November 6, 2026

TUG HILL TIMES

Bi-weekly newsletter bringing you the latest news, trainings, and updates from in and around the Tug Hill region.

NYS Tug Hill Commission
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NORTHERN ONEIDA COUNTY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS ANNUAL MEETING



Over 85 people attended the Northern Oneida County Council of Governments (NOCCOG) annual meeting on Thursday, October 29, at the McConnellsville Country Club in Blossvale. Nine of the 17 NOCCOG towns and villages were represented, along with the Tug Hill Commission with chair Gerry Ritter and staff members Jennifer Harvill and Patrick Brady. Jim Nabywaniec was present representing Assemblyman Ken Blankenbush, as well as Oneida County Legislator Steve Boucher and representatives from Mohawk Valley EDGE and the Mohawk Valley Economic Development District.

NOCCOG business items included review and approval of the NOCCOG 2027 budget, 2025 annual meeting minutes, and revisions to the bylaws and intermunicipal agreement. NOCCOG's current executive committee was also re-elected: Robert Sauer, Camden, chair; Lawrence Meirek, Western, vice chair; Betsy Mack, Trenton, fiscal officer; Thomas McDonald, Remsen, director; and Pamela Dibble, Annsville, director.

The keynote speaker was Oneida County planning commissioner James Genovese. James spoke about some of the housing issues in Oneida County, and on the positive action the county is taking to address those issues. He also discussed what can be done at the local municipal level regarding housing needs. The Northern Oneida County Council of Governments is a coalition of 17 towns and villages in the northern half of Oneida County. Situated at the southern side of Tug Hill, NOCCOG provides an outreach of technical and planning assistance to these communities.

TUG HILL COMMISSION BOARD MEETING

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2026

10:00 AM – 11:30 AM

TOWN OF WATERTOWN MUNICIPAL BUILDING, 22867 COUNTY ROAD 67, WATERTOWN, NY 13601

The public is welcome to attend.

Newsletter Highlights

- NOCCOG Annual Meeting
- Tug Hill Commission Board Meeting December 9
- 2026 WQIP Round 22 Grant Awardees
- Funding Round Open for NY Forward and DRI
- Fire Protection Presentation Well-Attended
- Changing Energy Landscape and Local Considerations Public Forum Nov. 12
- Oneida Lake Watershed Plan Public Meetings
- State Finance Training Attended
- Webinar Series: Preparing, Conducting & Reporting Village Elections

2026 WQIP ROUND 22 GRANT AWARDEES

The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation recently announced funding recipients for Round 22 of the Water Quality Improvement Program (WQIP), a competitive statewide grant program. The Tug Hill Commission provided grant writing assistance and application coordination to the towns of Croghan, Osceola, and Worth, helping them secure funding to construct new salt storage facilities. The commission also assisted the town of Annsville, who will receive funding to replace the Coal Hill Road culvert along Florence Creek. Award amounts are:

- Town of Croghan: $600,000 for a new salt storage facility
- Town of Osceola: $597,074 for a new salt storage facility
- Town of Worth: $554,000 for a new salt storage facility
- Town of Annsville: $2,000,000 for the Florence Creek culvert replacement

Together, the four towns were awarded $3,751,074 in state funding to support these important infrastructure and water quality improvement projects. Several other communities in the Tug Hill region also secured WQIP funding, including the Jefferson County Highway Department, Lewis County, Oswego County, and the town of Champion. Congratulations to all award recipients and remember that it is never too early to plan for the next round of WQIP funding. Please contact the commission office for assistance with grant writing or project development.

FUNDING ROUND OPEN FOR NY FORWARD AND DRI

Funding is now available through the Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) and NY Forward, offered through the NYS Department of State. The DRI aims to accelerate and expand the revitalization of downtowns and neighborhoods to serve as centers of activity and catalysts for investment. NY Forward works in concert with the DRI to accelerate and expand the revitalization of smaller and rural downtowns so that all communities can benefit from the state's revitalization efforts, regardless of size, character, needs and challenges.

The websites linked above include application and submission guidelines which outline eligibility criteria, important dates related to application deadlines and the anticipated timing of award announcements, resources to support application development, including capacity building webinars, and an overview of both programs. The guidebook provides a detailed overview of the Downtown Revitalization Initiative and NY Forward planning processes. It is intended to serve as a resource for local planning committees, municipal officials and staff, project sponsors, and the general public.

December 21, 2026, is the deadline to submit an intent to apply form, to receive technical assistance from the NYS Department of State. January 8, 2027, is the deadline to submit your community's application. This opportunity is highly competitive, and communities may need to apply more than once before they are successful. By this point, planning for community projects should already be well underway. If just beginning now, it may be challenging to develop a strong application, but it will still be valuable preparation for future rounds.

FIRE PROTECTION PRESENTATION WELL-ATTENDED IN WEST MONROE

Over 35 individuals from local government and the fire protection world on Tug Hill and as far as Albany attended a very informative workshop in West Monroe on Tuesday, October 27. Presenters Dan Acquilano from the Office of the State Comptroller and Katie Hogdon from the NY Association of Towns gave a great overview of a very complicated topic, as multiple types of fire protecting entities (fire districts, joint fire districts, fire protection districts, fire departments, and fire companies) work to provide fire protection services across New York State. The PowerPoint presentation from the evening can be found here. OSC also has a useful publication on the topic here.



Jefferson Community College
State University of New York

PUBLIC EDUCATIONAL FORUM

State University of New York Jefferson
The Center for Community Studies

New York's Changing Energy Landscape and Local Considerations

Powering NY in the Future

About this Program

For the past two years the Center for Community Studies has been surveying North Country adults regarding potential development of electrical energy generation via nuclear reactors in the future in NY State and particularly in our local region. A very prominent outcome of this public opinion survey research has been the desire for residents to learn more about all factors that impact electricity supply and demand, and facts about options available in the future. This evening, we bring together four speakers to address electrical energy generation and use in the future as an attempt to better inform local residents.

The Center for Community Studies will present recent North Country polling results regarding understanding, concern, support/opposition, and expectations regarding nuclear energy generation and electricity use.

The NY Independent System Operator will provide an overview of the state's electrical grid, how it works, explain how energy demand is growing faster than supply, and what that means for NYS.

The Tug Hill Commission will give a regional perspective on what the changing energy landscape means for the North Country in terms of generation, transmission and energy storage.

Clarkson University will explain how this is affecting the consumer and energy bills.

Learn More on November 12

Jules Center, Room 6-002
Jefferson Community College

Thursday, November 12, 2026

6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Have Questions?

Joel LaLone
Director, Center for Community Studies
Jefferson Community College
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Katie Malinowski
Executive Director
Tug Hill Commission
katie@tughill.org

JOIN US

Come explore NY's Changing Energy Landscape and Local Considerations. A Q&A session will take place following each presentation. Admission is free.

Made possible by the generous support of Jefferson Community College, the Northern New York Community Foundation, and the Jefferson County and Lewis County Boards of Legislature.

Oneida Lake Watershed Plan Public Meetings



Help shape the future of Oneida Lake!

How would you spend $1,000? Come take part in a hands-on lake priorities exercise where each participant will receive $1,000 in imaginary funds to allocate among lake priorities. It's a fun, but thoughtful way to learn what matters most to our community. Bring your questions, ideas, and vision for Oneida Lake!

When completed, this community-driven Nine Element Watershed Plan will describe local water quality concerns and provide a strategy to address those concerns. The Plan's recommendations will be developed in partnership with the people who live, work, fish, swim, and boat in the Oneida Lake area, with guidance from state and local agencies. Your ideas, knowledge of the lake and watershed, and thoughts on how to protect Oneida Lake will help guide the plan's development. We need your input!

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 17TH 5:00 – 7:00 PM Delphi Falls County Park 2006 Cardner Road, Cazenovia

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18TH 5:00 – 7:00 PM Sullivan Free Library 8979 North Road, Bridgeport

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19TH 5:00 – 7:00 PM Oneida Public Library 459 Main Street, Oneida

MEETING OPPORTUNITIES

The evening meetings will feature a short presentation followed by an open house with opportunities for you to provide your input.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 1ST 5:00 – 7:00 PM Cleveland Village Hall 2 Clay Street, Cleveland

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2ND 1:00 PM VIRTUAL MEETING - ZOOM Registration required: https://bit.ly/4i9s4hD

OR scan this code:

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3RD 5:00 – 7:00 PM Constantia Town Hall 14 Frederick St, Constantia

NEW YORK STATE Department of State

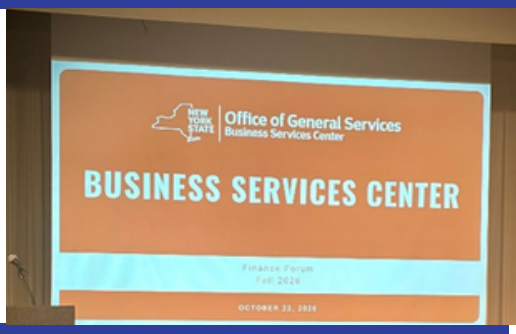
Central New York Regional Planning & Development Board

Madison County, with support from the NYSDOS and the CNY RPDB, is developing a Nine Element Watershed Plan for Oneida Lake. For more information, see the Oneida Lake 9E Website: https://publicinput.com/v71244

This project is being prepared with funding provided by the New York State Department of State under Title 11 of the Environmental Protection Fund.

STATE FINANCE TRAINING ATTENDED

Staff member Felicia Passino attended the NYS Business Services Center Finance Forum in Albany on Thursday, October 22. The forum covered several key areas for state agencies, including travel, purchasing, and accounts payable. Discussions on recent changes to discretionary purchase thresholds, upcoming training opportunities and the vehicle marketplace were particularly relevant for commission operations in support of the region. The forum also provided a valuable opportunity to network with colleagues from other agencies, including staff from the NYS Department of State.



WEBINAR SERIES: PREPARING, CONDUCTING & REPORTING VILLAGE ELECTIONS

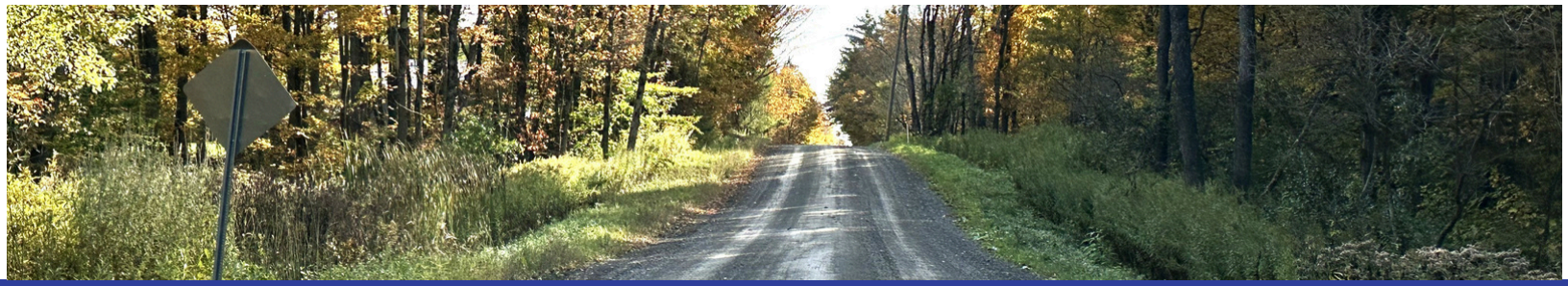
Join presenter Rebecca Ruscito, NYCOM counsel, and the New York Conference of Mayors as they present their annual village election training series. The webinar series covers everything village clerks and elected officials need to know to prepare for, conduct, and wrap up village elections. This year the series will be in three parts, which will include two webinars addressing the village election process, followed by a new third webinar focused on the state's new election reporting requirements. Click each highlighted link below to register. As a reminder, any village that conducted an election after April 30, 2026 MUST submit a report to the state by January 1, 2027.

Part I: Getting Ready for Election Day, Tuesday, November 10, 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. This webinar will focus on the steps that take place before Election Day. Topics will include: ballot access and petitioning, voter registration, absentee and early mail ballot applications, and ballot preparation.

Part II: Election Day and Beyond, Tuesday, November 17, 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. This webinar will address the conduct of Election Day and the responsibilities that follow. Topics will include election inspector appointment and training, poll watchers, Election Day procedures, dealing with voters who are not on the registration list, canvassing the vote and mailed ballots, post-election responsibilities, and the availability of election records.

Part III: Reporting Requirement - What Clerks Need to Know, Tuesday, December 1, 11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. New York State now requires all election authorities to transmit election and voting data to a centralized database maintained by the New York State Board of Elections (SBOE). Villages that administer their own elections are required to report on their elections. This webinar will provide an overview of the new reporting requirements and explain what information the village must submit to the SBOE, when it must be submitted, and what clerks need to do to prepare. This session is designed specifically for village clerks who are responsible for administering and reporting village elections.

All webinars are free to NYCOM members. Registration is required and sessions are subject to change. When completing the registration for each webinar, you must click “place order.” A confirmation email should be received after each successful registration. For questions, please contact Rebecca Ruscito, at rebecca@nycom.org or 518-463-1185.



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