

OCTOBER 21, 2016

Lewis has New Municipal Building

The town of Lewis recently held their first board meeting in their new municipal facility located at 1039 State Route 26 in the hamlet of West Leyden. Town officials and volunteers put in many long hours in addition to the work done by contractors to transform the former Mom's Diner building into their new municipal building. With funding assistance from a Justice Court Assistance Program (JCAP) grant and a NYS Archives



Records Management grant, they have created a new facility with a shared court/meeting room and a secure fireproof records storage area. The facility also includes offices for town officials and a room for the town's library. The new building allows the town to centralize the location of their records, which they have been paying to store for several years, as well as offering space for the town officials to work and allowing safe access to the public. They will be holding an open house Saturday, October 29 from 1:00-4:00 p.m. and invite the public to stop in to see the new facility.

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Land Trust Turns 25; Venerable Folks Exhibit Premieres

The Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust celebrated its 25th anniversary at the Kallet Theater in Pulaski on Thursday, October 20th. Joined by around 100 conservation landowners, board members, volunteers and friends of the land trust, executive director Linda Garrett and board chairman Bob Quinn reviewed accomplishments over the past quarter century. Former Tug Hill Commission executive director Ben Coe recognized Bob for creating the land trust while on staff at the commission, as an idea that came out of forums held by the commission in the late 1980's.

The new Venerable Folks of Tug Hill exhibit also premiered at the dinner. The exhibit is composed of eight large panels depicting various facets of life on Tug Hill (community spirit, forestry and farming, and embracing winter to name a few) numerous portraits done by Loretta Lepkowski of several Tug Hill Sages and other long-time Tug Hill residents, and a video capturing highlights of the interviews conducted to capture the stories that are displayed on the panels. The exhibit will also be on display at the Tug Hill Commission dinner on November 10th at the Tailwater Lodge and Barn in Altmar.



Ransomware – What Local Governments Need to Know

Many people know about computer viruses, but not as many have heard about a more recent and rising threat called ransomware. Ransomware is a variety of malware (the umbrella term for computer viruses and other malicious and unwanted software) which attempts to extort money from the victim by locking up the victim's files and offering to make them available again – for a price.

A ransomware attack most often comes from running an infected file, including files which may come in the form of an e-mail attachment. There is a good article about ransomware available at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ransomware>.

A ransomware attack takes time to execute, as the program goes about encrypting the user's files. It's possible that the user may be able to halt an attack in progress if they are aware of it, for example through unusual disk activity, although files already encrypted may now be inaccessible and thus lost. The endpoint of ransomware is when the software pops up a message indicating that your files have been encrypted and that you need to pay money to get them back. Paying the money is no guarantee that this will happen, however.

The FBI offers these tips for protecting your computer at www.fbi.gov/news/stories/ransomware-on-the-rise:

- Make sure you have updated antivirus software on your computer.
- Enable automated patches for your operating system and web browser.
- Have strong passwords, and don't use the same passwords for everything.
- Use a pop-up blocker.
- Only download software—especially free software—from sites you know and trust (malware can also come in downloadable games, file-sharing programs, and customized toolbars).
- Don't open attachments in unsolicited e-mails, even if they come from people in your contact list, and never click on a URL contained in an unsolicited e-mail, even if you think it looks safe. Instead, close out the e-mail and go to the organization's website directly.
- Use the same precautions on your mobile phone as you would on your computer when using the Internet.

To prevent the loss of essential files due to a ransomware infection, it's recommended that individuals and businesses always conduct regular system back-ups and store the backed-up data offline.

The last point deserves additional explanation. Back-ups are a good idea for reasons beyond just the threat of malware, but it's best to have a way of backing up data that is only connected to the computer at the time of backup, and disconnected afterward. Backups to physical media like a USB memory stick or an external hard drive which is left connected can also be infected as the ransomware looks for files to encrypt. Your backed-up files may thus not be available when you need them most.

In addition to this, it is a best practice to store backup files not just offline, but also physically separated from the computer. A physically disconnected backup will not help you in the event of a different type of data loss risk such as fire, flood, or theft affecting the site where the computer is used.

Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust 2017 Calendar Available

Numerous local photographers are once again featured in the Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust's annual calendar! Each month features landscapes, flora and fauna that represent the time of year. A full preview of the calendar is available at http://tughilltomorrowlandtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/2017-calendar-8_29.pdf - warning, it's a large file. To purchase the calendar, go the land trust's website at <http://tughilltomorrowlandtrust.org/store/>.



October is National Cyber Security Awareness Month!

A cyber threat is one of the most serious economic and national security challenges we face.

The New York State Office of Information Technology Services has provided these links to helpful cyber resources:

- NYS Information Technology Services Enterprise Information Security Office: <http://its.ny.gov/eiso>
- U.S. Department of Homeland Security: <https://www.dhs.gov/national-cyber-security-awareness-month>
- StaySafeOnline.org: <https://staysafeonline.org/ncsam/>
- Multi-State Information Sharing and Analysis Center - <https://msisac.cisecurity.org/>

Municipal Fundraising and Gifting Paper Updated

The commission's technical paper on municipal fundraising and gifting has been updated. The paper was originally prepared in 2001 and updated in 2012 with the guidance of the regional Office of the State Comptroller. The topic has been of interest to local officials as municipalities are challenged to operate within the tax levy cap, faced with the reality of increasingly limited local resources. The paper highlights the proper role of municipalities, their officials, and/or special committees in fundraising efforts for community projects.

Additionally, municipalities receive many requests for gifts, which is prohibited in Article VIII of the NYS Constitution. A gift is defined as the voluntary transfer of money, goods, or services without any consideration or compensation to a private individual, corporation or association. Although municipalities may not *give* funds to a private entity, they may contract with such entities to provide specific activities or services that constitute a proper municipal purpose. This update includes sample agreements for various municipal services. The new paper can be viewed or downloaded from the commission website at <http://www.tughill.org/publications/white-papers/>. For hard copies, please contact the commission office.

6 Mistakes to Avoid When Implementing a Records Management Solution

For a great article about the pitfalls when implementing a records management solution, check it out here:

<http://idm.net.au/article/0011222-6-mistakes-avoid-when-implementing-records-management-solution>

Save the Date!

Land Use Planning Workshop November 14th at JCC

Article 10 – Public Service Law:

What You Should Know About the Siting of Major Electric Generating Facilities

Article 10 provides a unified review and approval process for major electric generating facilities in New York State. It applies to electric generating facilities with generating capacity of 25 MW or more; a lower threshold than the previous 80 MW required, and applies to renewable energy projects, like wind powered electric generating facilities. It also includes facilities repowered to add 25 MW of capacity or more.

There are five phases of the Article 10 process: pre-application, application, administrative hearings, siting board decision, and compliance. This workshop will review and discuss each step and how the public is involved at each stage.

Paul Agresta, General Counsel of the NYS Board on Electric Generation Siting and the Environment as well as General Counsel of the NYS Public Service Commission and the NYS Department of Public Service, and James Denn, Public Information Coordinator of the NYS Board on Electric Generation Siting and the Environment and Director of Public Affairs for the NYS Public Service Commission and the NYS Department of Public Service will be presenting and available to answer questions related to Article 10.

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Electronic versions appear in full color!

Computers and Your 2017 Town Budget

As towns work on their 2017 town budgets, this is a good time to review your inventory of computers and consider which of your computers are most in need of replacement. It is always easier to replace a computer while it is still working, rather than after it has failed.

An additional point of consideration as you review your computer inventory is to consider what version of Windows the computers are running, if they are Windows computers, as many are. Small towns and villages tend to use computers until they can't be used any more, which means there are many old computers still in use in local government. This means that there are many computers out there still running Windows Vista, which was released seven years ago, in October of 2009.

Mainstream support of Windows Vista ended in April of 2012, and extended support will end next April 2017, which means that Microsoft will be ending the release of security patches for Vista.

Any computer old enough to be running Windows Vista is most likely no longer a good candidate for upgrade to a newer version of Windows, and your municipality may wish to consider replacement instead. Keep in mind, if you are replacing an older computer, not all new computers have the necessary connections to use your old hardware such as monitors, printers, and scanners, and newer versions of Windows may not have the drivers and software available to make older hardware work, even if it can be physically connected. As a result, purchase of a new computer may make it necessary to buy other hardware as well. Also keep in mind that software currently in use may not necessarily install or run on a new computer, and that's if you can still find the installation disks from the original purchase and installation.