:	ED Report
Ms. Malinowski reported salary increases were completed and went into effect for the last pay period.	Albany Items
Ms. Malinowski shared that the Local Government Conference program has been finalized. Registration mailing will go out by end of December. Registration costs remain the same as last year. Sponsor letters have gone out and we have received responses already. We have secured Bill Fulton to speak at both the afternoon session on Monday and a session on Tuesday, he should be a big draw. We are also trying to secure the executive director of the Saratoga County Economic Development Agency and former town supervisor in the Global Foundries area to speak on Monday afternoon. Chobani will also be presenting on Tuesday, which is good as we would like to maintain a working relationship with them. A discussion with members took place regarding dairy production.	LGC

Ms. Tompkins shared the Salmon Rivers Council of Governments has received a letter of interest to join from the town of Sandy Creek supervisor. The town of Richland joined last year however, they are considering opting out this year due to budget issues.

SRCG Interest

Ms. Malinowski is scheduled to meet with Assemblyman Barclay on Wednesday regarding increased demand for our services, staffing costs, adding ways to increase our budget to allow for additional staff. Other legislative meetings are also being planned.

Legislative Meetings

The 2009 vehicle policy has been updated by Ms. Malinowski and Mr. Willbanks for commission review and approval. The vehicle policy has been formatted to be included in the commission's consolidated policy document. A discussion took place with members regarding the fleet management software Samara now being used in both commission vehicles as per NYS requirements.

Vehicle Policy

On a motion by Commissioner Scriber and seconded by Commissioner Keller members approved the vehicle policy as presented.

Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust has reached out to us to garner input on potential regional highway signage. We will stay informed and see what develops.

Signage

Ms. Harvill shared we are following 480a tax law bill that modify the current law in various ways, with particular interest from our communities in the portion that would reimburse municipalities for lost property tax revenue. Ms. Harvill and Ms. Malinowski have developed a spreadsheet to determine the amount of reimbursement that would be required to all towns in the state based on current 480a enrollment. A discussion with members took place.

480a Legislation

Mr. Johnson shared we are working with Albion, Ava, Black River, Central Square, Champion, Pulaski, Richland, and Rodman on comprehensive plans. Constantia and Port Leyden are working on their first zoning laws. Large scale solar, energy storage, and short-term rentals current hot topics for communities. We have completed issue papers for large scale solar and short-term rentals. We are also looking at how Micron might affect development in the southwest corner of the region. Mr. Street has provided some planning guidance with communities and hopefully will be doing more in the coming year.

Planning Overview

Mrs. Malinowski shared that we received a letter of support request from Austin Wheelock, executive director of Operation Oswego County, for the county's indication of interest for the new nuclear power plant being sited in NY. Mrs. Malinowski asked if the commission would be willing to provide a letter of support. A discussion took place with members, and it was agreed that the commission does not take a position on regional matters like this and respectfully declined to provide a letter of support.

Energy Landscape
Nuclear

Mrs. Malinowski shared that the Department of Defense has plans to site three small nuclear reactions on military installations in the next several years, and Fort Drum is in the running as a potential site. Ms. Malinowski is keeping track of this through her position with Advocate Drum, and there is likely to be more information on this in January.

We are working on organizing a newly elected training workshop with NY Association of Towns, as there are many newly elected officials in the region this year. We are also planning another budgeting and accounting workshop with Mr. Petrie later in the year.

Newly Elected

Commission staff created a 2024-2025 snowfall map with NOAA data to show accumulations for the northeast, and to reaffirm the Tug Hill as the snowiest place east of the Rocky Mountains. That distinction still holds.

Snow Map

Work continues with Ayers Law Firm regarding county- town road transfers and winter logging access. We should have more information for Ayers by the end of February.	Ayers Update
The ATV workshop has been rescheduled for January 8 in Boonville.	ATV Workshop
The 2025-26 financial statement shows salary increases and laptop purchases were finalized. We are on track budget-wise, with business as usual.	Finance Report
Chair Ritter opened the floor for public comment. No public comment was made.	Public Comment
There being no further business, on a motion made by Commissioner Scriber and seconded by Commissioner Munk members adjourned the meeting at 12:02 p.m.	Adjourn
These minutes were approved by the Board of Commissioners.	

Tom Boxberger
Secretary