

Joseph Wetmore
Town Board Member Report
March 2025

New York Association of Town's 2025 Annual Conference (NYAOT)
Monday, February 17, 2025

Opening General Session for all Conference Attendees

Keynote Speakers Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer; New York State Attorney General Letitia James; and New York State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli
Welcoming Remarks: Christopher A. Koetzle, Executive Director, NYAOT

Valuing Renewable Energy Projects and Negotiating PILOTs

Daniel Spitzer, Amy D'Ambrogio, Henry Zomerfeld, Hodgson Russ LLP

The continued growth of renewable project development across the state creates opportunities for communities who are eligible under RPTL 487 to enter into PILOT agreements. This session will discuss the state assessment model under RPTL 575-b for renewable projects, the RPTL 487 exemption, and PILOT agreements for renewable projects.

Fiscal Oversight Responsibilities of Town Officers and Employees Part 1

Dan Acquilano, Division of Local Government and School Accountability, OSC and Katie Hodgdon, Association Counsel, NYAOT

Both the newly minted and veteran town officer know that there are many moving parts that work together to ensure that the town's financial responsibilities are completed efficiently and in compliance with the law. Like a well-oiled machine, town officers have individual statutory and delegated financial responsibilities and must perform their fiscal duties individually as one part of the machine and in a way that, taken with the other components (town officials), makes the machine, ahem, town government, work as efficiently and smoothly as possible. Each component - that is, each officer's responsibilities - is essential to the smooth running of town government. This course will provide an overview of the fiscal responsibilities associated with town government and then provide an in-depth analysis of the roles of the town board, the town supervisor, the town comptroller and the town budget officer.

Fiscal Oversight Responsibilities of Town Officers and Employees Part 2

Dan Acquilano, Division of Local Government and School Accountability, OSC; and Katie Hodgdon, Association Counsel, NYAOT

This course is a continuation of the discussion of the fiscal roles and responsibilities of town officers, with a specific focus on the roles of the town clerk, collecting officer, highway superintendent and assessor. Questions are encouraged!

Improving the Effectiveness of the Governing Boards' Audit of Claims

William Naylor, Division of Local Government and School Accountability, OSC

This session will assist members of the governing board in establishing an effective and efficient claims processing system. A well-designed system ensures proper use of municipal resources, provides local officials with useful information, and complies with all applicable laws and regulations.

Ask the OSC Auditors

William Naylor & Joseph Testa, Division of Local Government and School Accountability, OSC
Have an accounting question? Want to hear some audit stories? Or maybe you have a follow-up question for OSC from another session? This session will allow town officials to ask the OSC staff questions in an open forum.

NYAOT 2025 Annual Conference

Tuesday, February 18, 2025

Annual Business Meeting

Keynote Speaker: Governor Kathy Hochul



Please note this major scheduling change from past annual meetings and join us for a Tuesday morning Annual Business Meeting to conduct association business, such as electing officers, adopting our 2025 legislative platform, hear from the NYAOT Executive Director Christopher A. Koetzle on the goals and forecast for the Association in its advocacy and member services.

Skills That Make Great Board Members

Paula Gilbert, Local Government Specialist, Division of Local Government Services, NYS DOS

What makes a great land use board member? This course examines some of the necessary skills needed for new members and should serve as a refresher for more seasoned members alike. Topics include board procedures and applicable laws to more practical matters, including conducting site visits, working with consultants, avoiding ex parte communications, and working with the public. How to build your technical

knowledge and find assistance when needed, as well as using the comprehensive plan for your decisions, will also be discussed.

Renewable Energy Development and the Role of Local Governments

Moderator: Sarah Brancatella, Deputy Director, NYAOT

Panelists: Sarah Crowell, Program Manager at ORES; Deb Peck Kelleher, Deputy Director, ACENY; Matt Nelligan, New Yorkers for Affordable Energy; Chris Koetzle, Executive Director, New York Association of Towns; Steve Broderick, Supervisor, Town of Lewiston; and Mark Richardson, US Light Energy

Love it or hate it, renewable energy development is a hot topic in New York. With so many different stakeholders and viewpoints, open conversation between interested parties is more important than ever as the state continues to implement and develop policies. This panel discussion brings individuals representing diverse interests together to talk about the role local governments have under existing rules and what the future could hold.

Subverting the Dominant Paradigm: Vision-led Planning that Prioritizes People not Cars and Transferable Approaches from European Cities

Paul Curtis, Director of Transport and Mobility Research and Development, SLR Consulting and Ian Todreas, Head of Sustainability Solutions, SLR Consulting

For the past several decades, planners and policymakers have dutifully built cities and towns by predicting transportation capacity and then providing the infrastructure to accommodate it. The result? Sprawling landscapes dominated by motor vehicles that deliver traffic congestion, unhealthy air quality, inequitable access to jobs and amenities, increasing greenhouse gas emissions, and dwindling biodiversity. Are we doomed to repeat these mistakes? Perhaps not. Over the past several years, an emergent movement is gaining traction in Europe and other places that turns the “predict-and-provide” mindset on its head. Sometimes referred to as “vision and validate,” forward-thinking planners and policymakers are placemaking by starting with a goal-focused vision of results and lifestyle and building to that, accordingly. The result is more equitable, climate-resilient, mobility-focused communities and even regional and national policies codifying the process. Can this work in the U.S. as well? Join us as we present the origin story of “vision and validate,” its contrasts to “predict-and-provide,” its successes and lessons learned in Europe and developing countries, and its potential applications in the U.S.

Can I Delete That? Social Media, Public Officials and the First Amendment

Sarah Brancatella, Deputy Director, NYAOT

Social media can be a great resource to stay in touch with people and share information, but it can also be a space where harassing and vitriolic speech thrives. It’s well-established that deleting comments from a municipal page can be a constitutional mess, but what about a town officer blocking someone or deleting comments on a social media page they consider private? In March 2024, the United States Supreme Court issued an opinion in *Lindke v. Freed* with a new test to determine when a public official’s private social media page becomes a government problem. This class goes over the decision, reviews how the *Lindke* standard has been applied since March, and offers some practical tips for consideration.

Q&A with the New York Association of Towns’ Staff

Christopher A. Koetzle, Executive Director; Sarah Brancatella, Deputy Director; Lori Mithen-Demasi, Chief Counsel; Katie Hodgdon, Association Counsel; Dana Campbell, Counsel, NYAOT

This session offers an opportunity to ask the staff from the New York Association of Towns your questions.

Follow-up items:

Policies required by NY State (we have all of these)

- Code of Ethics – General Municipal Law §806
- Deposits and Investments – General Municipal Law §39
- Procurement – General Municipal Law §104(b)
- Workplace Violence Prevention – Labor Law, Article 2 §27-b
- Sexual Harassment Prevention – Executive Law, Article 15
- Breach Notification – State Technology Law §208
- COVID 19

Recommended policies:

- Travel
- Cash Receipts/Petty Cash
- Vehicle Use
- Cell Phone/ Electronic Devices
- Computer and Internet Use
- Private, Personal and Sensitive Information
- Credit Card Use
- Capital (Fixed) Assets
- Gasoline and Fuel Usage
- How verbal quotes are documented

Check with the school district to see what is in their policy book. The State has recently reviewed the policy books for all the schools.

We should establish a section of the town website for Town policies. This would make them easily accessible to everyone on staff.

Social media concerns:

This is an area that is changing quickly. Recommendations are that elected officials make a clear distinction between personal/campaign pages and official pages. It is easy to blend these two together. Problems arise if you try to delete comments on a page that is being used as part of your official duties. You should post on your page “All posting on this page are my personal opinions” and that you set up a separate page if you want a page that you use to make announcements as part of your official duties.

Reserve Funds:

We have reserve funds that have been sitting idle for many years. We have reserve funds that are not in our policy dated May 18, 2016 (Highway DB and Parks and Trails). None of the funds are at their optimal

level, as defined in the policy. This policy should be reviewed, and funds should be reworked so they are reflecting the needs of the town.

Educating the Public:

We spend a lot of time educating the Planning Board on how to review a proposed project, but very little on educating the public. If we had a place on our website that explained the basics: here is the Town Code, the project has to follow this or get a variance; the Planning Board needs to hear how this will affect you and your property; what do you know about the property that may not be obvious this time of year?; etc. In other words, if we help the public understand how to express their concerns, they will help the Planning Board better understand how to shape the proposed project. It's a win-win for everyone. The Planning Board gets better information, the public feels heard, and the project is better in the end.

Smart Growth:

The issue with the smart growth movement is that it focuses on urban areas, and expects rural areas to mirror these ideas on a smaller scale. This does not work. Nodes do not replicate urban areas, and will never have the population to even remotely do so. Nodes spread throughout the countryside create the urban issues of individual cars. We will not solve the urban transportation issues until we find a way to develop the rural areas that do not result in lots of individual cars driving into the city.

Yellow Barn Solar (CS Energy) Public hearing

Thursday, February 20·6:00 – 8:00pm



Attended the second half of this public hearing.

Planning Board

Monday, February 24·6:30 – 8:30pm

*Presentation from the Parks, Recreation, and Trails Working Group on what they are working on and how to work more closely with the Planning Board

*2661 N. Triphammer Road Tax Parcel # 44.-1-25 Request for extension on subdivision approval for Minor Subdivision of lands. Approved

*Site Plan Review of a proposed 149' monopole cellular communication tower and associated facility located at 1767 E. Shore Drive. Approved

Parks, Recreation, and Trails Working Group (WG)

Wednesday, March 5·9:30 – 10:30am

- *Myers Road Greenway: WG decided to only invite the Town Engineer, Dave Herrick from TG Miller, to write proposal for the Myers Road Greenway feasibility study.
- *Steve will check with TC Transportation Council regarding the status of funding for the feasibility study for the Town Center which could possibly be added onto the Myers Rd scope of work in the future.
- *Comprehensive Trails Plan Invitation to Submit – A list of five consulting firms has been developed.
- *Rural Beautification Grant – A proposal for a second round of banners on Route 34B was submitted. Pat expects we will hear in June.
- *Steve presented to the PB on February 24th and the WG's plans seemed well received. The PB has already demonstrated their interest in engaging the WG when there might be implications for the trail.
- *Easements – the process of requesting, negotiating, and finalizing trail easements has begun. This will be a vital and ongoing focus for the WG. The Town Board would need to formally accept any easement. In order to have a successful funding proposal, the Town must know it has access to the land (ownership or right of way) and have a cost estimate for the work. Information on existing easements is in the Google folder. The Town Clerk has been helpful in providing supporting documents.
- *Steve will formally submit his resignation from the WG due to moving out of the town. He expects to continue to participate as a guest after a 3-week transition. Sharon will update the WG Contact Info
- *Pat will check if rules allow staff to be chair and if there is a limit to the number of committee members (Town policy says Pat should be Chair).
- *Members are looking for new members to expand the group.

Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council, Inc.

Tuesday, March 18·10:00 – 11:30am

- *Director's Summary – Adam Effler
- *Treasurer's Audit and Finance Report
- *Lake Level Report
- *Venice Preserve, Opportunity for OLWMC Ownership and Stewardship
- *Watershed Inspection Monthly Report
- *Approval of Resolution 01-25, RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE TRANSFER OF THE MANDAN (VENICE) PROPERTY FROM THE NATURE CONSERVANCY AND ALLOW THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO ACT AS SIGNATORY FOR ALL REQUIRED CLOSING DOCUMENTS
- *Owasco Flats Retention Basins Project Update
- *NYSDEC FL Hub Update
- *Owasco Watershed Lake Association Update
- *Cornell Cooperative Extension Update