

Minutes of Meeting
North Shore Council of Governments
Wednesday, August 21, 2024, 7:00 p.m.
West Monroe Town Hall
46 County Route 11
West Monroe, New York

Attending:

Central Square: Randy House, Mudd Murphy

Constantia: Richard (Rip) Colesante, Dan Poné, Frank Tomaino

West Monroe: Mike Hickey, Jesse Green, Dale Maher, Vern Sundet, Dean Gass (codes)

NorCOG staff: Paul M. Baxter, Heidi Tompkins

Tug Hill Commission: Katie Malinowski, Matt Johnson

Other attendance:

Chris Centner, Caughdenoy Fire Department

John Commisso, Central Square Fire Department

Rod Coffey

Dennis Crowell, Hastings Fire Department

Kristina Donegan, West Monroe Fire Department

Dave Hanson, West Monroe Fire Department

Aaron Hawkins, West Monroe Fire Department

Joan Hilton, West Monroe Fire Department

James Jock, West Monroe Fire Department

Don LaRock, West Monroe Fire Department

Ben Maher, West Monroe Fire Department

John Mura

John Purdy, town of Cicero

Timothy Tolson, Constantia Fire Department

Austin Wheelock, Operation Oswego County

Meeting called to order at 7:00 p.m. and attendees were introduced.

Proposed changes to fire brigade standards: The first item under discussion was the proposed changes to fire brigade standards which, if adopted, have the potential for severe negative consequences for area fire departments. Among them, Dave Hanson mentioned a three year certification for members, including a physical abilities test, and required definition of job roles. Also mentioned were increased requirements for gear replacement, apparatus replacements, and increased cost of firefighter physicals, and impacts on volunteers as equipment operators, including age limits. Dave noted that New York State PESH (Public Employees Safety and Health) follows federal OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health) guidelines. Significant increases of time and expenses are predicted for development of written policies and overall recordkeeping. Randy noted that some local fire departments already have fire line secretaries; this would increase the workload and likely, the expense of supporting this function. Austin noted that the change in standards would also double the length of the firefighter basic training course from 150 hours to 300 hours.

Dale suggested that we flood those with authority to make these changes with letters. At the request of the group, Katie will develop a draft letter outlining concerns by the end of next week.

Related, in terms of a changing regulatory environment affecting emergency services: North Shore Ambulance recently closed its doors, affecting not just Constantia and Cleveland, but the southeast quadrant of Oswego County. Frank reported that Menter Ambulance is serving Constantia and Cleveland in the short term, while the town explored longer-term options, including McFee and Vineall. A plus for Menter is that Menter would not be looking for financial support from the town, while the other options range upward to \$330,000 a year.

Wetlands: Paul provided an introduction to the subject of the proposed changes in the regulation of wetlands in New York State. More stringent standards are already being exercised. Between this and what DEC (New York State Department of Environmental Conservation) characterizes as more accurate mapping, the area of wetlands affected would almost double, increasing by one million acres over the 1.2 million acres currently under regulation. Matt reported that smaller wetlands previously not regulated would now be regulated.

West Monroe supervisor Dale Maher noted that 95% of the town of West Monroe is either regulated wetlands or adjacent, in buffer zones or 'check zones.' West Monroe codes officer Dean Gass noted that a small finger of wetlands can result in an entire parcel made subject to wetlands restrictions. As with the change in fire brigade standards, Dale suggested letters to legislators and those promoting the increased standards. Dean noted that he had been in touch with Assembly Minority Leader William Barclay's office regarding the topic.

NorCOG chair Rip Colesante proposed that NorCOG should invite a DEC representative to a future NorCOG meeting.

Operation Oswego County: Austin Wheelock made a presentation about Operation Oswego County and the county industrial development agency's efforts. Roots of this effort date back to 1950 with a focus in the city of Oswego; in the 1960s the effort broadened to take in all of Oswego county. A housing study for the county is currently being undertaken by the MRB Group (the same group doing the recent economic development study for NorCOG), with an estimated completion date of February or March 2025. The Micron project is expected to result in increased demands for housing as it develops.

Tug Hill report: Regarding New York State Route 49 and the bridge closure in West Monroe, Katie reported that an RFP has been issued. On Micron, the environmental evaluation has pushed the project's timeline back. There is nothing new concerning state Wildlife Management Areas and reimbursement to local governments. There is nothing new concerning the Oneida Lake Nine Element (9E) study.

North Shore rails-trails: Efforts on this have been delayed by seeing what other actions might be taking place within the corridor. There is a possibility of a wastewater trunk line being developed on the west side. ATVs use is a dynamic situation. Dale and Vern advocated a need for basic maintenance regardless, and that a support letter be sent to Oswego County supporting that. Dale noted that the trail had not been maintained for four years.

Circuit rider transition: Things are moving forward to have Heidi on board by the end of 2024.

Economic development: An incomplete follow-up item from the North Shore economic study is a municipality-by-municipality identification of developable parcels of various sizes for various purposes. Tug Hill is ready to help each town and village with this as desired by each town and village.

Next meeting date, location, agenda items: The group decided to meet next in October unless needed earlier.

Tourism: Rod brought up the subject of tourism, and noted the need for something to act as a gateway to the North Shore. He suggested signage, and sooner rather than later; and development of branding and marketing of the North Shore identity, with consistent fonts and colors.

The meeting adjourned at 9:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted



Paul M. Baxter
Municipal Management Consultant
North Shore Council of Governments

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