

TUG HILL COMMISSION

MINUTES OF MEETING

February 4, 2026

Lowville Municipal Building, 5533 Bostwick Street, Lowville, NY 13367

Chair Ritter opened the meeting at 10:14 a.m.	Opened
Commission members included Mdm. Ritter and Messrs. Keller, Bogdanowicz, Munk, and Scriber. Staff included Katie Malinowski, Gwen Decker, Jillian Lee, Mickey Dietrich, and Heidi Tompkins. Guests - Bob Mullin, town of Lowville supervisor.	Attendance
On a motion made by Commissioner Scriber and seconded by Commissioner Munk members approved the agenda as presented.	Agenda Approved
On a motion made by Commissioner Munk and seconded by Commissioner Bogdanowicz members approved the minutes of December 8, 2025.	Minutes Approved
Chair's report:	Chair's Report
Chair Ritter welcomed everyone and thanked the town of Lowville for hosting. Introductions were made. She noted that we have had a great deal of snow this past month that has made for good winter activities.	Welcome
Executive Director's report:	ED Report
Ms. Malinowski reported the commission is included in the proposed FY 2026-27 executive budget at the same levels at FY 2025-26. Funding for the ACUB program through the EPF for Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust was also proposed at \$250,000 level, the same as last year. Regarding legislative meetings, Mrs. Malinowski and Mr. Johnson met with Senator Ryan; Mrs. Malinowski and Mrs. Harvill met with Senator Walczyk and Assemblyman Smullen; and Mrs. Malinowski and Ms. Tompkins met with Assemblyman Barclay. Meetings with Assemblywoman Buttenschon and Senator Griffo are scheduled for February 6 in Utica with Mrs. Malinowski and Mrs. Ritter. Meetings with Assemblyman Gray and Assemblyman Blankenbush are to be scheduled. There has been a 36% increase in Council of Governments membership over a 10-year period and only minor increases in our budget. Mrs. Malinowski is sharing this information with legislators for potential budget considerations that would allow for salary and staff increases. Changes in the Assembly are on the horizon with members Smullen, Buttenschon, and Blankenbush either retiring or pursuing other elected positions.	Administration
Regarding the potential switch to a tughill.ny.gov website, staff worked with Riverside Media and Albany ITS to try to secure the domain. ITS has been non-responsive, so the effort is on pause. Regarding office phone issues, Ms. Passino received a new phone in November but it never worked properly. She continues to use an old, partially functioning phone while Ms. Decker works with Albany ITS to fix the phone and/or the phone line.	

This winter has been difficult with frequent problems related to the RAV Hybrid battery. A battery charger was purchased, and staff has been diligent about driving it regularly.

The GTSC grant, which has ended and is being closed out, continues to be difficult to administer. DOS has been helpful as we work to reconcile charges and absorb some unexpected expenses.

Ms. Malinowski, Ms. Lee and Ms. Tompkins have been working on a dashboard to track 2025 progress for the commission's strategic plan. Ms. Lee provided a presentation on screen and handouts of a draft dashboard, that uses Google sheets and other apps to display measured activities. The presentation generated good discussion, and the commissioners appreciated the presentation and work being done to increase awareness and transparency of the commission's work.

Strategic Plan Progress

Commissioners were provided with a handout of the current project list. Not on the list yet is a potential dissolution of the village of Remsen. The commission has assisted four other village dissolutions upon request over the years. Many planning related efforts are reflected on the project list. Three salt shed grants written by staff on behalf of municipalities were funded.

Project List

The Black River Initiative newsletter was provided to the board, which reflects a broad partnership across portions of five counties. The 2026 Black River Watershed Conference will likely be either June 2 or 3, in Lewis County.

Black River Initiative
Newsletter

A revised draft of the roads paper will be ready for the March board meeting. Road materials are expected from Ayers Law Firm by February 20. Conversations are ongoing with Assemblyman Barclay about a potential bill for a second town to be added to the Highway Law 205-c. Lorraine is the only town so far – two additional possibilities are Montague and Redfield.

Roads

Commissioner Bogdanowicz suggested tracking how the issue papers impact what's being done in the communities.

2026 is the 250th year anniversary of the USA, and the commission would like to do some kind of historical workshop to commemorate it. A meeting is planned with Shawn Doyle at Halfshire Historical Society to discuss doing something from a regional perspective.

250th Anniversary of
America

The training calendar (handout) shows trainings provided so far this year and those that are to be scheduled in the coming months.

Training Calendar

Mr. Pacilio is no longer at Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust. Heidi Sourwine is currently interim director.

THTLT

Mr. Dietrich reported that the RACOG board will meet tomorrow. Ms. Lee will be doing a presentation for the board. The village of Black River is planning to join RACOG. Currently there is no chair for the RACOG board, which was previously Paul Smith. Heidi Lehman from Castorland will likely become chair, with Yvonne Boliver likely staying as vice chair. The Civil

COG Report

Service Student Activity Program had 11 students participate this year, with four from Lowville, six from Copenhagen, and one from South Lewis. The RACOG youth committee continues to identify to better their communities, such as welcome packets for new residents, and RACOG is hoping to get more students involved. The Economic Visioning summit will be held in March, with an agricultural focus. Several local and county organizations are presenting. Another associate circuit rider Wyatt Phelps will be coming on board, which will make three associates for RACOG. Wilna, Carthage, Deferiet, and Copenhagen are working on comprehensive plans. Champion is working on zoning. Grants include Carthage Park playground; Castorland park and bathroom.

Supervisor Bob Mullin shared that dog control has become a big issue for municipalities with significant concerns.

The 2025-26 financial statement was shared, and the budget is on target with total current expenses at 76%. Unfortunately work in communities has not aligned this year to use contractor Mr. Street. Finance Report

Chair Ritter opened the floor for public comment. Public Comment

Commissioner Ritter asked for suggestions for a retirement gathering for Leona Cheresnoski. Also, it's been a while since Tug Hill Sages were done, something to think about. Tom Voss from Lorraine has expressed interest in becoming a board member. Jackie Hobbs, Leona's daughter, is interested in filling her mother's vacancy. Mike Yerdon is considering stepping down at some point in the future. Commissioner Bogdanowicz suggested having the fiddlers at the retirement gathering for Leona.

Ms. Tompkins shared that NorCOG Community Guide draft is almost ready. Sandy Creek is interested in joining SRCG.

There being no further business, on a motion made by Commissioner Scriber and seconded by Commissioner Bogdanowicz members adjourned the meeting at 11:52 a.m. Adjourn

These minutes were approved by the Board of Commissioners.

Tom Boxberger
Secretary