

**Executive Committee**

Robert Sauer, *Chair*  
Thomas McDonald, *Vice-Chair*  
Betsy Mack, *Fiscal Officer*  
Lawrence Mierek, *Director*  
Pamela Dibble, *Director*

**Municipal Projects Coordinator**

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## ***Announcements***

### **ATV Recreation: Considerations for Municipalities, January 8 - NEW DATE! -**

NOCCOG and the NYS Tug Hill Commission will host an informational session regarding recreational ATV/OHV traffic, on Thursday, January 8<sup>th</sup>, at 7:00 pm at the Boonville municipal offices.



Join Tug Hill Commission as they present on the factors municipalities should take into consideration when enacting or updating local road laws for ATV use. The session will derive from the commission's recently updated issue paper, [ATV Recreation: Considerations for Municipalities](#), originally written in 2004. Now, with over two decades of experience with ATV trails, as well as numerous court cases that shed light on best practices, municipalities are much better positioned to make informed decisions. Taylor will also discuss the detailed approach taken to create a map of the region's ATV trail system, which is based on trail data, local laws, and pertinent court cases.



There is no cost to attend, and refreshments will be provided. For more information or to register, please contact John Healt at [jhealt@tughill.org](mailto:jhealt@tughill.org), or 315-941-2818.

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## Department of State Winter Webinar Series

The Department of State's Division of Local Government Services continues their winter webinar series throughout January, with sessions geared for planning boards, ZBAs, municipal governing boards, Code Enforcement Officers, as well as other local officials. Click on each course below to register. Once registered, you will receive a confirmation email with instructions for joining each session.



### [Planning Board Overview](#) Monday, Jan. 5, 6:00-8:00pm

This basic course addresses the powers and duties of town, village, and city planning boards and commissions. The administrative and regulatory roles of the planning board, including its review of site plans, special use permits, and subdivision plats are discussed, along with the planning board's role in the municipal comprehensive plan. The importance of board procedures, referral to the county planning agency, and making findings are also covered.

### [Zoning Board of Appeals Overview](#) Monday, Jan. 12, 6:00-8:00pm

This introductory course to the zoning board of appeals focuses on the statutory tests boards must follow to grant use and area variances and proper handling of zoning interpretations. Meeting procedures and notice requirements will also be discussed, along with the ZBA's relationship with enforcement officials and the planning board, and the importance of making good findings.

### [Essentials for Planning and Zoning Board Staff](#) Thursday, Jan. 22, 2:00-3:30pm

The responsibilities of the staff of local planning boards and zoning boards of appeals range from accepting applications, to maintaining and archiving records—and everything in between, including issuing notices and transmitting communications on behalf of their boards. This course explores the essential duties of municipal staff to planning boards and zoning boards of appeals, as well as best practices.

## NYSLTAP - CLRP Foundational Webinars



The Cornell Local Roads Program's no cost Winter Foundational Webinar series continues, focusing on many important principles which are key to local highway agency operations and management. These hour-long webinars are on Tuesdays and start at 9:00am. *Please note only the person registered will receive credit and you need to attend 75% of the live session for an attendance certificate and 90% for a PDH certificate.*

- January 6 - [Basics of a Good Road](#)
- January 13 - [Departmental Duties](#)
- January 27 - [Worker Safety](#)

For more information about these webinars, or to view the Winter Foundational Webinar series schedule, visit the NYS LTAP Center webinar webpage, [here](#).

## Records Management Officer Webinar January 8

As local governments must designate a Records Management Officer (RMO) to coordinate a program for managing records, New York State Archives is presenting a no cost webinar on Thursday, January 8 from 10-11 am for local government records management officers. The presentation will explain the law and regulations behind the role of the RMO and others managing local government records, discuss key areas to develop policies and procedures for managing records throughout their lifecycle, describe tools to help you manage records, and review services of the State Archives and other organizations available to help you build and maintain a successful Records Management Program.

Registration is required, and will close at 4:00pm on Jan.7. Click [here](#) for more information or to register. All webinars are recorded for future viewing.

## Small Wastewater System Funding Webinar Series; State Revolving Funds- The Basics, January 13

The no-cost webinar series from the Capacity Collaborative continues with it's fourth session focusing on State Revolving Funds, on Tuesday, January 13, from 1-2pm.



The State Revolving Fund (SRF) programs administered by EPA provide financing for many types of water infrastructure projects, and are implemented by state agencies. How the Clean Water SRF program is implemented will be particular to your location, however there are some fundamental requirements you should be aware of to get started. This session will provide the basics to demystify the Clean Water SRF.

For more information, visit the Small Wastewater System Funding [webpage](#), or click here to [register](#).

## Transitioning into the Town Clerk Position Webinar, January 15

Join NYSTCA officers on Thursday, January 15, at 10:30am, for an informative webinar designed to support both newly elected Town Clerks and those with years of experience. This session will offer a comprehensive overview of the Town Clerk role, valuable insights, and an opportunity to ask questions in advance. Please email advance questions to: [townclerk@cantonny.gov](mailto:townclerk@cantonny.gov)



NEW YORK STATE  
TOWN CLERKS  
ASSOCIATION

For more information, visit the NYSTCA [website](#), or click [here](#) to register.

## Tug Hill Commission Meeting, January 21



The Tug Hill Commission is scheduled to meet Wednesday, January 21, at 10:00 a.m. at the Lowville Municipal Offices, 5533 Bostwick Street, Lowville. The meeting will include routine business of the commission, and a review of major projects and activities in the region. The public is welcome to attend.

## SEQR Basics Webinar, January 22

Join the MRB Group and Hancock Estrabrook on Thursday, January 22, from 6-7pm, as they present their first, no cost, training session of the year, *Environmentally Speaking- the Nuts and Bolts of SEQR*.

New York's State Environmental Quality Review Act impacts nearly every decision you'll face as a community development player. Getting SEQR right is critical to addressing development projects- whether you're working to advance a development, or to stop one that doesn't align with your community's value. This session will focus on the processes associated with SEQR review, and on what to do when you're faced with challenging SEQR questions.



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

The MRB Group and Hancock Estabrook's free annual training program will include 10 hours of remote training designed to provide a comprehensive education that encompasses all aspects of municipal governance. Each program in the series will be provided remotely on the fourth Thursday of each month with subject matter experts from MRB Group and knowledgeable attorneys from Hancock Estabrook, LLP. Topics will be useful and can qualify for the education requirements for members of Planning Boards and Zoning Boards of Appeals. These sessions are geared to assist local governments, town officials, and planning and zoning boards.

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## Newly Elected Town Officials Webinar, January 28



The NYS Tug Hill Commission, in cooperation with its 5 Councils of Government and the NYS Association of Towns, is happy to announce a no cost training webinar geared for newly elected officials on Wednesday, January 28, from 6:30 to 8:30 pm.

Presenters, Sarah Brancatella and Lori Mithen-Demasi, from NYSAOT, will cover such topics as conflicts of interest, codes of ethics and boards of ethics, financial disclosure requirements, typical town offices and their roles, oath of office and preparing for your first meeting. There will be plenty of time for questions and answers.

Click [here](#) to register.

### Municipal Parks and Recreation Grants Funding

The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) is pleased to announce the second round of the Municipal Parks and Recreation (MPR) Grant Program, awarding up to \$10 million in 2026.



**Parks, Recreation  
and Historic Preservation**

MPR funding is available for the construction of recreational facilities and other improvements to municipally owned recreational sites and parks. Examples include playgrounds, courts, playing fields, and facilities for swimming, biking, boating, picnicking, hiking, fishing, camping or other recreational activities. Grants will primarily fund construction costs. Preconstruction activities, such as developing plans and design specifications may be included in the project budget, but MPR cannot fund projects that are solely for planning and design without a construction component. Only one location per application. The MPR grant opportunity can fund up to 90% of the total eligible project costs, with a matching share requirement of 10%. The maximum grant award is \$900,000, and these grants are administered on a reimbursement basis.

Eligible applicants include counties, cities, towns, and villages within New York State that own the property where the proposed project will take place. Applications must be submitted by February 9, 2026, at 4:00 pm.

Program guidelines, including how to apply, are available on the NYS Parks MPR Grant [webpage](#).

### Volunteer Fire Infrastructure & Response Equipment (V-FIRE) Funding Available

The 2025-2026 Volunteer Fire Infrastructure & Response Equipment Grant Program, better known as the V-FIRE Grant, is accepting applications. This program is a state-funded \$25,000,000 competitive grant program that supports the enhancement of the security and safety of



**Fire Prevention  
and Control**

the citizens of New York State by providing critical funding to strengthen volunteer fire departments and districts statewide. Eligible applicants can apply for up to \$1,000,000 if proposing projects for construction, renovation, or purchase costs for critical facilities (buildings, training facilities, etc.) that support fire operations, or up to \$500,000 if proposing projects for allowable fire service equipment to upgrade and improve their response capabilities.

Complete eligibility and program information can be found in the Request for Applications (RFA) and these other supporting documentation links:

- [Request for Applications \(RFA\)](#)
- [Application Worksheet](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [E-Grants Tutorial](#)

The application deadline is February 25, 2026, by 5:00 pm. For more information about the V-Fire Grant, visit the NYS Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services webpage, [here](#).

# Registration is Open!

NYS Tug Hill Commission's  
35<sup>th</sup> Local Government Conference

Monday & Tuesday, April 20-21, 2026

Register online,  
[events.humanitix.com/lgc-2026](https://events.humanitix.com/lgc-2026)

Print a registration form,  
[tughill.org/localgovernmentconference](http://tughill.org/localgovernmentconference)

Turning Stone Conference  
Center, Verona, NY



Strengthening Communities  
Empowering Local Government  
Growing Together

QUESTIONS?

 315-785-2380



NOCCOG to Cover One Local Government Conference Registration for Each Member Municipality



At the December NOCCOG Executive Committee meeting, the directors unanimously agreed to cover the registration cost of 1 attendee from each member municipality planning to attend the 2026 Local Government Conference, April 20 & 21, at the Turning Stone Resort and Conference Center. The intent is twofold, as training and knowledge are essential in any board position, and it offers savings to participating NOCCOG communities.

The registration can cover one or both days of the conference, including the reception. However, the ***registrations must be received by John Healt, [jhealt@tughill.org](mailto:jhealt@tughill.org), prior to March 13***. Local Government Conference registrations and agendas have been sent but are also available on the Tug Hill Commission's LGC [webpage](#).

For more information or to secure your registration, please reach out to John Healt by calling, 315-941-2818, or by email, [jhealt@tughill.org](mailto:jhealt@tughill.org).



## Can the public speak at a public meeting?

The law is silent with respect to public participation (see 22 Opinion of the State Comptroller 311, 1966). And, while *a public body does not have to allow the public to speak, many choose to permit public participation*. In

those instances, it has been advised that a public body must treat all people in the same manner. The public body can adopt reasonable rules to ensure fairness. For example, allowing those who want to speak a specific period of time to express their views, but restricting every speaker to the same specific amount of time.

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## NOCCOG 2025 Review

The NOCCOG Executive Committee feels that it is imperative that municipalities are aware of the efforts and accomplishments of the groups they support. And as our communities look forward to 2026, NOCCOG feels that this is a good time to reflect and report on 2025, with its challenges and accomplishments.

Last year started with a workshop focusing on the best practices for land use, code enforcement, and property tax assessment in Amish communities- an important, and sometimes problematic, topic in many of our municipalities.

In February, a new director was welcomed to the NOCCOG Board, Pam Dibble. Pam is the current town supervisor for the Town of Annsville, and brings not just a fresh perspective, but also years of experience.

This spring, we released, and provided numerous copies of, ***A Reference Guide for Municipal Boards***. This guide is meant to assist all municipal boards, elected and appointed, with certain aspects of meeting protocol, procedures and mandated obligations. The guide covers much of the usual verbiage, definitions, requirements and regulations that are common at municipal meetings. It takes a lot of information from various outlets and puts it in one, convenient and easy to read binder. Copies of which are still available, by request.

We assisted, and helped sponsor, the Tug Hill Commission at this year's Local Government Conference, where we also staffed a NOCCOG information booth. Additionally, NOCCOG covered the cost of one registration for each of our member municipalities. Training and education for our local officials has always been a main focus for our council of government.

The idea to engage students with the efforts of local government continued again this year with the NOCCOG Scholarship Program. Four local students are set to receive a \$500 cash award with the completion of their first college semester this past December. The scholarship program was established to recognize college bound seniors that participate in school or community activities without the desire for reward or recognition. This program is also about bringing awareness on what it takes to keep our local governments functioning.

The GPS Mapping program saw work in Forestport, Boonville, and Annsville. Mike Thompson worked with the towns to map some vital infrastructure locations. Digitally mapped data will help with budgeting, knowledge transfer, emergency situations, grant funding opportunities, and comprehensive plans. The goal of this program is to create a thorough regional map, one that will grow and change as the NOCCOG communities grow and change. If your community is interested in the benefits of this resource, please reach out to Mike or your municipal advisors.

We know that getting information to our communities on where NOCCOG and the Tug Hill Commission can assist is always important, so this summer we launched a NOCCOG Service Survey. The results showed that NOCCOG is not just a well-known resource, it also highlighted what is important to our municipalities, and on which issues NOCCOG can focus.

In fact, getting information to our municipalities is always a priority. Each month our advisors share and inform on the many training and funding opportunities available through various organizations and departments. Whether it's a webinar on understanding the local law process, a new grant opportunity, an upcoming training for planning and zoning boards, or a recently updated technical paper from the Tug Hill Commission, NOCCOG's goal is to let our member municipalities know about it. It is the work of the municipal advisors that keeps the connection between our communities and the Tug Hill Commission open. Associate Advisors Lisa Bellinger, Joe Rowlands, and now, Mike Thompson, have been diligent in their efforts and are invaluable members of the NOCCOG team. From answering daily inquiries or keeping up to date on mandates and regulations, municipal advisors provide information, assistance, and monthly announcements to our communities.

NOCCOG continues to appreciate the support from the NYS Tug Hill Commission- the Commission staff has always been available, and happy, to assist. The Watertown office is our first resource when addressing questions or issues.

Looking forward to the new year, the Northern Oneida County Council of Governments Executive Committee thanks you for your valued and continued support. Each year, our municipalities face new challenges and changes, but our goal of providing assistance, training, and support remains constant.

NOCCOG will always strive to be an asset and resource for our local governments.

Best wishes for a great 2026!