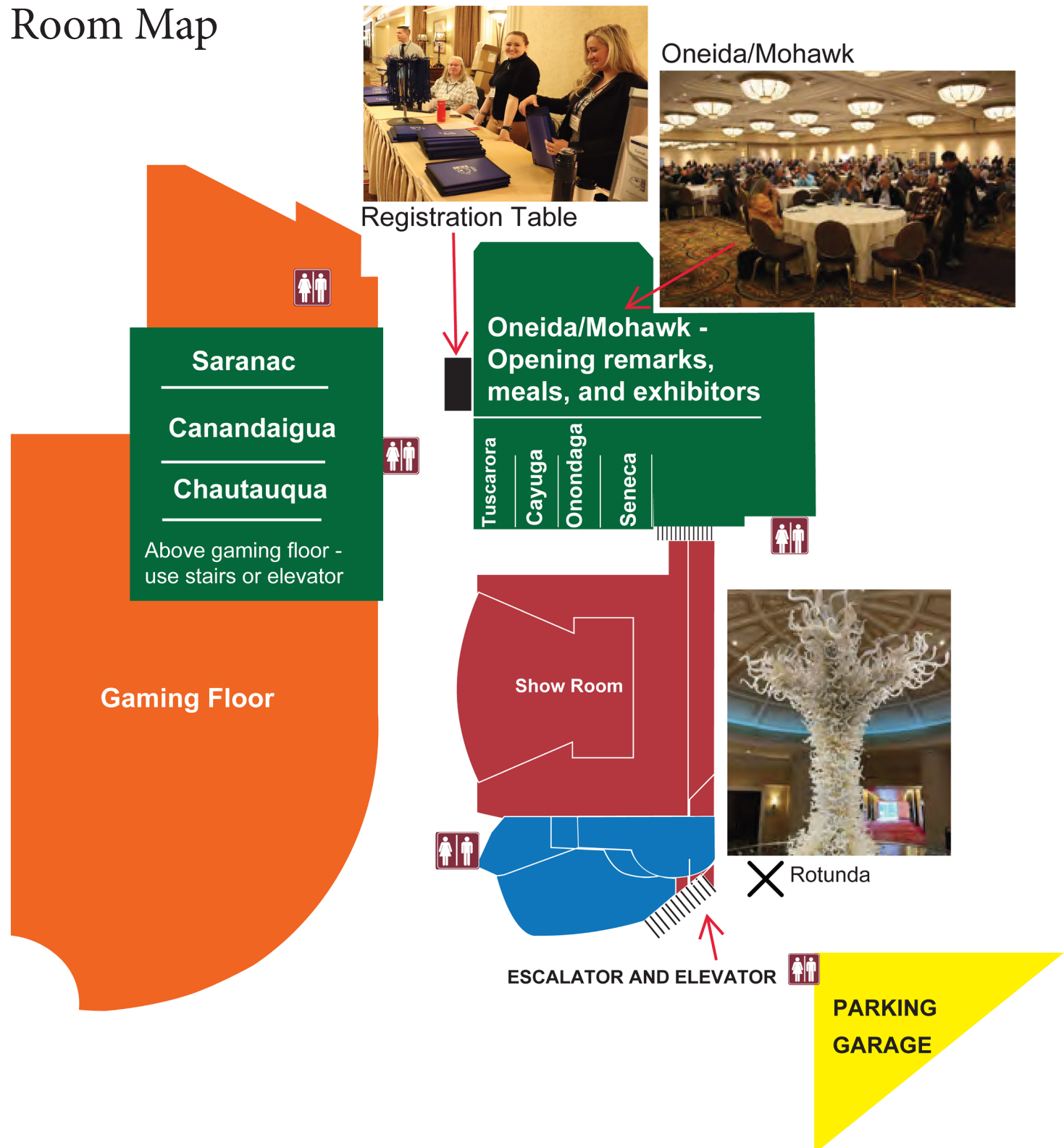


# Room Map



Registration Table



Oneida/Mohawk



## New York State Tug Hill Commission 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Local Government Conference

April 20, 2026 - April 21, 2026



Remsen Falls, Remsen, New York. Photograph by Maria Covey, NYS Tug Hill Commission, August 18, 2025

Meals, breaks, raffle drawings, and opening remarks will be held in the exhibit room Oneida/Mohawk.

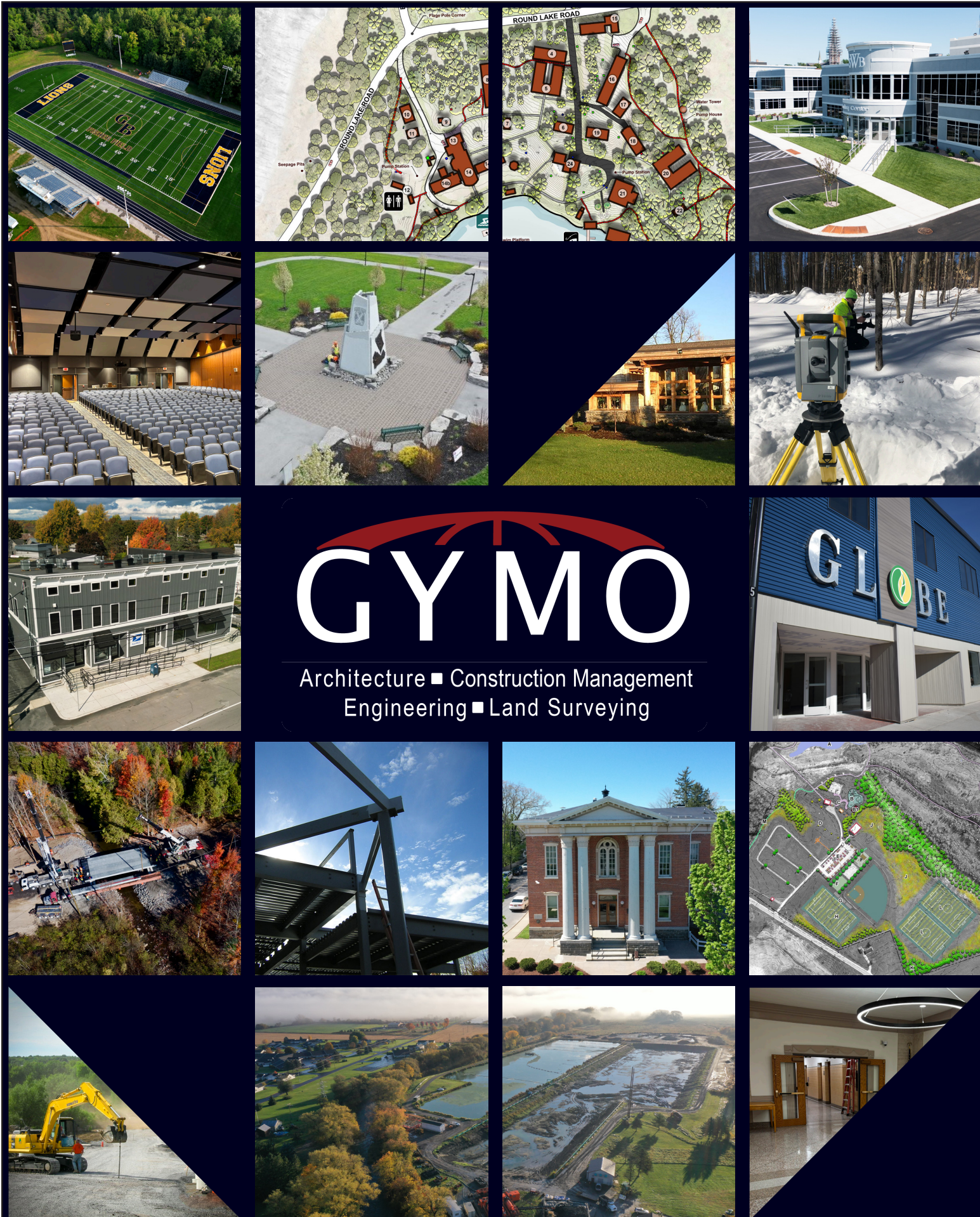
The registration table is located outside Oneida/Mohawk.

Tuscarora, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca around the corner from the registration table.

Saranac, Canandaigua, and Chautauqua are located opposite the registration table and above the casino floor. There is a staircase and an elevator available.

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### Welcome to the Conference!

On behalf of the staff and board of the Tug Hill Commission, we are pleased to welcome you. We hope today's sessions spark new ideas, the conversations build meaningful connections, and the overall experience is both informative and enjoyable. This conference is a valuable opportunity to connect with fellow local government leaders, learn from knowledgeable speakers, and engage with our dedicated sponsors and exhibitors.



We extend our sincere appreciation to our speakers, many of whom have traveled great distances to share their expertise. Your insight, experience, and commitment to public service enrich our discussions and strengthen the communities we serve.

We are also deeply grateful to our generous sponsors and exhibitors, whose support makes this event possible. Special thanks to our Diamond Sponsor, GYMO. At the Gold level, we thank: BCA Architects & Engineers, Comp Alliance, C&S Companies, National Grid, Northern Oneida County Council of Governments, and Williamson Law Book. At the Silver level, we appreciate: Adirondack Bank, C2AE (an AtkinsRéalis Company), LaBella Associates, MRB Group, NYCLASS, EPIC Fund NY, and Statewide Aquastore. At the Bronze level, we thank: Development Authority of the North Country, North Shore Council of Governments, Salmon Rivers Council of Governments, and River Area Council of Governments.

Our team is here to ensure you have a productive and rewarding day. If you have any questions or need assistance, please don't hesitate to reach out to me or any member of our staff. Thank you for being here and for the important work you do in your communities. We hope you have an outstanding conference.

Katie Malinowski, Executive Director

**Please note: Unauthorized audio or video streaming or recording of conference sessions is strictly prohibited and may result in removal from the venue and potential legal consequences. Thank you for your understanding.**

### Today's Schedule

The schedule of classes is located in the middle of this program.

7:30 a.m.	Registration
7:30 a.m.	Breakfast
8:30 a.m.	Opening Remarks
9:00 a.m.	Concurrent Session 1
10:15 a.m.	Break
10:45 a.m.	Concurrent Session 2
Noon	Lunch
1:15 p.m.	Concurrent Session 3
2:30 p.m.	Coffee Break
2:45 p.m.	Raffle Drawing
3:00 p.m.	Concurrent Session 4
4:15 p.m.	Conference Concludes Certificates Available

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<b>Concurrent Session 1</b>		<b>9:00 a.m. - 10:15 a.m.</b>	
<b>1A) ATV Recreation: Considerations for Municipalities</b>			<b>Tuscarora</b>
All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) are an important activity from a recreation, economic, and tourism standpoint on Tug Hill, but regulations on motorized recreation can become complex when involving public right of ways. This presentation will discuss the legal framework in which ATVs exist, summarize recent court case reviews, and offer suggestions on best practices for municipalities considering implementing a local law regarding ATV access to highways to reduce municipal liability and ensure safety for all parties.			
Susan O'Rorke, President, NYMIR Division of Wright Public Entity, sororke@wrightinsurance.com, Peter Baynes, Executive Director, pbaynes@kcnymir.com, New York Municipal Insurance Reciprocal, www.nymir.org, and Taylor McKinney, Projects Specialist, NYS Tug Hill Commission, taylor@tughill.org, www.tughill.org			
<b>1B) Chobani's Expansion in Upstate New York</b>			<b>Onondaga</b>
Chobani's \$1.2 billion investment in Rome, New York, the largest natural foods manufacturing investment in U.S. history, is underway. This session will provide an overview of the project, share progress, and explore the opportunities it will bring to the region's dairy industry and beyond.			
Donald Brown, Senior Community Impact Manager, Chobani, www.chobani.com			
<b>1C) Land Use and SEQR Case Law Update</b>			<b>Cayuga</b>
This session will provide attendees with an overview of changes in the laws relating to land use and zoning in New York State. The latest cases from New York courts have been reviewed and the speaker will discuss new trends in municipal land use and zoning issues. The session will also include discussion about the latest decisions relating to the State Environmental Quality Review Act.			
Matthew Fitzgerald, Partner, Phillips Lytle LLP, MFitzgerald@phillipslytle.com, www.phillipslytle.com			
<b>1D) Zoning Basics for Enforcement Officials and Board Members</b>			<b>Seneca</b>
The interpretation and application of the requirements of zoning is the focus of this course, which is geared toward enforcement officials, planning board and zoning board members. Attendees will learn about the essential elements of zoning: definitions, districts and permitted uses and area and development standards within them, nonconformities, and more. With some real-world examples, participants will learn to use the tools needed to guide sound, fair, enforceable, and defensible land use decisions.			
Paula Gilbert, Local Government Training Manager, Paula.Gilbert@dos.ny.gov, and Christopher Eastman, Local Government Specialist, Christopher.Eastman@dos.ny.gov, NYS Department of State, www.dos.ny.gov/services-and-support			
<b>1E) Clean Energy and Host Community Agreements</b>			<b>Canandaigua</b>
With the growth of renewable energy in New York, the benefits to the local communities where these projects are sited are a key aspect of project development. This presentation will discuss the mechanics of host community agreements, how they are structured, and how they fit with other financial agreements like payments-in-lieu-of-taxes agreements.			
Charles Malcomb, Partner, CMalcomb@hodgsonruss.com, and Henry Zomerfeld, Partner, HZomerfe@hodgsonruss.com, Hodgson Russ LLP, www.hodgsonruss.com			
<b>1F) Fiscal Responsibilities of Town and Village Clerks and Clerk Treasurers</b>			<b>Chautauqua</b>
This session will assist town clerks and village clerk-treasurers in understanding their major financial duties and responsibilities such as receiving moneys and maintaining accounting records. We will discuss the importance of having a system of internal controls, reconciliations, and timely reports, along with other important fiscal oversight topics.			
Ingrid Otto, CPA, Auditor 2, Local Official Training Unit, NYS Office of the State Comptroller, localtraining@osc.ny.gov, www.osc.state.ny.us			

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**Concurrent Session 2**

**10:45 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.**

**2A) Hot Topics for Town Boards**

**Seneca**

This session will cover issues facing governing boards in 2026, including building electrification mandates, new animal shelter standards, affordable housing challenges, assessing and revaluation challenges, and workforce development needs, among other things. Attendees will gain practical insights into navigating regulatory changes and enable town boards to effectively address issues impacting their municipality.

**Katie Hodgdon**, Association Counsel, khodgdon@nytowns.org, and **Lori Mithen-Demasi**, Chief Counsel, lmithen-demasi@nytowns.org, Association of Towns, www.nytowns.org

**2B) Municipal Considerations for Procurement and Writing RFPs for Professional Services**

**Canandaigua**

Local procurement is governed by each municipality's adopted procurement policy. If a purchase exceeds a set dollar threshold, a competitive process, such as an RFP, is required. This presentation will cover NYS procurement policy related to professional services, the municipality's procurement policy, and will discuss how municipalities can develop effective Requests for Proposals (RFPs) for professional services such as engineering, architecture, and legal consulting.

**Matt Cervini**, CEO and Director of Engineering, mcervini@gymodpc.com, **Mark Tompkins**, PPE, Partner, Senior Project Engineer, mtompkins@gymodpc.com, GYMO Architecture, Engineering & Land Surveying, DPC, www.gymodpc.com, and **Laird Petrie**, Municipal Consultant, lpetrieconsulting@gmail.com

**2C) Placemaking In Your Community**

**Cayuga**

The coming boom in Central New York will require towns and villages to place greater emphasis on "placemaking" — reinforcing traditional town planning standards that both current and new CNY residents will likely desire as development ramps up. This session will provide a discussion of how CNY towns and villages can take advantage of new demand for development to create better places that the market will desire.

**Bill Fulton**, President, William Fulton Group, bill@williamfultongroup.com, www.williamfultongroup.com

**2D) Litigation Lessons: Strategies to Avoid Article 78 Proceedings**

**Tuscarora**

Think your board is safe from an Article 78? Think again. In this fast-paced, practical session, Corey Auerbach pulls back the curtain on the missteps that land municipalities in court and how to avoid them. Learn how to bulletproof your record, craft defensible findings, and turn procedural traps into teachable moments drawn from real-world litigation lessons.

**Corey Auerbach**, Partner; Managing Director of Buffalo and Toronto Offices, Barclay Damon, CAuerbach@barclaydamon.com, www.barclaydamon.com

**2E) Abandonment of Town Highways**

**Chautauqua**

This session will focus on the proof necessary to determine whether a town highway has been abandoned, how to confirm and memorialize that finding, and outline the procedures that the town superintendent and town board must follow to abandon a town highway.

**Ken Ayers**, Esq., kla@theyayerslawfirm.com, and **Jennifer Chrisman**, Esq., jlc@theyayerslawfirm.com, The Ayers Law Firm, www.theayerslawfirm.com

**2F) Navigating AI: The Do's, Don'ts, and Must-Knows for Clerks**

**Onondaga**

In this insightful and approachable session, tech expert and municipal advocate Lisa Brown demystifies artificial intelligence and shows clerks how to harness its power without falling into common traps.

**Lisa A. Brown**, CEO and Founder, IT For Local Government Powered by CST Group Inc., lisa@itforlocalgovernment.com, www.itforlocalgovernment.com

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Concurrent Session 4		3:00 p.m. - 4:15 p.m.
<b>4A) Ambulance Service in Rural New York State</b>	<b>Chautauqua</b>	
<p>Ambulance services provide critical first-response care statewide but can face challenges especially in rural communities across New York State. A significant number of emergency medical services (EMS) agencies have closed in the past few years. The challenges for EMS and ambulance services include volunteer and staffing changes, a dysfunctional funding model, and increasing costs and training requirements. This session will provide background on emergency services in New York, discuss each of these challenges as experienced by municipalities and ambulance service providers in the Tug Hill region, and explore potential solutions.</p> <p><b>Angie Kimball</b>, Circuit Rider, <a href="mailto:angie@tughill.org">angie@tughill.org</a>, <b>Katie Malinowski</b>, Executive Director, <a href="mailto:katie@tughill.org">katie@tughill.org</a>, NYS Tug Hill Commission, <a href="http://www.tughill.org">www.tughill.org</a>, and <b>Nathaniel Degear</b>, EMS Coordinator, <a href="mailto:nathaniel.degear@oswegocounty.com">nathaniel.degear@oswegocounty.com</a>, Oswego County, <a href="http://www.oswegocountyny.gov/departments/public_safety/emergency_management/">www.oswegocountyny.gov/departments/public_safety/emergency_management/</a></p>		
<b>4B) ASSESSORS PART 2 (3:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.) To Reval or Not to Reval: How to Decide?</b>	<b>Canandaigua</b>	
<p>This presentation is designed to provide an overview of the revaluation process. Topics include the process, implications, financial considerations, and administrative challenges in providing a revaluation that promotes transparency and tax equity.</p> <p><b>Warren Wheeler</b>, Executive Director, NYS Assessors Association, <a href="mailto:wjwheeler@nyassessor.org">wjwheeler@nyassessor.org</a>, <a href="http://www.nyassessor.org">www.nyassessor.org</a></p>		
<b>4C) SEQRA Basics</b>	<b>Tuscarora</b>	
<p>The New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) is the required review governmental agencies must perform before taking action. This presentation will review the step-by-step process, unlisted, Type I, and Type II actions, the role of the lead agency, and the best practices and pitfalls of SEQRA compliance.</p> <p><b>Charles Malcomb</b>, Partner, <a href="mailto:CMalcomb@hodgsonruss.com">CMalcomb@hodgsonruss.com</a>, and <b>Henry Zomerfeld</b>, Senior Associate, <a href="mailto:HZomerfe@hodgsonruss.com">HZomerfe@hodgsonruss.com</a>, Hodgson Russ LLP, <a href="http://www.hodgsonruss.com">www.hodgsonruss.com</a></p>		
<b>4D) Questions and Answers for Planning Boards and Zoning Boards of Appeals</b>	<b>Seneca/Onondaga</b>	
<p>This is your chance to ask the expert your burning legal questions. This session is an open-floor format for questions on planning and zoning issues.</p> <p><b>Matthew Fitzgerald</b>, Partner, Phillips Lytle LLP, <a href="mailto:MFitzgerald@phillipslytle.com">MFitzgerald@phillipslytle.com</a>, <a href="http://www.phillipslytle.com">www.phillipslytle.com</a></p>		
<b>4E) Highway Departments and Town Budgets</b>	<b>Cayuga</b>	
<p>The town highway superintendent is responsible for the maintenance, repair, and snow removal of all town highways and bridges. Key duties include managing personnel, maintaining highway equipment, and overseeing road improvement projects. In addition, each year the highway superintendent must work cooperatively with the town board in developing the highway budget and keep the purchases of materials and equipment within budgetary limits. This session will focus on the statutory duties of both the highway superintendent and the town board and will discuss ways in which the two parties can work effectively together.</p> <p><b>Laird Petrie</b>, Municipal Consultant, <a href="mailto:lpetrieconsulting@gmail.com">lpetrieconsulting@gmail.com</a>, and <b>Joseph Wasilewski</b>, Superintendent, Jefferson County Highway Department, <a href="mailto:jwasilewski@jeffersoncountyny.gov">jwasilewski@jeffersoncountyny.gov</a>, <a href="http://www.jeffersoncountyny.gov/highway-department">www.jeffersoncountyny.gov/highway-department</a></p>		
<b>4F) Local Registrar and Clerk Responsibilities for Births, Deaths, and Marriages</b>	<b>Saranac</b>	
<p>This presentation will give an overview of the responsibilities of the filing and processing of births, deaths and marriages for local registrars and clerks.</p> <p><b>Kristi Winston</b>, Program Coordinator 1, <a href="mailto:registrar@health.ny.gov">registrar@health.ny.gov</a>, NYS Department of Health, <a href="http://www.health.ny.gov/vital_records/">www.health.ny.gov/vital_records/</a></p>		

## Concurrent Session 3

1:15 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.

### 3A) Implementation of Article 26-C of AGM Law: The Shelter Standards Act

Canandaigua

This presentation will highlight the standards set forth in the Shelter Standards Act as well as grant funding opportunities through the NYS Companion Animal Capital Improvement Grant program.

**David Chico**, Assistant Director, Division of Animal Industry, david.chico@agriculture.ny.gov, and **Dr. Bridgette Kennedy**, Companion Animal Program Manager, Bridgette.Kennedy@agriculture.ny.gov, NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, www.agriculture.ny.gov

### 3B) ASSESSORS PART 1 (1:15 p.m. - 2:45 p.m.)

#### The Assessors Office: What Elected Officials Need to Know

Cayuga

As an elected official, do you know what your assessor does, what they are responsible for, and how important a good assessor is to the fiscal health of your jurisdiction? This presentation will shed some light on this for attendees.

**Rob Bick**, AIA, CSI, SCA, Assessor, Town of Clay, rbick@townofclay.org, www.townofclay.org

### 3C) Sign Regulation

Tuscarora

The regulation of signs isn't just a zoning issue— when regulating signage, municipalities must be careful not to violate free speech. This course reveals what municipalities may and may not regulate in commercial or non-commercial signage and explores how signage can be regulated for community aesthetics. The session also addresses the drafting of a sign control law; the content of local sign control regulations; regulating billboards and other off-premises signs; and eliminating nonconforming or undesirable signs.

**Paula Gilbert**, Local Government Training Manager, Paula.Gilbert@dos.ny.gov, and **Christopher Eastman**, Local Government Specialist, Christopher.Eastman@dos.ny.gov, NYS Department of State, www.dos.ny.gov/services-and-support

### 3D) Variances and Limitations

Seneca/Onondaga

The role of the ZBA is instrumental in upholding the constitutionality of zoning. This session offers a focused examination of the statutory requirements for use and area variances, with an emphasis on how those standards operate in practice and how courts have defined the limits of ZBA discretion. Corey Auerbach provides a clear, practical framework for understanding the function of variances and for applying the statutory criteria consistently and defensibly.

**Corey Auerbach**, Partner; Managing Director of Buffalo and Toronto Offices, Barclay Damon, CAuerbach@barclaydamon.com, www.barclaydamon.com

### 3E) Cybersecurity Made Simple for Government Leaders

Saranac

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**Lisa A. Brown**, CEO and Founder, IT For Local Government Powered by CST Group Inc., lisa@itforlocalgovernment.com, www.itforlocalgovernment.com

### 3F) Hot Topics for Municipal Clerks

Chautauqua

This session will address key issues in the town clerk office, including their roles and responsibilities as records management officer, complying with the new .gov mandate and the resulting website publication requirements, handling voluminous Freedom of Information Law requests, and how to process cash payments now that the penny is dead, among other topics. Bring your questions to this interactive session!

**Katie Hodgdon**, Association Counsel, khodgdon@nytowns.org, and **Lori Mithen-Demasi**, Chief Counsel, lmithen-demasi@nytowns.org, Association of Towns, www.nytowns.org

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Grant Services



# Conference Schedule At-A-Glance

**7:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. BREAKFAST WITH EXHIBITORS in Oneida/Mohawk**

**8:30 a.m. - 8:45 a.m. OPENING REMARKS in Oneida/Mohawk**

**9:00 a.m. - 10:15 a.m. CONCURRENT SESSION 1 9:00 a.m. - 10:15 a.m.**

<b>(1A) ATV Recreation: Considerations for Municipalities</b>  Susan O'Rorke and Peter Baynes, New York Municipal Insurance Reciprocal and Taylor McKinney, NYS Tug Hill Commission  Tuscarora	<b>(1B) Chobani's Expansion in Upstate New York</b>  Donald Brown, Chobani  Onondaga	<b>(1C) Land Use and SEQRA Case Law Update</b>  Matthew Fitzgerald, Phillips Lytle LLP  Cayuga	<b>(1D) Zoning Basics for Enforcement Officials and Board Members</b>  Christopher Eastman and Paula Gilbert, NYS Department of State  Seneca	<b>(1E) Clean Energy and Host Community Agreements</b>  Charles Malcomb and Henry Zomerfeld, Hodgson Russ LLP  Canandaigua	<b>(1F) Fiscal Responsibilities of Town Clerks and Village Clerk-Treasurers</b>  Ingrid Otto, Office of the NYS Comptroller  Chautauqua
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**10:15 a.m. - 10:45 a.m. BREAK in Oneida/Mohawk**

**10:45 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. CONCURRENT SESSION 2 10:45 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.**

<b>(2A) Hot Topics for Town Boards</b>  Katie Hodgdon and Lori Mithen-Demasi, Association of Towns  Seneca	<b>(2B) Municipal Considerations for Procurement and Writing RFPs for Professional Services</b>  Matt Cervini and Mark Tompkins, GYMO, and Laird Petrie, Municipal Consultant  Canandaigua	<b>(2C) Placemaking In Your Community</b>  Bill Fulton, William Fulton Group  Cayuga	<b>(2D) Litigation Lessons: Strategies to Avoid Article 78 Proceedings</b>  Corey Auerbach, Barclay Damon  Tuscarora	<b>(2E) Abandonment of Town Highways</b>  Kenneth L. Ayers and Jennifer L. Chrisman, The Ayers Law Firm  Chautauqua	<b>(2F) Navigating AI: The Do's, Don'ts, and Must-Knows for Clerks</b>  Lisa A. Brown, IT For Local Government Powered by CST Group Inc.  Onondaga
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**12:00 p.m. - 1:15 p.m. LUNCH in Oneida/Mohawk**

**12:00 p.m. - 1:15 p.m.**

**1:15 p.m. - 2:30 p.m. CONCURRENT SESSION 3 1:15 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.**

<b>(3A) Implementation of Article 26-C of AGM Law: The Shelter Standards Act</b>  David Chico and Dr. Bridgette Kennedy, NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets  Canandaigua	<b>(3B) ASSESSORS PART 1 (1:15 p.m. - 2:45 p.m.) The Assessors Office: What Elected Officials Need to Know</b>  Rob Bick, Town of Clay  Cayuga	<b>(3C) Sign Regulation</b>  Christopher Eastman and Paula Gilbert, NYS Department of State  Tuscarora	<b>(3D) Variances and Limitations</b>  Corey Auerbach, Barclay Damon  Seneca/Onondaga	<b>(3E) Cybersecurity Made Simple for Government Leaders</b>  Lisa A. Brown, IT For Local Government Powered by CST Group Inc.  Saranac	<b>(3F) Hot Topics for Municipal Clerks</b>  Katie Hodgdon and Lori Mithen-Demasi, Association of Towns  Chautauqua
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**2:30 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. COFFEE BREAK in Oneida/Mohawk**

**2:45 p.m. RAFFLE DRAWING in Oneida/Mohawk (must be present to win)**

**3:00 p.m. - 4:15 p.m. CONCURRENT SESSION 4 3:00 p.m. - 4:15 p.m.**

<b>(4A) Ambulance Service in Rural New York State</b>  Angie Kimball and Katie Malinowski, NYS Tug Hill Commission, and Nathaniel Degear, Oswego County EMS  Chautauqua	<b>(4B) ASSESSORS PART 2 (3:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.) To Reval or Not to Reval: How to Decide</b>  Warren Wheeler, NYS Assessors Association  Canandaigua	<b>(4C) SEQRA Basics</b>  Charles Malcomb and Henry Zomerfeld, Hodgson Russ LLP  Tuscarora	<b>(4D) Questions and Answers for Planning Boards and Zoning Boards of Appeals</b>  Matthew Fitzgerald, Phillips Lytle LLP  Seneca/Onondaga	<b>(4E) Highway Departments and Town Budgets</b>  Joseph Wasilewski, Jefferson County Highway Department, and Laird Petrie, Municipal Consultant  Cayuga	<b>(4F) Local Registrar and Clerk Responsibilities for Births, Deaths, and Marriages</b>  Kristi Winston, NYS Department of Health  Saranac
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Certificates of Attendance  
Will Be Available at the  
End of the Last Session of the Day