

UPSTATE NEW YORK TOWNS ASSOCIATION

MINUTES

Nov. 14, 2025

ATTENDING Nov. 14, 2025:

Carolyn Price, Former Windsor Supervisor, Association Exec Director
Gilda Ward, Supervisor-Elect Town of Guildford
Matt Ward, guest
Tim Harting, Windsor Supervisor
Gary Hupman, Windsor Councilman
Steve Palmatier, Supervisor-elect, Town of Preston
Bill Dumian, Supervisor, Town of Conklin
Sue Messina, Vestal Councilwoman
Dell Boyle, Conklin Councilman, Association President
Bill Farley Conklin Councilman
Carol Armstrong, Conklin Zoning Board
Jim Finch, Conklin Councilman
Elizabeth Einstein, Conklin Zoning Board and Assoc. of Towns Secretary
Don Einstein, guest
Rebecca Walley, Deposit Supervisor, retired veterinarian
Liz Polomcean, Deposit Deputy Town Clerk
Deposit Deputy Town Clerk
Patti Reichert, Town of Candor Deputy Supervisor, Association Treasurer
Katie Legg, Deputy Supervisor Kirkwood
Ammon Bush, Deposit Councilman

President Dell Boyle called the meeting to order and led in the Pledge of Allegiance. He followed that with prayer before dinner was served. The first few minutes were spent getting acquainted with each other as everyone introduced his or her self. The President turned the meeting over to UNYTA Executive Director Carolyn Price who gave a brief history of UNYTA.

The organization was started when town and village leaders believed it was time to take a stand to protect the freedoms of their residents. Many property owners in Upstate New York were excited about the opportunity for natural gas drilling, but the state of New York took a strong anti-gas drilling stance. Unfortunately, the Association of Towns decided to state—in writing-- its anti-gas drilling position and support the Governor's ban on natural gas drilling. This was the impetus for UNYTA. Upstate New York Association of Towns was formed to add another voice to the issue. After surveys on natural gas showed the majority of residents were behind it. UNYTA members began to talk of towns seceding from the state of New York. When Conklin Supervisor Jim Finch announced that to the media, local officials were astounded when their cause was picked up by media around the world. Conklin Supervisor Jim Finch was invited to appear on Fox & Friends in support of natural gas. UNYTA officials were invited to a conference with Senate & Assembly leaders in Pennsylvania who supported gas drilling in their state.

Mrs. Price said she asked media representative several times, "Why are you here?" and was told they responded because the use of natural resources is a worldwide issue; as is "urban versus rural". While natural gas drilling is an old issue, UNYTA is presently supporting the development of the Constitution Pipeline, and standing strong for other freedoms being jeopardized.

UNYTA TODAY

Executive Director Carolyn Price focused on an anagram for UNYTA's goals, T.E.T.E. The Association has lobbied on four huge topics in rural areas: Ticks, EMS, Technology (Broadband specifically), and the Emerald Ash Boer.

On June 6, 2025, a UNYTA lobbying team pushed **Tick Education and Prevention** to the forefront. New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey consistently report the most tick-borne illnesses, particularly [Lyme disease](#), due to their high concentration of ticks. There are several bills in Albany. One bill that is important to us, was passed by the Assembly & Senate and would require the Dept. of Health to annually post statistics on the web of how many cases of the various tick diseases have been reported. For some reason the bill has not moved to the Governor's office. Assemblyman Joe Angelino's office has promised to stay on top of the progress there. Lyme Disease, Anaplasmosis, or Powassan, the deadliest of the tick-borne diseases, are on the rise. Since New York usually focuses on these diseases in April, UNYTA will return to Albany and push for this bill to move on to the Governor's desk for approval.

EMS: Curtis Hammond from Candor, now with the Instructional Standards and Compliance. NYSDOH- Division of State EMS, went with us to Albany as we lobbied for **EMS to become as essential service with towns & villages given the choice of contracts or forming districts**. We are happy to say the EMS Direct Pay Bill was passed after we lobbied in Albany the previous year. Now insurance checks go right to ambulance companies. Too many people were collecting the insurance money but never paying the ambulance companies for this service. Bills about EMS have passed both houses but have not hit the Governor's desk. One of the things we learned this time is the Governor will not approve a bill that hasn't been funded. Monies must already be allocated in the budget.

Technology: A while back, Carolyn was able to testify in Albany when the state was charging broadband providers by the foot for their wires. She said, "This made no sense. We have a lot of people who still need fiber, and we are out there making it harder for the companies to break even doing their jobs." After Carolyn's testimony, Senator Liz Kruger from Manhattan agreed saying, "That was probably the worst law we ever passed." The law was soon changed.

But, unfortunately, the Broad Band issue has not been resolved. Said Price, "Legislators think that it is solved. That is why we must raise our voices and let them know the problem still exists." She said the BEAD federal funding will not provide any new fiber for most areas. Chenango County was fortunate to get some fiber. Funding is going for towers and "fixed wireless." But fixed or not, trees make this an issue. The waves cannot penetrate the many trees in rural areas. There is also a concern over \$131 million in BEAD money going to a very small company with only a little over 2000 customers. Can the company handle something of this volume? The question was never answered. Carolyn and UNYTA member Sue Messina were also told the urban area broadband is getting old and needs to be replaced. So, replacement will come before the areas that have never had any broadband at all. It is good news that the FCC has approved T-Mobile and Starlink teaming up to provide cell coverage through the lower satellites. This may help.

Emerald Ash Boer: Many towns and villages are concerned about the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) infestations. Hundreds, in some cases thousands, of trees have been destroyed and municipalities face high financial costs to deal with the cleanup. We were surprised that the author of a bill providing some aid, Senator Leroy Comie, is from Queens, NY. He was not in his office when the lobby team visited in June, but we were able to speak briefly with an assistant. Subsequently, he contacted Carolyn for background information on how it has affected the towns and residents. His bill would amend the tax law to establish a tree removal and emerald ash elimination credit. Bill #NY S05368 has been referred to the Budget & Revenue Committee. The bill would aid NYS taxpayers but does not address the high cost municipalities face.

OTHER CONCERNS

Windsor Councilman and UNYTA Vice President Gary Hupman said the state requirement that school districts purchase electric buses is a huge problem for NYS. The electric buses are not efficient in our areas. The purchase costs alone will result in higher taxes for Upstate. This is another freedom being taken away.

Windsor Supervisor Tim Harting agreed that the UNYTA should push back on these electric mandates. He said he was also frustrated by NYS's push to provide grant money for parks. He said all the money ends up going into areas of New York, like the Adirondacks and NYC.

Vestal Supervisor Maria Sexton replied, saying, "The smaller your area, the less likely you are to get funds because hiring a grant writer is very costly, and they don't see you as significant. She stressed the importance of banding together so we would have a lot more say; a stronger voice.

UNYTA Executive Director agreed there is a need to upgrade our parks, and NYS is ignoring the need in Upstate New York. She also pointed out that UNYTA has been concerned about the amount of land that NYS owns. NYS owns over 30% of the land in the state. She said, "It could help NYS taxpayers if some of this land were put back on the tax rolls. Yet, they seem to move in the other direction. And, some of this land continues to be a huge expense to local government in terms of fire protection services—even state forest land.

Sexton also opened the door to green energy discussion. She said, "With all the state's solar and electric push, the state is now considering a bill that will essentially negate a lot of local solar regulations. "I think this is very dangerous. Freedom is important to us. We support various forms of energy—all are needed, but have their place. . . . Buses don't work. How do you get the buses when you have no money, and then they don't work? They can't do the hills. They are not suitable for rural areas." She urged the towns to join together, share information, advocate & lobby. She continued saying that electric in this area is primarily sourced from natural gas and coal. "Even NYSEG has told Albany, the electric school buses are not good for this area." The Supervisor emphasized the importance of standing strong for home rule.

Executive Director Price pointed to the growing energy need for AI and the massive data centers that use so much electricity. Said Price, “If we don’t diversify our energy sources, we are going to have blackouts. Both urban and rural residents will suffer.

Conklin Supervisor Bill Dumian referenced the need for another nuclear power plant. He said solar is not the power needed to drive these systems. Carolyn pointed to new technology being developed for mini nuclear power plants.

Deposit Supervisor Rebecca Walley said that Senator Oberacker spoke to the Delaware Ag Committee recently and said the Governor has given permission to examine nuclear alternatives. Most buses could be retrofitted with small nuclear power that would not be costly, and it would not increase bus weight as electric batteries do. Oberacker said they are particularly interested in this.

Bill Dumian said he would love to see some of these officials who are pushing solar come to town board meetings when this new energy has been sited for the Town. “It is frustrating for us when we have no authority to decide against companies that have already been given Article 78. These energy companies can come into your town, and it is usually not possible to deny them, even if it is not in the best interest of your town and its residents. We can’t make everyone happy, but if we can’t make the decisions for our communities—who elected us—why are we here? We have one legal advisor and one engineer. Home rule in necessary—come on down and sit in a board room for three hours while people lament how this is taking away agriculture.”

Vestal Councilperson Messina said there is a huge push by the governor to force towns and villages. The state has a template for solar, and they want everyone to use it. The towns have resisted and put their own solar laws in place. In April a commission was formed to study this issue and put into place laws that favor solar. Said Messina, “No information has been released on this commission. We will be watching this carefully as sources pursue more information.” Home rule is a freedom UNYTA strongly supports.

Another issue brought forward by Supervisor Sexton was the absence of Lyme Disease Vaccines for people. She said clinic trials are underway. She said dogs are already vaccinated to protect them from Lyme, people should have that opportunity, too. She said that. Initially, pharmaceutical companies didn’t see the market but tick-borne diseases are on a concerning rise.

Deposit Supervisor Rebecca Walley is a retired veterinarian. She explained that the vaccines are not 100 % effective for dogs. There are complications. If a dog already has Lyme Disease and is not tested prior to being given the vaccine, the dog can go into kidney failure. She suggested we push for funding for research that would help and reiterated UNYTA’s position on education on tick-borne diseases, “There is more awareness, but still a lot of people are not aware of the dangers from a tick bite.”

Executive Director Price commented on how helpful the discussion was. She said, “We learn a lot from listening to each other.” She also said she would like to see UNYTA expand. We have been in Broome, Chenango, Tioga, Delaware and Sullivan counties. UNYTA Treasurer and Candor Deputy Supervisor Patti Reichert said she is willing to lead the push to get more Tioga County towns involved.

Coming up, Price said UNYTA will support the Constitution Pipeline. She said UNYTA has requested an interview with the Governor, and she has been notified that the Governor’s Director of Environment would meet with us. Constitution Pipeline is not asking for the permit right now, so there is time to address the issues, and she will follow up on this.

At this time, a December roundtable meeting is planned in Vestal to hear from our legislators and find out how we can help. We will also discuss concerns about the hard push for solar right now and writing new solar laws to protect our residents.

In January or February, a UNYTA lobby team will go to Albany to make sure the bills we support are moving forward. We will return to Albany again at crunch time.

Subject Friday meeting

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Date Monday December 8, 2025 10:19:47 AM

Upstate New York Towns Association
2026 Legislative Meeting
Friday, December 12, 2025, 10:00 AM
Town of Vestal Town Hall Board Room
605 Vestal Parkway West
Vestal, NY 13850

Member Towns are invited to the 2026 Legislative Meeting on December 12th at the Town of Vestal Town Hall Board Room, 10:00 am. Legislative Topics are: Tick Awareness through Research and Education, EMS As an Essential Service, Technology Needs in Rural Areas, Emerald Ash Borer Destruction of Trees, Energy Law and Regulation Impacts.

Legislators who have been invited are Senator Tom O’Mara, Senator Peter Oberacker, who has a schedule conflict, Senator Leah Webb, Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo, Assemblyman Chris Friend, and Assemblyman Joe Angelino. We will discuss with the Legislators what happened with bills last year related to the legislative topics listed above and what is planned for 2026.

Please RSVP to upstatenytownassoc@gmail.com regarding attending.