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et cetera

A member-focused, digital round-up
of breaking news and timely updates

Calendar of Upcoming Events

2022 Annual Meeting February 20-23, 2022

VIRTUAL CONFERENCE. We recently made the difficult decision to switch from hosting an in-person, live event in New York City to a much safer all-virtual event. Dates remain the same. Registration will be done all online. Information regarding registration and the event can be found [here](#). We can't wait to see you!

Legislation at Lunch ARPA Update

The United States Treasury has issued a final rule on how ARPA funds can be used. You won't want to miss this if your town is planning on taking advantage of ARPA funding.

Join Legislative Director and Counsel Sarah Brancatella on Friday, Jan. 14 at 12 p.m. Registration is free and limited to AOT members. To register, click [here](#).

Annual Meeting & Training School will be an All-Virtual Event

Given the current surge in COVID-19 infection and hospitalization rates due to the omicron variant, the Association of Towns' executive leadership and staff have made the difficult but necessary decision to switch from an in-person event to an all-virtual event. Some important notes about what this means for you.

- Same dates – Our event will still be held Feb. 20 – 23, 2022.
- More programming – We have expanded our Zoom capabilities and will be able to offer 25 percent more classes at this year's event.
- Affordable rates - Registration rates will remain the same for last year's virtual event - \$100.
- Special rates for new officials - We will offer a Newly Elected Training School Attendee rate of \$50. (To be eligible, you must have registered and attended our 2022 Newly Elected School held last week.)
- Already registered for the in-person event? Sit tight, we have your information and we will give you a call to inquire how you'd like to proceed. If refunds need to be issued, we will issue them.
- All registration will be done online and is open now at www.nytowns.org. (PSSSST. Keep note of the email address you use to register with us – that will be your email for the event app!)
- All attendees will have access to an electronic (PDF) program and exhibitor guide.

The Annual Meeting in New York City is a special event. However, we believe holding an event that imperils the health and well-being of our members would tarnish the reputation of our Association and conference, particularly when a suitable alternative exists. Thank you for your continued dedication to public service and local government, and we hope you will join us for our virtual event.

Federal ReConnect Program Workshops

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development has announced two upcoming workshops for the ReConnect Loan and Grant Program, which "furnishes loans and grants to provide funds for the costs of construction, improvement, or acquisition of facilities and equipment needed to provide broadband service in eligible rural areas. The application window for the third round of funding is now open." The workshops will run from Jan. 18 - 20 and then Feb. 8 - 10. Each workshop contains the same material, so choose the one that fits your schedule best and feel free to explore the website for more information. Register for your preferred session here: <https://www.usda.gov/reconnect/events>

Meet the Leadership

Q&A with Association of Towns Executive Director and former North Castle Councilman Gerry Geist



Q: When did you join town government?

A: First elected in 1985, in a contest that was decided by a single vote and affirmed by a court decision.

Q: What compelled you to get involved with the Association of Towns?

A: After i won, my father, who was a former board chairman of the Westchester County Board of Legislators, told me that I should get involved with the Association and that it would provide me with the training and education and networking opportunities I needed.

Q: What has been the most rewarding part of your career as a public servant?

A: Making a difference in people's everyday lives. Things like etting roads repaired, providing better town

services including library and recreation, provided me with the most gratification. Best accomplishment was getting sewer and water to an area of town that needed it the most but was lacking the resources to make it work. Reached out to Congress and they supplied the funds.

Q: What are your favorite things to do in your spare time?

A: Travel, watch television shows -- especially anything related to the Bachelor franchise or Survivor -- and reading and exercising.

Q: What words of advice do you have for those that would like to get involved in local government?

A: We all need individuals to step up and give back to their community. The rewards of giving back to your town

enrich not only your residents who benefit from your expertise and willingness to contribute but it will make you a better person as well.

Q: What are your goals / vision for local government and/or AOT as a whole?

A: My goal is to continue the work and tradition of having AOT be a strong advocate for towns, provide exceptional training and education and look for new ways to help towns manage their affairs in a better setting to meet the needs and demands of their community.

COMP CORNER

With winter in the northeast in full force, it's a great time to once again review your practices for handling the cold, ice and snow. The basics always include dressing for conditions. Layering of clothing consisting of thinner materials always works best, with a warmer, outer shell to protect from the cold and wet. Drivers can expect mechanical failures in frigid conditions

and should have clothing and emergency equipment available. Be diligent about maintaining facility parking lots and entrances clear of ice and snow build-up. Plow, shovel and use ice-melt whenever conditions warrant. Keep parking lots well lit as winter brings decreased daylight and early darkness. Be mindful to drive defensively and maintain control under adverse conditions. When working outside, be alert for frostbite and hypothermia in yourself and your



colleagues. Maintain contact with co-workers as slips and falls are more frequent and injuries are exacerbated by the cold weather.

Lastly, look to monitor your mental health during the winter months. Seasonal affective disorder affects many of us, and may leave us feeling fatigued and depressed. Improving diet, exercising and increasing vitamin D intake helps us to get through these periods. Additional information can be viewed at the www.Compalliance.org Safety Bulletins.



Legal Hot Topic

Videoconferencing Special Legislation Update



Most towns in New York have taken advantage of the special authority to hold meetings remotely and suspend in person attendance during the COVID-19 health emergency. Originally, this authority was granted pursuant to an Executive Order that had expired, but in September 2021, legislation was adopted extending the authority until January 15, 2022. As of January 11, this has not been extended but there is legislation pending which AOT supports that would extend the authority again. We will update our members, but in the meantime, we thought it would be useful to explain what we'll call the "normal authority" towns have with videoconferencing and the special authority granted during the public health crisis.



Normal Authority

Under normal circumstances under Public Officers Law Article 7 (*aka* Open Meetings Law) a member of a public body is allowed to attend and participate in meetings via videoconferencing so long as the notice for the meeting informs the public that videoconferencing will be used, provides the address(es) for the location(s) of the meeting, including all of the addresses where a public official will be videoconferencing in from, and alerts people to the fact that they can attend the meeting at any and all locations where people videoconference in from (see Public Officers Law §§ 103[c]; 104[4]).

Special Authority

Under Chapter 417 of the Laws of 2021, public bodies may hold meetings through video or audio conferencing without in-person public access so long as the general public has the ability to view or listen to such proceeding and provided that the meetings are recorded and later transcribed.

Videoconferencing	Normal Authority	Special Authority
Minutes required	Yes	Yes
The meeting must be transcribed	No	Yes
Tell public about videoconferencing in meeting notice?	Yes	Yes
Allow people to attend in person from any and all locations where board members videoconference in from?	Yes	No
Include addresses where board members will videoconference in from in meeting notice?	Yes	No
Public has the right to observe and attend virtually?	Recommended	Yes

Local Law

There is a small hiccup with videoconferencing as it applies to town board meetings because Town Law § 62 requires town board meetings to take place within the jurisdiction of the town, therefore it's unclear if a board member could videoconference into a meeting from outside the town's limits. However, if the town is concerned about this, the board can always adopt a local law authorizing this, and AOT has drafted a sample that you can find on our website www.nytowns.org. We strongly recommend that you consult with your town attorney before adopting any local law.