

**River Area Council of Governments  
November 16, 2021**

**Members present:** S. Burto, B. Ferguson, W. McIlroy, R. Schell, P. Smith,  
M. Souva, S. Storms, C. Terrillion, T. Widrick,  
and J. Zando

Others: M. Dietrich, J. Harvill, and K. Malinowski

Chairman McIlroy called the remote meeting to order at 6:05pm.  
Motion by J. Zando, seconded by S. Storms to approve the minutes of  
September 21, 2021. All in favor.

**LED Lighting Update**

Wendel is conducting kick-off meetings. Construction is scheduled to  
begin in the V/Carthage next week.

B. Ferguson reported that the Town of Champion worked with National  
Grid to upgrade the street lights in Great Bend. The street lights were changed  
in September 2020. The Town has seen a seventy percent (70%) savings.

**Tug Hill Commission Update**

Jennifer Harvill was introduced as the new director of projects. She  
advised that the THC Local Government Conference will be held in March 2022  
at Turning Stone Resort Casino.

J. Harvill reported that THC has contracted with Laird Petrie, formerly with  
the Office of the State Comptroller, to provide training and guidance with a  
number of fiscal issues including AUDs, budgeting, capital project planning, and  
dissolutions. Communities seeking to utilize this service should contact THC.

K. Malinowski shared information regarding a study on the economic and  
fiscal impact from snowmobiling for the area including the Counties of Lewis,  
Jefferson, Oswego, and Oneida. Over 2,416 surveys were completed by  
persons living in 789 unique zip codes.

W. McIlroy questioned if a similar survey will be done in regards to four-  
wheelers. K. Malinowski responded that a survey will be conducted in Lewis  
County.

**Circuit Rider Report**

M. Dietrich reported that the Friends of the Black River have mapped  
historical sites identified by the THC intern between Lowville and Castorland.  
The research identified a Native American tribe that formerly overwintered in  
Castorland where the Beaver River meets the Black River. The village clerk has  
contacted the tribal chief who has shown interest in visiting the area.

M. Dietrich reported that he continues to work on the T/Wilna website and has received a request from the T/Denmark to update their website.

Clean Energy communities are working with Matt Price to meet requirements and submit grant applications.

R. Schell reported that the T/Lowville is updating their comprehensive plan.

### **New Business**

Members discussed a request from the T/New Bremen to join RACOG and to participate in the RACOG Cooperative ZBA. S. Burto advised that the RACOG Cooperative ZBA is specific to the five (5) member communities who do not seek to increase the membership. State statute provides for three- or five-member zoning boards of appeals. S. Burto encouraged the Lewis County RACOG members to consider a cooperative ZBA for those communities.

M. Dietrich reported that conversations with Cassandra Buell suggest that T/New Bremen may not be interested in joining RACOG if they can not be part of the zoning board of appeals. Motion by S. Burto, seconded by R. Schell to approve RACOG membership for the T/New Bremen pending approval by the New Bremen town board. All in favor.

M. Dietrich discussed the operating procedure of one of the larger COG's. They have two annual dinner meetings and an executive board that meets every other month to conduct regular business. Chairman McIlroy requested that M. Dietrich send out an email to seek opinion.

S. Burto reported that NYCOM will conduct their annual meeting online on December 8, 2021.

Motion by J. Zando, seconded by B. Ferguson to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 6:40pm.

*Christina Vargulick*  
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RACOG Secretary