

Minutes of Meeting

North Shore/Salmon Rivers Councils of Governments (COG)

Thursday, May 29, 2019 7:00 p.m.

Parish Village Gym – 2938 East Main Street, Parish, New York

Attending:

Constantia: Rip Colesante, town councilman, NorCOG chairman

Orwell: William Potter, town supervisor, SRCG chairman

Parish (village): Jaqueline Murphy, village trustee

West Monroe: Vern Sundet, supervisor, NorCOG fiscal agent

NorCOG/SRCG staff: Paul Baxter

New York State Tug Hill Commission: Katie Malinowski, executive director; Jean Waterbury, Associate Director of Community and Regional Projects

Meeting convened at 7:00 p.m.

Financial reports: Fiscal agent Vern Sundet will forward a report to the membership after the meeting, NS/SR staff Paul Baxter will contact the Salmon Rivers fiscal agent and will forward the report to the membership upon its availability. The Salmon Rivers fiscal agent is the village of Parish and they will be preparing an annual report following the close of their fiscal year.

Major expenses in each COG are the routine expenses of the annual contract between the COG and the New York State Tug Hill Commission; COG co-sponsorship of the annual NYS Tug Hill Commission Local Government Conference; COG web hosting for participating municipalities and domain name renewals.

This is the first meeting of the calendar year for each of the COGs, and usually at this meeting, the COGs would be asked to consider a new **contract with the Tug Hill Commission** for the new state fiscal year starting April 1. Tug Hill executive director had an **alternative for the COGs to consider**. In past years, a contract amount was established to cover incidental expenses such as mileage, cellphone, office supplies and computer equipment where such expenses were identifiable as circuit rider expenses. That amount was split between North Shore and Salmon Rivers in proportion to the number of municipalities in each. That amount was also typically at least slightly greater than the sum of anticipated expenses, and any amount in excess of those *actual* total expenses at the end of the fiscal year became part of the end-of-year agency fiscal closeout and did not accrue to any further availability to the Commission.

Things have been handled in a different way with the other COGs in the Tug Hill region, who pay the incidental expenses of the circuit rider directly, paid for from COG member dues. There is more work for the COGs – more checks to be written, and additional auditing/expense oversight responsibilities, but the advantage is that the amount expended precisely matches the actual total, not the estimated total which may (and sometimes has) exceeded the actual amount. After discussion, those present decided to try direct payment, with expenses to be split proportionate to the total number of municipalities in each COG (4/9 to NorCOG; 5/9 to SRCG). Expenses would be run by the COG chairs for audit before payment by the COG fiscal agent. The Tug Hill Commission will cover travel card expenses incurred thus far in the state fiscal year for rental vehicles and gasoline purchase. The COGs would pay at the IRS mileage rate. Paul would prepare one unified statement of travel for the time period and send an invoice to each of the COG chairs for their review prior to forwarding to each fiscal agent for payment.

Web sites: A goal in both North Shore and Salmon Rivers has been to update the COG and hosted municipality web sites from the original hand-coded HTML format to a more modern and easily maintained framework, preferably accommodating multiple user accounts to facilitate direct maintenance of the web site without

compromising security. NS/SR staff Paul Baxter reported that this has been mostly implemented, with both COGs and all the hosted municipalities save the towns of Amboy and Parish now on a WordPress-based framework.

To get this underway, Paul signed up for a WordPress hosting account that he could use to learn WordPress and then prototype the new web sites, and implement the transition. Paul locked in the introductory rate for three years, and after discussion, North Shore and Salmon Rivers both agreed to pay one-third each of the hosting account, at significant savings to the COGs. The existing arrangement cost each COG over \$200 a year for the hosting services; the new arrangement will cost each COG approximately \$40 a year (rising to approximately \$80 after the introductory rate concludes).

Domain name renewal costs will be unaffected by the change in web hosting.

Election of Officers: North Shore representatives present had a consensus to maintain Richard Colesante as chair and Vern Sundet as fiscal officer. The vice chair has been Ken Sherman, who will be leaving office as mayor of member municipality Central Square, as he is not running for re-election and will leave office at the end of June. North Shore decided to leave the vice chair office vacant following Mr. Sherman's departure until village elections take place with potential new candidates available to fill the position at a future meeting

Salmon River representatives had a consensus to maintain the current officers of William Potter as chair, Aaron Walter as vice chair, and the village of Parish as fiscal officer.

Old Business:

Contractor: North Shore and Salmon Rivers continued discussions on **implementing a contractor to assist in meeting coverage.** Paul will work on specifics of implementation and will forward to the COG chairs for review and subsequent distribution to the larger group. The COG chairs would also participate with Paul in selection of possible contractors. Target is to have a contractor in place by early September, in advance of the town budget cycle, when things are always busier, with special meetings.

New Business:

Local Leaders Survey: Tug Hill Commission Katie Malinowski discussed the Tug Hill region landowners survey, last conducted in 2009. Katie requested consideration of North Shore and Salmon Rivers co-sponsorship of the 2019 survey, which would then include a further breakdown of results to the COG level. **North Shore and Salmon Rivers each agreed to participate in the funding of the 2019 landowners survey at the level of \$1000 each.**

Other: Member municipalities present updated the group on current activities in each town and village.

Next Meeting: The last several North Shore and Salmon Rivers meetings have been joint meetings due to discussions about implementing a contractor and changes in web site arrangements which made joint discussion an advantage. **The next meeting of North Shore and Salmon Rivers will be individual by each COG,** which are easier to coordinate without conflicts with each municipal meeting schedule.

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

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