

# Municipal News

A publication of Southern Tier West Regional Planning & Development Board's  
Center for Local Government & Community Services

APRIL 2007



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Center For Regional Excellence  
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## A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

The Staff and Board of Southern Tier West would like to offer our congratulations to those elected to a village office. Whether you are newly elected or are returning to office, always remember you're not alone in dealing with municipal issues. There are many resources available to assist you with the problems at hand.

First and foremost are the other Village officials in your county or throughout the state. They may have found the answer and most are very willing to discuss it with you. A great place to meet the local officials is at a county municipal association meeting. Most counties have a municipal officials association such as the Cattaraugus County Town Supervisors Association. Attend the meetings - - it's amazing what you will learn!

A great source of support and information is through the state and national associations such as Association of Towns or the NYS Association of City and Village Clerks. Also available to assist you are the state agencies. Just because they are "the state" doesn't mean they are not willing to help you.

Another option is to call our office. We have a wealth of information to help you. If we don't know the answers, we have the contact information for the person who does have the answer. We are very willing to meet with you one-on-one in your municipality over coffee or a Board meeting to discuss town or village issues. Of course anyone is very welcome to visit us here.

Lastly, take advantage of the training programs offered throughout the year. They are created for YOU. Southern Tier West coordinates and/or presents many programs. We also help promote programs throughout the region. If you ever have any questions, don't hesitate to contact us at 716-945-5301 or by email: [eweishan@southerntierwest.org](mailto:eweishan@southerntierwest.org).

Best Wishes -- Eileen

## REMINDER

**STW Local Government Conference  
WEDNESDAY, MAY 9, 2007**

**Register at [www.southerntierwest.org](http://www.southerntierwest.org)  
or call 716-945-5301x207**

**Credits available for CEO, Justices,  
Credits available for CEO's, Justices  
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**Serving Local Governments of Allegany, Cattaraugus, and Chautauque Counties**

# Municipal News

## Contact Information

If you would like more information on any of Southern Tier West's programs, contact:

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## ✓ THE RECORDS YOU PLUG INTO THE WALL

By Geof Huth, Director Government Records Services, NYS Archives

People change in mysterious and unexpected ways, just as the world changes around them. In high school in the late 1970s, I used to work in a college library. At the time, libraries had to put aside large expanses of space for their card catalogs. It's hard to remember how valuable card catalogs were to us at the time. We had to pull each drawer out of a wall of drawers, find what we wanted, and put the drawer back. It was tedious, but we didn't realize the tedium at the time. When computerized catalogs came into libraries usually sometime in the 1980s, many people reacted to them negatively, imagining all that they would lose: the ability to search at random, the pleasant physical activity of pulling drawers out and returning them to the slots. People grouched a bit about the move to electronic library catalogs, but those complaints subsided quickly—because the computer found stuff for us faster and better. Without knowing it, we had taken the first step into our digital future, one that is now our continuing present.

Even in the early 1990s, though, the digital world was not a reality in most villages and probably some cities. As I traveled about my business fifteen years ago, the majority of local governments in the state still hadn't incorporated computers into the workplace. Now, I run into few municipalities, even the smallest of them, without a computer of some sort. This change has usually improved the way cities and villages conduct their work, but it also has complicated the process of managing records for many of them.

We have now had computers in our offices for so long that there are few of us who fear those beasts, at least for our regular work. We know how to use our computer to write e-mails, fill out forms, and create minutes. A little of the trepidation about computers has evaporated, but not all of it. Since few of us in records management work

in information technology, we sometimes think we cannot manage electronic records ourselves. What we really need to understand, though, is that each of us has developed some skills in managing electronic records. We simply need to exercise those skills and get our hands dirty—just as we have already done with paper records and with microfilm. At a basic level, we need to know how to file, provide access, retain, and preserve these new records.

The first issue is filing, and there are two basic rules we need to use for filing electronic records: make sure the system is logical and make sure people in your town can gain access on their own (when appropriate). Filing is almost easy for us, because most of what we need to do is to replicate filing systems we have already designed for paper records. The trick is that the machines we are working in now think perfectly logically, so we have to conform to their thinking. The simplest way of understanding it is to know that files that you want to see lined up together should start with the same words. This means you should call all your minutes "Minutes," rather than calling one set "Council Minutes," another "City Council Minutes," and yet another "Minutes of the Council." Then if you want these minutes to line up in chronological order, use a form of the date that the computer will always be able to convert into a logical sequence, such as "2006.01.01, 2006.06.12, 2006.12.31."

The hardest part about filing is actually doing it. Most of us tend to allow our files to fall into a pile on our hard drives, without moving them to a space that is backed up regularly and accessible to those who need to use the records. For internal documents, it is easy enough to have your information technology folks set up a shared

**Continued on page 3**

## ✓ THE RECORDS YOU PLUG INTO THE WALL CONTINUED

folder to store documents that anyone in the town can see and use. For external documents, like minutes, posting them to a website can reduce the number of times you have to pull out a set of minutes for a citizen.

After we file electronic records, we often forget about retention. Electronic records are just like paper records as far as retention is concerned. Some we keep forever, and others we keep for a very short time. The secret to good retention practices for e-records is good filing practices. If you file your records by series and year, then you can implement retention by series and year, instead of at the file level. And this will save you much time. At the end of the year, all you will need to do is review your retention schedule and delete those files that have come to the end of their useful life. There are many document management products now that can help control retention for you, but these are more likely to be used only in larger municipalities.

The final problem with electronic records is preservation. It would take too long to give much useful advice here about this complicated issue, but there are a couple of basic principles you should follow. First, make sure that you create records in common file formats. That increases the chances that the file format will last a while and that people will be able to open it. If, instead, you start using a file format used by only a single start-up company, the chances are high that you will be left in the end holding a bag of unreadable files. Second, make sure you still have the ability to open and read the files you are saving. As your work changes, you might start creating records with an entirely different software package, one that cannot read the files you created previously. Don't let that happen to you. The preservation of electronic records requires eternal vigilance.

I've only touched on the issues surrounding electronic records. The State Archives holds many workshops across the state each year on managing electronic records, and our regional advisory officers can give you the benefit of their expertise as well. We have also begun to hold full-day electronic records symposiums across the state to help people learn much about electronic records in a short period of time. So if you're having trouble with some electronic records issue, be sure to contact us for help. ✓

## ✓ 2010 CENSUS LOCAL UPDATE OF CENSUS ADDRESSES (LUCA)

The Local Update of Census Addresses program, also known as LUCA, is a decennial census geographic partnership program that will allow the Census Bureau to benefit from local knowledge in developing its Master Address File (MAF) for the 2010 Census. Tribal and local

governments can contribute to a more complete and accurate census for their community by reviewing and commenting on the list of housing unit and group quarter's addresses that the Census Bureau will use to deliver questionnaires within their community. ✓

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## Discover Southwest NY.com

DiscoverSouthwestNY.com is a web-based regional marketing tool providing information on "everything Southern Tier." DiscoverSouthwestNY.com provides information on Business, Living, and Recreation in Allegany, Cattaraugus, and Chautauqua Counties and combines interactive digital photography with maps to create geographically referenced virtual tours of the region. To find out more, contact DiscoverSouthwestNY.com at (716) 945-5301 or visit their website at [www.discoversouthwestny.com](http://www.discoversouthwestny.com).

### TRAINING SCHEDULE

**Code Enforcement:** For more information go to: <http://www.dos.state.ny.us/code/netsched1.html>

April 24-26 Inspection Procedures, Southern Tier West Offices

May 8-9 Existing Code, Erie County

**Advanced Municipal Bookkeeping:**

May 22-24 at Southern Tier West. Register on line at <http://www.osc.state.ny.us/localgov/training/advreg.pdf>

**Records Management:** Call 847-7903 for locations and registration

April 17 "Preservation of Historical Records", Lockport Town Hall

May 15 "Electronic Document Imaging", West Seneca Town Hall

**State Comptrollers Office Downlinks:** Register with site location -

May 22 Comptrollers Downlink: Accountability for Justices and Court Clerks

**Statewide Training:**

April 26 NYCOM Village New Officials Workshop, Syracuse

April 29 - May 2 New York Town Clerks Association Conference, Rochester

May 16-17 Main Street Economic Development Conference, Syracuse

May 16-18 Town Finance & Management School by Comptrollers Office and Assn of Towns, Rochester

June 4-6 Highway School, Ithaca

June 10-13 NY Association of Local Records Officers School, Hunter Mountain

June 10-13 NYCOM Annual Meeting & Training School, Saratoga Springs 



### CAPSULES OF SUCCESS

*In this issue we highlight and applaud the Village of Sherman –*

Many of us dream of receiving all kinds of funding and accomplishing a variety of wonderful things in our town or village. More often than not the "genie from the bottle" never appears to do all of the work. Once in awhile you find a local government that seems to get it all together and get the money too!

The Village of Sherman is a case in point. I received a letter from the Sherman Village Clerk, Joann Munger, describing some of the projects and funding they have been involved with the past few years:

□ New York Main Street and New York State Restore NY grant for restoration of historic facades of several downtown buildings - \$163,200

□ Member Items for restoration work at the Yorker Museum - \$35,000

□ NeighborWorks America funding for community visioning and planning

□ Governors Office for Small Cities 2007 Grant Application

□ Dedication of Nature Trail and Play area at French Creek

□ Fund raising for Athletic Field Snack Shack

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## ✓ OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF MIND

A basic role and responsibility of government is to provide and maintain public infrastructure that includes, but is not limited to; roads, bridges, electric producing facilities and the transmission of electricity, schools, emergency services, and recreation and parks. Public infrastructure is the highway for businesses and economic development; the source for public health and environmental protection; the pipeline for prosperity; and the foundation for a good quality of life. Our local municipalities play a key role in planning, building, and maintaining this public infrastructure. There is one major source of our infrastructure that is not mentioned in the list of infrastructure above -- do you know what it is? I'll give you a hint -- you can't see it, feel it, or hear it until you need it.

Water and wastewater infrastructure systems often suffer from the "out of sight out -- of mind" syndrome. These are very critical pieces of our municipalities' capital assets that need to be well managed for efficient trouble free usage for years to come. However, there is some evidence that we are not paying as close attention to this issue as we should be. In 2005 the US Conference of Mayors completed a survey related to municipal water resources -- "aging water infrastructure" was found to be the top mayoral priority. The American Society of Civil engineers consistently awards the nations water and wastewater infrastructure a D-.

Small and large systems alike are sliding into disrepair as these assets reach the end of their useful life. Capital projects are complicated undertakings, especially in an era of decreasing funds. However, financing is just one small part of the broader picture when it comes to successfully managing any infrastructure. Building "capacity" in 3 key areas is crucial to the successful implementation of a well-developed plan. By definition of this concept "capacity" comes in three forms:

**(1) TECHNICAL CAPACITY** refers to the ability to operate and maintain infrastructure on a day-to-day basis. For example, this would be the front line workers who are in the trenches repairing water lines with ample training and a certain level of expertise being careful to follow standard operating procedures laid down by state codes.

**(2) MANAGERIAL CAPACITY** refers to the expertise of the water systems personnel to administer the systems overall operations. In this case the operator (manager) has to have an elevated level of expertise to lay out an asset management plan that includes maintenance schedules as well as cost-based analysis recommendations to the governing board.

**(3) FINANCIAL CAPACITY** refers to the financial resources and fiscal management that support the cost of operating the water system. At this stage it is critical that the fiscal managers support the asset management plan that the operator defines as necessary. In fact, in many cases it is essential that municipalities have an asset management plan to receive funding from government agencies. To take it one step further; there are many instances that bond rates are downgraded due to the neglected infrastructure, which means that you are borrowing money at higher rates to repair or replace outdated infrastructure.

In conclusion, a proactive approach in caring for our municipalities infrastructure is a good way to look out for the best interest of the constituents well-being as well as the tax burden and other financial implications that derive from neglected infrastructure. ✓

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# Municipal News

## Southern Tier West Homepage

Southern Tier West's homepage is [www.southerntierwest.org](http://www.southerntierwest.org).

The page describes Southern Tier West's organization, programs, activities, and events and will contain data and links to other useful and interesting sites. We encourage you to visit our homepage and make suggestions for improving the page so that we can make it more useful to you in the future.

### ✓ ARC WORKSHOPS

ARC application deadline is Friday, June 1, 2007! In order to make it more advantageous for communities and non-profits to submit an application for Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) funding consideration, Southern Tier West in cooperation with the NYS Department of State (NYSDOS) will be changing the project application process and materials for FY2008 ARC Area Development Program. Rather than one application, there will be the submission of a Pre-Application and a Final Application. The Pre-Application will consist of a brief 2 - 4 page project profile in a format provided by Southern Tier West. The format for the Final Application has also been changed. However, ARC Guidelines Have Not Changed. Eligible applicants include any municipality located within the three-county area; and government, education, health, or non-profit entity serving areas within the Southern Tier West region (Chautauqua, Cattaraugus, Allegany Counties). Projects must serve areas within the Southern Tier West region. Apply for a maximum of 50% of the total project cost up to \$150,000 in ARC funding.

ARC Grant Application Workshops have been scheduled for the times and dates. These workshops are appropriate for all potential project applicants including: Local Governments, Educators, Health Care Professionals, Non-profits, Grant Writing Consultants and Engineering Firms.

For more information contact Ginger G. Malak at Southern Tier West, 716-945-5301 x 201 or E-mail: [gmalak@southerntierwest.org](mailto:gmalak@southerntierwest.org)



### WORKSHOP TIMES AND LOCATIONS

#### **Allegany County**

**Tuesday, April 17, 2007**

10:00 am – 12 noon

Cornell Cooperative Extension  
5435A County Road 48  
Belmont, New York

#### **Cattaraugus County**

**Tuesday, April 17, 2007**

7:00 pm – 9:00 pm

Center for Regional Excellence  
4039 Route 219, Suite 200  
Salamanca, New York

#### **Chautauqua County**

**Wednesday, April 18, 2007**

10:00 am – 12 noon

Cornell Cooperative Extension  
3542 Turner Road  
Jamestown, New York



## ✓ YOU CAN SELL IT ON e-BAY

The Southern Tier West Regional Planning and Development Board's mission is to help coordinate and enhance planning and development activities in Allegany, Cattaraugus, and Chautauqua Counties so as to promote social, physical, and economic development in these counties. Taking this mission to heart, we are embarking on a concept that has been proven to be successful by another county government in New York State. Southern Tier West is going to become a hosting agent on eBay for municipal governments of our region. The idea is to assist municipalities in liquidating used equipment by selling it on eBay on their behalf. Local government representatives would forward a description and digital picture of the item(s) to be sold, to Southern Tier West, who would retain a commission of twenty percent for the service provided.

Southern Tier West is modeling their eBay service after a successful program provided by Oneida County, who has offered hosting services to its municipal governments and school districts for the past couple of years. Oneida County has found that prices received through eBay auctions are 2-3 times higher than local auctions. They also point to the fact that most of their equipment is sold to out-of-state buyers as evidence that eBay is an effective way of obtaining the best possible price for their surplus items.

May 1<sup>st</sup> is the anticipated date for this program to be offered to our municipalities. If your municipality has any questions as to the procedures of this program, you are encouraged to call Brian Paschen at (716) 945-5301 x-206 or email [bpaschen@southern-tierwest.org](mailto:bpaschen@southern-tierwest.org). ✓

## ✓ WIND ENERGY LOCAL GOVERNMENT SUPPORT PROGRAM

Southern Tier West has been working on expanding the Wind Energy Local Government Support Program to better serve the three-county area. Southern Tier West will continue to provide technical assistance and information such as sample laws and moratoriums. The education portion of the program will include smaller presentations made by local staff and continue to include the larger conferences with state and national speakers. The program is also expanding in the area of small wind system development.

Southern Tier West has been taking a proactive approach to educate municipal officials and their constituents. Since the beginning of the year, presentations have been given to clubs, organizations, and municipalities on topics including an overview of renewable energy and basics of wind energy. Other topics that will be available for presentation will include an overview of small wind installations, funding sources, and the pros and cons of wind development. Presentations can be scheduled if your community is interested in learning more about wind energy development.

Southern Tier West is actively pursuing opportunities for development of small wind systems in the three-county region. With recently announced funding from USDA Rural Development and the funds available through NYSERDA, 75-95% of the small wind system can be subsidized. This means if your average electric bill is approximately \$100 a month, the simple payback could be as little as 2 – 6 years on a system that has a lifespan of 20-years. For further information about the Southern Tier West Wind Energy Program, please contact Daniel Reynolds, Regional Environmental Analyst, Southern Tier West, (716) 945-5301 x 211. ✓

## Our Corporate Supporters



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# Municipal News

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### CAPSULES OF SUCCESS CONTINUED

And the list goes on! Congratulations to all of the hardworking people in Sherman. It's amazing what can be done with a little hardwork, dedication and cooperation.

This quote is on the Town of Sherman letterhead: "Not many of us are material for Greatness according to the general acceptance of the term, but each of us has something to give..." It's amazing what can be done and what can grow when each of us participates just a little or gives something no matter how small.

It all adds up to success in the end. 