



## **SOUTHERN TIER CENTRAL REGIONAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD**

**Thursday, May 21, 2026**  
(In-person)

### **BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

#### CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair, Jennifer Furman, called the STC Board Meeting to order at 9:02 a.m.

#### ATTENDANCE

Chemung County – Jennifer Furman, Courtney Dunn, Ernie Hartman, Dave McCormick, Kyle Sullivan, and Tom Tranter

Schuyler County – Carl Blowers, Joann Lindstrom, Judy McKinney Cherry, and Mark Rondinaro

Steuben County – Kelly Fitzpatrick, Hilda Lando, Jenn Miller, Michael Volino, and Jack Wheeler

STC Staff – Chelsea Robertson, Katie Heverly, Jack Cook, Victoria Ehlen, Liv Lovejoy, Cathy Rook, Alison Salisbury, and Janet Thigpen

#### WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Jennifer Furman gave an in-person welcome to STC's four newest Board members and all other Board members introduced themselves. STC is pleased to have the following persons serving on our Board of Directors:

- Hilda Lando, Steuben County Legislature
- Michael Volino, Steuben County Legislature
- Courtney Dunn, Chemung County Transit Manager
- David McCormick, Chemung County Planning Commissioner

#### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On a motion duly made (Judy McKinney Cherry and Kelly Fitzpatrick) and carried, the **April 16, 2026, Board Meeting Minutes** were approved.

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

### 1. **Audit Committee**

- a. The **Abstract of Claims** presentation was made by Tom Tranter. On a motion duly made (Tom Tranter and Mark Rondinaro) and carried, 7 abstracts totaling \$23,499.37 were approved.
- b. Per Tom Tranter, the **Annual Audit Review report** was thoroughly reviewed by the Audit Committee prior to the Board meeting and Tom introduced Ryan McGlynn, CPA, from the Rochester office of MMB+Co, to present the Audit Executive Summary and highlights to the board. Ryan's comments and highlights were as follows:
  - The annual audit results were very positive and reviewed in detail with the Audit Committee.
  - No significant deficiencies or material weaknesses were found.
  - Operating surplus largely due to the absence of two employees at mid-year.
  - A minor control recommendation was made to look into and adopt a formal investment policy.
  - MMB was pleased to report that the one minor recommendation communicated at last year's audit, concerning journal entry oversight, had been properly implemented to their satisfaction.
  - A single audit is not required this year because STC had a decrease in Federal funding and because STC did not meet the new federal spending threshold (\$1 million in any calendar year) which would automatically trigger a single audit.

On a motion duly made (Tom Tranter and Mark Rondinaro) and carried, the Board adopted and accepted the 2025 Annual Audit. Chelsea Robertson also thanked Accountant, Katie Heverly, for the excellent job she did with the annual audit.

### 2. **Regional Leadership Conference Committee**

- a. The **Regional Leadership Conference** planning update was presented by Alison Salisbury. Alison reminded the Board that STC's 29<sup>th</sup> annual Regional Leadership Conference would be held in a couple of weeks on June 11<sup>th</sup> at SUNY Corning Community College and thanked them for spreading the word about the conference. This year's conference has 6 major sponsors to help cover the costs for Breakfast, Lunch, Coffee Breaks, Conference Tote Bags, Conference Folders, and Lanyards with Name Tags and 5 sponsors for advertisements in the program booklet. Currently, there are 24 vendor tables from both private and public sectors, including 6 invitational tables for such organizations as NYS DEC and NYS DOS, who will provide resources and information. To date, 164 people have registered to attend the conference with many more registrations expected as per conversations with the municipal clerks. Alison also stated that the registration deadline was extended one week, from May 22<sup>nd</sup> to May 29<sup>th</sup>, to encourage more municipalities and colleagues to register. The registration fee remains the same as the past few years at \$75 per person. There is a great line-up this year of 28 classes, including a Keynote panel, covering a broad range of topics. Some of the conference classes will be: Flood Safety and Land Use (presented by STC's Janet Thigpen), Grant Writing Workshops (presented by STC's Victoria Ehlen and Dot Richter), Preserving Local Landscapes (presented by STC's Liv Lovejoy), Battery Energy Storage Systems and Solar Energy Policy and Best Practices (both classes

presented by NYSERDA). There is also a great line-up of classes specifically for Code Enforcement Officers and Planning Board/Zoning Board members, as well as classes designed for Mayors, Supervisors, and Clerks relating to skills that make great board members, FOIL, and handling ethical dilemmas. Our colleagues from NYS will present information and resources for Pro-Housing communities, Local Government Efficiency, and types of State Funding opportunities. Chelsea Robertson added that STC is honored this year to have Dr. Terence Finley, President of CCC, introduce our panel of Keynote Speakers. The Keynote panel will consist of 3 municipal leaders, including STC Board Member, Michael Volino, who is the Supervisor for the Town of Thurston. STC is excited and looking forward to another great conference!

#### REGIONAL PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

1. Janet Thigpen presented a **Flood Studies, Maps, and Levees** update with highlights as follows:
  - Janet shared some good news that 3 watersheds in Steuben County are now on the Resilient NY Streams list to be studied later this summer or fall. The 3 watersheds to be studied are Tuscarora Creek, Bennett Creek, and Colonel Bill's Creek. SLR Consulting has been contracted to conduct all 3 studies.
  - In 2023 and 2024, FEMA prepared Base Level Engineering Mapping for all of Chemung and Steuben Counties. DEC then developed an initial draft of the approximate floodplains for the updated FEMA maps, which are now in an online map viewer at this link:  
<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/59dc63564e9447d79d1c87322a2d0246?org=FEMA>
  - Janet noted that the maps in the online viewer are not regulatory floodplains, but will likely become regulatory maps in the future for rural areas where FEMA does not conduct more detailed studies.
  - Schuyler County mapping is underway and FEMA is nearing completion of the draft maps, which may roll out in the next couple of months. It is anticipated that the maps will be finalized sometime in 2028.
  - For areas protected by levees in all 3 counties, the goal is not to have those protected areas included in the 100-year regulated floodplain. However, it will cost millions of dollars for the engineering evaluation (required by FEMA) to certify the levees and possibly millions more to remediate any deficiencies identified during the evaluation.
  - Please refer to the attachment at the end of these meeting minutes, **Janet Thigpen's Notes**, for more details regarding specific town levees.
  - At the end of 2025, there was an update to the NYS Residential and Building Code requiring that new building in the mapped 500-year floodplain must comply with the flood resilience standards.
2. Victoria Ehlen presented the **ARC Grants Cycle** update and highlights were as follows:
  - Victoria stated she has worked on the Appalachian Regional Commission Grants Cycle for 15 years now and is very excited about this new cycle. ARC has improved the application process, changed questions, and will now utilize just one Word document for the application (versus the old way of combining multiple Excel sheets, pdf files, and Word documents). The applicant now answers basic questions in a 14-page Word document for the ARC Grant application, then it is

reviewed by the local committees, and then NYS will “spin up” the project so the applicants can input their own material into the ARC online portal. After that, everyone will be able to watch their applications go through the various review stages. ARC pre-applications (material submitted to the STC office) are due by June 26, but no date has been set yet for the EDPSC (Economic Development Policy and Strategy Committee) review or the Regional Human Services Committee review. Victoria will send out an email shortly with the July date for the EDPSC meeting.

- No CFA (Consolidated Funding Application) announcement yet. If there is an organization, local government, or non-profit that is eligible for a CFA, then please encourage them to contact STC to go through the ARC application process, because the funding sources often match. Your community could execute a project for as little as 10% of the total project cost (half of the project covered by ARC and some other percentage covered by NYS).
- Recently, STC conducted an ARC promotional event in Chemung County which was very well received and there is an upcoming event on May 26 in Schuyler County. Victoria will also promote ARC funding on June 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> in Hornell. Additional events to come. Please contact Victoria if you would like her to attend an event to present ARC funding information to your organization or community leaders.
- School budgets were recently passed for 2027 and they are eligible applicants for ARC match funding. Non-profit healthcare providers are also eligible to apply. STC has not received many applications from either of these two groups.
- Chelsea Robertson commented that Victoria has worked hard to convey information about the ARC Grant process, helped communities secure ARC funding, and is maintaining a waitlist for ARC projects making STC the highest performer in NYS for ARC. Chelsea also mentioned that Kyle Wilber, NYS DOS - ARC Program Manager, will be retiring soon and that Mark Patterson, also with NYS DOS - ARC, retired last month.

#### INTER-BOARD REPORTING

1. Kelly Fitzpatrick, Chair of the **Steuben County Legislature**, presented an inter-board report. Kelly stated that the Steuben County Legislature recently passed a 6-month moratorium on sludge spreading in the county. The sludge is not having a municipal effect right now, but it is an important issue because it affects water and farmland. The county hopes to receive some guidance from NYS DEC on the process soon. The legislature also recently passed an animal abuser registry that is coordinated with the Steuben County Sheriff's Office. The registry will be provided to animal breeders and others so they do not sell or give any animals or pets to those who have been convicted of abusing animals. Sadly, animal abuse cases are on the rise and the Legislature felt it was important to take a stand. Kelly is in her 2<sup>nd</sup> term as Chair of the Legislature, by unanimous vote, and noted that the Legislature works very effectively as a collaborative group. A collaborative Legislature, working with partner agencies, will be especially important over the next 6-8 months as there are many changes coming from the federal and state levels. New Federal work requirements will affect SNAP Benefits and Health Care Benefits, so Kelly is advocating for the Legislature and partner agencies to find solutions to better serve the communities. The Legislature also works very well with the Steuben County Manager, Jack Wheeler and Deputy County Manager, Chris Brewer, and team, as well as the County Attorney, Tim Rosell.

2. Courtney Dunn, Chemung County Transit Manager, presented an inter-board report for the **Elmira-Chemung Transportation Council (ECTC)**. Courtney explained that ECTC is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Elmira-Chemung County area and responsible for the planning and programming of any transportation project which includes Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) or Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding. Some of the projects ECTC is working on include Site Safety Month in May and BACPAC (Bicycle Advisory Committee-Pedestrian Advisory Committee). With the help of STC's Liv Lovejoy and new ECTC Planner, Sam Somostrada, they have increased the visibility of BACPAC by utilizing social media and have put some emphasis on BACPAC. Related to BACPAC, another project is the North-South Bicycle Corridor, which runs from Davis Street and Water Street in Elmira up to Horseheads and creates a safe place for bikes. ECTC is working to finalize a contract for the East 13<sup>th</sup> Street study in Elmira Heights and is also currently working on the Gateway Feasibility Study, entering the Elmira area along Church Street and Water Street up to Madison Avenue. ECTC has looked for ways to slow down the traffic in that area to make it safer as well as more visually appealing. Last year, ECTC completed a 20-year Transportation Plan (2025-2045) and rebranded the C-Tran buses which are now "green."
3. Judy McKinney Cherry, CEcD, FM, the Executive Director of **Finger Lakes Gateway (DBA SCOPED, Inc)**, began her inter-board report by passing out their 2025 Annual Report and recapping highlights. The FLX Gateway organization began in 1987 as a non-profit, then in 1998 evolved into SCOPED (Schuyler County Partnership for Economic Development), and in 2025 transitioned to the FLX Gateway branding on all of its platforms. FLX Gateway runs IMPLAN (economic modeling software used by most consulting companies) as a service for economic impacts. This year, FLX Gateway included Return On Investment percentages and related ROI information in their Annual Report. The Schuyler County Façade Improvement Program has been very successful; for every public dollar invested, over \$8 is put into the program by the private sector. In 2025, the state funded DRI (Downtown Revitalization Initiative), was completed and consisted of 22 projects across Watkins Glen. For this DRI, \$3.1M in state funding leveraged into \$20.7M in private funding, resulting in 666% return on state investment. To further economic development, FLX Gateway proactively sent a very detailed proposal to a furniture maker because there is an abundance of lumber in Schuyler County. Another economic project in 2025 was the completion of the chickpea field trials, resulting in a proposal request by a large chickpea user in NY state. Judy's last highlight was a significant achievement, taking 18 months of strategic planning and readiness work. In 2025, the Schuyler County Business Park earned the first GOLD designation in NYS, through the national REDI Sites Program administered by the Site Selectors Guild. The GOLD certification for the 51-acre Schuyler County Business Park is impressive since there are only four GOLD-certified properties throughout the entire United States. Congratulations FLX Gateway!

#### OTHER BUSINESS

1. **No June Board Meeting.** Instead, all STC Board members were invited to join STC at the Regional Leadership Conference on June 11 at CCC.
2. The **next STC Board Meeting** will be held virtually on **July 16, 2026**.

#### ADJOURN

On a motion duly made (Tom Tranter and Carl Blowers) and carried, the Board Meeting adjourned at 10:20 a.m.

**PLEASE CONTINUE TO PAGE 7 TO SEE ATTACHMENT**

\*Attachment:

### **Janet Thigpen's Notes for STC Board meeting, 5/21/2026**

Resilient NY Streams – After the 2021 and 2024 flooding in southwestern Steuben County, we requested Resilient NY studies for Tuscarora, Bennetts, and Colonel Bills Creeks. This program conducts modeling and analysis of flood-prone watersheds to identify realistic mitigation projects. The idea is to develop preliminary project design information so the community can apply for grant funding. It took some time, but the state plans to conduct all three studies and has contracted with SLR consulting. They don't expect to start until late summer or fall and will probably do the studies one at a time. So, it will take more time, but we will eventually have information to proactively address flood risks in that part of Steuben County.

Base Level Engineering floodplain maps – In 2023 and 2024, FEMA conducted meetings and prepared reports for future floodplain mapping of Chemung and Steuben Counties. As part of that effort, DEC developed an initial draft of approximate floodplains for the updated FEMA maps. They are now available in an online map viewer for Chemung and Steuben Counties (<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/59dc63564e9447d79d1c87322a2d0246?org=FEMA>). These are not regulatory floodplains but are likely to become regulatory maps in the future for rural areas where FEMA does not conduct more detailed studies. They include floodplains for many smaller streams that were not previously mapped. I haven't done any detailed comparisons with the current maps, but it looks like many rural areas will have wider floodplains that include more houses. This isn't surprising because so many of the places that have flooded in recent years were outside of mapped floodplains, but may be difficult for existing property owners when they become effective due to the cost of flood insurance and the re-building requirements if the buildings are severely damaged.

Schuyler County draft maps – As far as the timing of new maps. FEMA appears to be almost done with draft maps for Schuyler County, which they may roll out in the next couple of months. They will then allow about a year for informal comments, then make the maps preliminary, for formal technical comments. And a year after that, sometime in 2028 they may be finalized.

Chemung and Steuben County mapping – FEMA Regional staff were hoping to start a funded mapping project in FY 2026. I haven't heard about any funding decisions yet. So, we're probably at least 4 or 5 years away from final maps.

Levees – Of course, the elephant in the room is our desire for areas protected by levees to not be included in the 100-year regulated floodplain. But we haven't yet found millions of dollars for the engineering evaluation required by FEMA to certify the levees and possibly millions more to remediate any deficiencies that are identified or confirmed during that evaluation.

- Hornell area levees – Because the USACE maintains that system, they have committed to conduct the evaluation of those levees. But if FEMA’s preliminary evaluation of the levee heights is accurate, there may be areas with inadequate levee height, particularly along the tributary streams.

- V. Canisteo and V. Montour Falls both asked the USACE for cost estimates for this evaluation. The Corps would need a 50% cost share for this. Their estimate for Canisteo was \$800-900,000, half of which is far out of reach for the Village.

Montour Falls is in a different Corps district and, as far as I can figure out, they didn’t get a cost estimate.

- The Corps evaluations would not include interior drainage studies. This is an evaluation of the rain and runoff on the dry side of the levee. When the river is high, the flap gates are pushed closed, so that water can’t drain through the levee. An interior drainage study evaluates whether there is adequate space to store that water. The Village of Canisteo got grant funding to evaluate another drainage issue in the Village and included the evaluation required by FEMA in the scope of work, so that study is in progress.

- State Senator O’Mara and our Assembly Members sent letters to the Governor asking for DEC to assume responsibility for levee certification. They got a response from DEC saying that the state maintains levees and municipalities are welcome to certify them if they want. They will continue to work on this.

2025 NYS Uniform Code – The other floodplain news is that the 2025 update to the NYS Residential and Building Code now requires that any new building in the mapped 500-year floodplain comply with the flood resilience standards. 4 ½ months later we are entering we are entering construction season without written guidance from the state to help with those fuzzy areas where the interpretation is not clear. We’ve gotten inconsistent verbal information from DEC about whether this applies to areas protected by levees that are mapped as 500-year floodplain.