



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 REGISTRATIONS GO TO 2,800 LOCAL OFFICIALS

Close to 2,800 registration brochures were mailed Christmas week to local officials in the counties of Jefferson, Lewis, Oneida, Oswego, and St. Lawrence for our upcoming March 27, 2008 Local Government Conference at Jefferson Community College.

Drawing over 600 local officials, this one-day event will offer a keynote address and 23 independent sessions along several different tracks for town and village boards, planning boards, zoning boards of appeal, highway departments, clerks, and assessors. Thirty exhibitors will feature services provided to local government by a variety of businesses and government agencies.

Registration information has been mailed to local officials within and outside the Tug Hill Region. Early registration fee is \$40, postmarked by March 7th. The fee will increase to \$60 if postmarked by March 12th and will be \$100 at the door. Anyone needing registration materials that did not receive them in the mail may contact the Tug Hill Commission at: 1-888-785-2380. Registration information is also available on the Commission's website: www.tughill.org.

ANNSVILLE WINTER WORKSHOP

Annsville Codes Enforcement Officer Joseph Muller will present an information session on

January 23, 2008, at the Annsville Town Hall, Main Street, Taberg, on a topic economically important to all, especially those who heat with oil. The session, titled "Winter - How to Manage Your Home," will run from 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m., and will cover information regarding ways to stay warm and ways to save money. The information session is open to all in the surrounding area at no cost. No reservations or advance notice of attendance is required. Please plan on attending to find out helpful ways to cut costs and still stay warm this winter.

CONSULTANT CHOSEN FOR BLACK RIVER WATERSHED PLAN

On December 14th, the Black River Watershed steering committee, which includes staff from the Tug Hill Commission, Department of State, the Town of Grieg and the Jefferson and Lewis County Soil and Water Conservation Districts, interviewed four consultant teams for the Black River Watershed Plan. Bergmann Associates out of Rochester was chosen to complete the work. Bergmann Associates was also chosen as consultant on the Lewis County Comprehensive Plan and has extensive experience on projects in the Black River Watershed bringing a vast knowledge of technical, planning, outreach, and GIS expertise to the job. Bergmann's team includes The Academy of Natural Sciences, which will complete data collection and field sampling, Camoin Associates, which specializes in socio-economic characterization and the Adirondack Watershed Institute, which brings to the project an important connection to issues in the Adirondack Park. The Adirondack Watershed Institute will also provide a post-project continuing education process on the Black River Watershed Plan.

A larger, project advisory committee will be formed soon to help oversee the watershed plan. If any communities in the Black River Watershed are interested in participating on such a committee, please contact Jennifer Harvill via e-mail at jennifer@tughill.org.

SALMON RIVER ASSESSMENT PROJECT TIMELINE EXTENDED

The Salmon River Watershed Natural Resources Assessment has received approval from the NYSDEC and US Fish and Wildlife Service for a later completion date of spring 2008. Successful workshops held last year generated a host of ideas that are now being pulled together in one document by project partners. A draft of the document will be released later this winter for review by workshop participants before being finalized. For more information, please contact Linda Gibbs at 315-785-2380 (1-888-785-2380 toll free in region) or gibbs@tughill.org.

LOCAL OFFICIALS, STATE AGENCY REPS TOUR NIRVANA WATER BOTTLING FACILITY

Over 20 local officials from around the region, along with many state agency representatives, attended a tour of the Nirvana water bottling plant near Boonville on January 3rd. The group was impressed by the facility's cleanliness and efficiency. The plant is locally owned. Nirvana is an atypical facility for the water bottling industry in that it owns the land surrounding its springs. Most other spring water bottlers lease the location of their springs from other landowners.

Nirvana employs approximately 85 people, and owns over 2,000 acres of land, helping to protect the integrity of its springs. The facility runs 24 hours per day. Four springs provide water for bottling. At the springs, water flows into a set of holding tanks. Once the water reaches a certain level in the holding tanks, pumps activate and

send it to the facility for bottling. Nirvana's spring water is bottled under approximately 100 different brand labels under contract and shipped to locations throughout the eastern seaboard.

STATE FOREST STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE TO FOCUS ON PROPERTY TAX ISSUES

Members of the State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee met in Albany on December 19, 2007. Representatives from NYSDEC, Cornell University, SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF), Society of American Foresters (SAF), New York State Forest Owners' Association (NYFOA), Empire State Forest Products Association (ESFPA), NYS Forest Practice Board, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Adirondack Council, Adirondack Mountain Club (ADK), Tug Hill Commission, and the United States Forest Service (USFS) attended the meeting.

The Committee's primary functions are to provide advice and recommendations to the state forester concerning implementation of the Forest Stewardship Program and other associated landowner assistance and cost-share programs. The committee also provides assistance and recommendations concerning the development, implementation and updating of the State Forest Stewardship Plan.

The December meeting agenda items included: an overview of the USFS State and Private Forest Program's redesign, and the resultant state assessment requirements, as federal monies allocated through the Farm Bill become more competitive over the next few years; NYSDEC's creation of an Office of Invasive Species that will coordinate the work of DEC's divisions, other state agencies, and nonprofit organizations to support research and raise public awareness; possibility of firewood regulations to prevent wood borer introductions into non-infested areas; and anticipation of state lands achieving joint FSC and SFI sustainable forestry certification in 2008.

Discussion at the end of the meeting focused on issues that representatives felt important to their constituencies. All agreed that property tax issues were at the top of everyone's list, including the court's consideration of the state's payments of property taxes to local jurisdictions, differing tax valuation on public vs. private land, and tax abatement programs for private forest landowners (480-a restructuring). The Committee will invite a representative of the Office of Real Property Services to its next meeting, not yet scheduled. For more information, contact Linda Gibbs, Natural Resources Specialist, at 315-785-2380 (1-888-785-2380 toll free in region) or gibbs@tughill.org.

SNOWMOBILE RACING RETURNS TO BOONVILLE JANUARY 25-27

The Boonville Snow Festival II Committee will once again be hosting "Adirondack Cup" snowmobile racing at the Boonville Fairgrounds on January 25, 26 and 27, 2008. The weekend long festival kicks off with a snowmobile torchlight parade through the village of Boonville on Friday evening. At the conclusion of the parade, there will be a spectacular fireworks display. The fairgrounds will open at 9:00 am Saturday for vintage snowmobile racing by the Northern New York Vintage Snowsled Racers, as well as a Vintage Snowmobile Show. It is anticipated that many local snowmobile enthusiasts will be taking part in these events. On Sunday the Eastern Pro Tour Circuit will heat up the track with their high speed sleds and racing icons. Concessionaires and vendors will be at the fairgrounds both days selling hot food, drinks, clothing and other related items.

Please check out the website for the snow festival for additional information at www.boonvillesnowfestival.com.

ADAMS FOCUSES ON COMMUNITY WALKABILITY

Walkable Communities consultant Mark Fenton visited the town and village of Adams this past

week to help the identify strategies for making the community more pedestrian friendly for those walking or biking for fitness, pleasure, transportation, or shopping. Over the course of two days, the project actively involved town and village board members, planning board members, school district staff, revitalization committee members, and interested citizens.

Mr. Fenton began the first day with a morning tour of the community to get the lay of the land. That afternoon, he led a workshop with two dozen local leaders and interested stakeholders to identify local goals and concerns, review aerial photos of the area and discuss possible solutions. In the evening, 70 people attended a public presentation by Mr. Fenton. He began with the health, safety, and economic benefits of more walkable communities. The second half of his talk focused on his observations of the local opportunities and issues and possible strategies. This session served to educate the general public and to generate excitement and support for the local effort. Mr. Fenton concluded his trip the next morning with a leaders breakfast at which he recommended eight strategies for the community to consider. These included tips for site design standards, an institutionalized sidewalk program, improving safety along the Route 11 commercial corridor, establishing trail connections between the village and hamlet, and establishing a Safe-Routes-To-School program. Overall, community representatives felt the exercise gave them good focus and direction for moving forward.

Mr. Fenton made similar visits to the villages of Carthage, West Carthage, and Lowville in October 2007. He was also the keynote speaker at last year's Local Government Conference.

PARISH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE

The Parish Economic Development Task Force met this week with circuit rider Paul Baxter and

Community Development Director David Zembiec for a mini “retreat” session to identify priority action areas. Task force members are appointed by the town and village boards and include a cross-section of local officials, citizens, school district personnel, and business leaders.

Mr. Zembiec led the group through a brainstorming exercise to identify and prioritize key challenges and issues impeding community growth. While a number of issues were identified, priority areas included the need for public water, residential infill development (to provide housing opportunity and to maximize utilization of the village sewer system), commercial district revitalization, and high speed broadband access. Participants then devoted time to identifying initial action steps for each of the priority areas. Mr. Zembiec and Mr. Baxter will provide a written summary of the exercise for review at the task force’s next meeting.