



Tug Hill Times

Tug Hill Times is published semimonthly by the Tug Hill Commission for its board members, staff and associates, and the local representatives on the region's councils of governments.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONFERENCE PROGRAM ANNOUNCED

The next annual Local Government Conference is scheduled for March 27, 2008, and registration materials will be mailed on December 27th to all local officials in the Tug Hill region, as well as to municipalities in the surrounding communities. The brochure is also available on the Commission's website at www.tughill.org.

The Commission has added additional workshops to the schedule in order to reduce overcrowding and to offer a wider variety of choices. Basic topic will address subjects such as roles and responsibilities of local officials, zoning variances, effective meetings and hearings, and municipal personnel policies. Additional topics include managing bad behavior at meetings, infrastructure asset management, rate setting, advanced budgeting, conservation subdivisions, and managing highway strip development. In total, the 2008 conference offers 27 sessions for governing boards, clerks, planning boards, zoning boards of appeal, highway personnel, and assessors – more than enough hours to meet annual in-service training requirements.

For its keynote speaker, the Commission has booked Jack Schultz, a premier authority in economic development recognized for his ongoing research and vast knowledge of rural America. In his book, *Boomtown USA: The 7 1/2 Keys to Big Success in Small Towns* and the popular presentation by the same name, Mr. Schultz exposes the well-hidden truth of

America's hometowns that he fondly calls, the agurbs®. Mr. Schultz established Boomtown Institute to better share his continuous research and sought after knowledge. The Institute's mission is "To provoke innovative thinking, encourage leadership and foster investment in communities across the U.S.A." Mr. Schultz says, "Vision is the difference between a ghost town and a Boomtown!" Mr. Schultz inspires communities to take charge of their own future deliberately, not waiting on the inevitable to happen. For a taste of Mr. Schultz's approach, read the online article in [Economic Development America](http://www.eda.gov/EDAmerica/winter2006/schultz_2.html) at:

www.eda.gov/EDAmerica/winter2006/schultz_2.html.

GOVERNOR ANNOUNCES 2007 EPF GRANTS

On November 29, 2007, Governor Eliot Spitzer announced \$25.3 million in Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) grants awarded to local communities and organizations across New York State to assist with waterfront revitalization projects, historic preservation efforts, expanding open space, and increasing access to public lands.

The EPF, created in 1993, is primarily funded through the real estate transfer tax and provides a dedicated source of funding for a variety of environmental projects and programs administered by the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, the Department of Environmental Conservation, and the Department of Agriculture and Markets.

Congratulations to the following communities in the Tug Hill Region on receiving EPF grants:

Town of Martinsburg (Lewis) - \$43,120

The town of Martinsburg will restore the Martinsburg Town Hall, the first county court in Lewis County and the site of the only execution in the history of the county. This project involves restoration of the foundation, wood siding, roof, chimneys and cupola.

Village of Boonville (Oneida) - \$445,603

The village of Boonville will expand trails and recreational opportunities by connecting Park Hill and Boonville Youth Athletic Fields, creating a year round facility, while protecting the village's water supply and green space from the threat of future mining opportunities.

ADAMS AREA STRIVES TO BE MORE PEDESTRIAN-FRIENDLY

On January 8-9, 2008, Mark Fenton, a walkability expert and host of the PBS television series, "America's Walking," will visit the Adams area to help identify strategies for making those communities more walkable for children, shoppers, and those walking for enjoyment and fitness. Mr. Fenton will tour the community then meet with local leaders to discuss strategies to make Adams more pedestrian-friendly. His ideas and concepts for improving the communities' walkability will be presented to the general public at a meeting on Tuesday, January 8, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. in the South Jefferson High School auditorium.

After touring the village of Adams and Adams Center on Tuesday morning, Mr. Fenton will conduct an afternoon workshop with community leaders and stakeholders to share his observations, discuss community goals, and share strategies to improve walkability. At the 7:00 p.m. public presentation, he will share his observations and engage attendees in a discussion on the economic, social, and health benefits of walkable communities. Mr. Fenton will again meet with local leaders and stakeholders on the morning of January 9th to make recommendations on implementation and next steps for local policies, programs, and projects that will improve the walkability of the Adams area.

Community walkability has broad implications for the pedestrian appeal and economic viability of downtown business districts; is a significant factor in providing safe routes to school for children; is key to connecting commercial and residential areas; and can enhance the experience of local residents who like to walk for fitness and enjoyment. Mr. Fenton, therefore, strives to involve local officials, public works personnel, planning boards, school system representatives, health care professionals, parent-teacher organizations, economic development professionals, and interested citizens in his dynamic and entertaining workshops.

Mark Fenton is a leading advocate in the United States for walking and its impact on community health and wellness. He is an entertaining, persuasive, knowledgeable walking advocate and a recognized authority on public health issues and the need for community, environmental, and public-policy initiatives to encourage more walking and bicycling. He is a member of the executive committee on the Partnership for a Walkable America and he addresses groups on topics ranging from transportation and planning, to safety, advocacy, Safe Routes to School programs and public health.

Mr. Fenton was the keynote speaker at the Tug Hill Commission's Local Government Conference this past March. His presentation there has generated a great deal of local interest in the topic. He visited the communities of Carthage, West Carthage and Lowville in October and was very well received by local officials and residents.

This project is made possible by funding from the Steps to a HealthierNY program, administered by the Jefferson County Public Health Service, and from the New York State Quality Communities program. The event is being organized and hosted by the Adams Revitalization Committee.

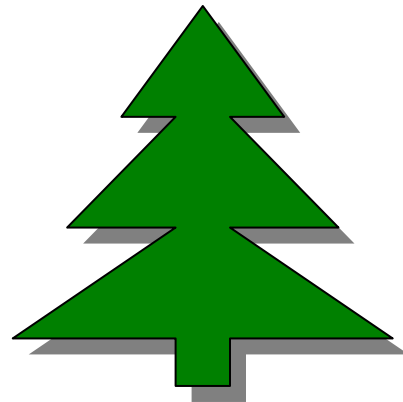
MUNICIPAL HEALTH INSURANCE FORUM

A forum on the potential of group health insurance cost savings and setting up a consortium was held on December 4th at the Lowville Town Hall. Attendees listened as Stephen Locey of Locey and Cahill, an employee benefits consulting firm out of Syracuse, explained key points of establishing a health insurance consortium. Topics included who can participate, geographical and political boundaries, number of employees required, financial structure of the plan, and premium rate setting models.

Currently, it appears that a local obstacle to consortium formation is the NYS Insurance Law regarding employers with less than 50 employees to participate. Although a consortium may include a number of towns that collectively have greater than 50 employees, the number of employees is determined at the town level. Until legislative changes occur, the best option for pursuing a consortium is for towns to partner with other municipal corporations, i.e., counties, cities, towns, villages, fire districts, or school districts.

Next steps will include contacting larger municipal employers in the area to assess their plans and gauge interest. Norm Roof, supervisor, town of Harrisburg, has volunteered to make these contacts during and report back to the group. A copy of Mr. Locey's presentation will be mailed to those communities that have expressed interest in additional information.

For more information or copies of Mr. Locey's materials, if you haven't received them, please contact Carla at 1-888-785-2380 or carla@tughill.org.



Happy Holidays!