

# Chenango County Department of Planning & Development

## 2020 Accomplishments

**THE GAZETTE**  
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### Chenango County seeks local feedback for hazard mitigation plan

By Shawn Magrath  
Sun Staff Writer  
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CHENANGO COUNTY - The Chenango County Department of Planning is soliciting local input as it progresses in the early stages of a months-long effort to update the county's hazard mitigation plan.

The hazard mitigation plan addresses the natural threats, including floods, fires, and damaging storms that have a history of devastating local businesses and entire communities.

"There's a lot of events that could impact our area. All our river valleys during a storm are particularly in the line of fire. Or it could be a huge snow storm like we've had in the past where every town gets it. So it could be anything, anywhere."

—Shane Butler, Chenango County Planning Director

Public participation and feedback is a vital part of the plan-writing process. Survey results will be used to write portions of the plan. County residents can complete a survey on the Chenango County Department of Planning website or on the department's Facebook page.

Butler is just one of several Hazard Mitigation Steering Committee members

impact of such disasters on all of Chenango County, officials say. But it all starts by getting local feedback.

"We're asking the public to fill out a survey," said Butler. "That's our current phase in the process. Our next step will be the mitigation strategy, where we take what people have said and what they feel is the biggest hazard, and we come up with strategies to mitigate what those events and weaknesses are. Then we'll go from writing the plan to adopting it."

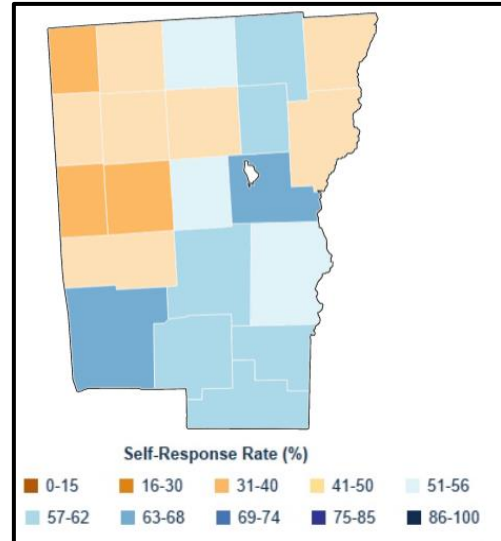
Chenango County seeks feedback about its hazard mitigation, which addresses natural threats, including floods, fires, and damaging storms, from plans.

It's been six years since the county last updated its hazard mitigation plan. The department says planning is a state law, the county must update the plan every five years; but the coronavirus pandemic forced a late start this year.

According to the New York State Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services, the need for a mitigation plan has only intensified over the years. The department says planning is a state law, the county must update the plan every five years; but the coronavirus pandemic forced a late start this year.

"This plan will also allow us to access funding, whether it's for fire or flooding, or hurricane damage - whatever the case may be," said Butler. "It makes it so we can have access for funding to replace, repair, rebuild, and prepare ahead of time."

Chenango County's Hazard Mitigation Steering Committee aims to submit their plan to New York State ahead of its July, 2021 deadline.



### Regional committee chugs forward with broadband improvement effort

By Shawn Magrath  
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CHENANGO COUNTY - A newly formed regional committee composed of planning and economic development leaders from four neighboring counties, including Chenango, is making headway in an effort to bring better broadband internet to remote areas.

Spearheaded by Southern Tier 8, a regional planning agency that supports economic development in the eastern portion of New York's Southern Tier, the new committee believes a regional approach will be more effective than each county taking on the problem of shoddy internet alone.

Chenango County Planning Director Shane Butler is part

**"Funders want to see a regional approach rather than town by town or county by county. So if we could do it all in one swipe, it would be great. They want to see that."**  
- Shane Butler, Chenango County Director of Planning

of that committee.

"We're moving ahead pretty quickly," said Butler, noting three meetings held by committee members in just as many months. "Funders want to see a regional approach rather than town by town or county by county. So if we could do it all in one swipe, it would be great. They want to see that."

Rural areas have been hit especially hard since New York State schools and businesses shut down in March, making it difficult for businesses, schools, governments, and courts to function. In response, Chenango County has joined ranks with Broome, Cortland, and Delaware counties to gather data that may give them an edge when applying for state and federal funding to improve broadband.

The committee's also using data from a recent survey conducted by Congressman Anthony Brindisi which shows shoddy broadband internet services throughout the 22nd Congressional District. Chenango County is a hallmark of that study, showing the slowest broadband internet speeds in all of New York State.

In addition to speaking with government leaders, the committee has reached out to 49 school districts throughout the region with a survey focused on the challenges of online education - a hot topic of the times. More than a dozen schools have responded thus far. Intentions are to incorporate findings in future funding applications for broadband improvement, said Butler.

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### Planning Staff:

Shane H. Butler - Planning Director

Rena M. Doing - Senior Planner

Colleen Bradley - Planner

Steve Palmatier - Workforce Development Consultant

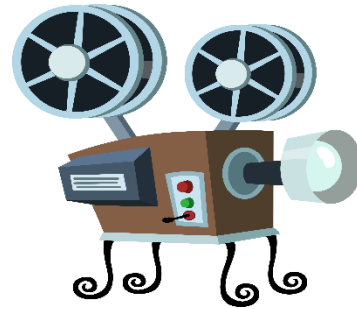
# Director's Perspective – Looking back at 2020

If you've ever seen "The A-Team," you've heard Lt. Col. John "Hannibal" Smith say; "I love it when a plan comes together!"

At the end of 2019 we, like Hannibal, were hopeful our plans for 2020 were going to come together. Public engagement was going to be a big focus; the 2020 Census, transportation initiatives, hazard mitigation plan, and the agriculture and farmland protection plan all had heavy outreach components. It was going to be a good year.

Enter 2020 and COVID-19.  
Plan for 2020, Exit Stage Right.

In-Person Meetings and Gatherings  
Ag Tour for Legislators  
Airpen Day  
NYS DOS Land Use Training



What do you do when your plans go awry? You learn and you adapt your plan while continuing to move forward.

Like everyone else, we revised our plan to do as much promotion as possible virtually through Facebook, LinkedIn, Zoom Meetings, etc., and it was going reasonably well. We were hitting our stride and feeling good about what was getting accomplished. Frankly, some of the changes made things easier and more efficient than previously.

Since everything was virtual, it seemed like no better time to start scanning old documents and saving them to our servers to reduce storage space in the office. It was a project that had been talked about for a while but put off. What could possibly go wrong?

Enter Cyberattack.  
Revised plan for 2020, Exit Stage right.

No files, no internet and no email for a month. Back to the four P's: Paper, Pen, Phones and the Postal service, mailing all of the outreach materials. It wasn't ideal but at least things still were getting done, albeit slowly and with a lot more effort.

All this is to say, if 2020 were a movie, it must have been another Rocky sequel. The hits kept coming but our resilient County kept moving forward. And now, here we are on December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020 with a plan for 2021 in place. Will everything go according to plan this year? Probably not, but we can only hope when next year's plan goes awry, it's because we underestimated how great 2021 would be.

## Staffing Changes

Thank you to Corey Katusha for his dedicated service and hard work over the last two years in the Planning Office. This year's list of accomplishments wouldn't have been possible without him. Best of luck in your new career!

Welcome to Colleen Bradley, our new Planner! Colleen started in November and was a great sport during her first two weeks, actively learning the ins and outs of the job despite not having a computer or internet access. Colleen will be working on the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan, completing the 8-year Review of Ag District #2A, spearheading some clean energy initiatives, and collaborating on a variety of other projects in the office.

Congratulations to Rena Doing on her retirement! Rena has been working for Chenango County over the last 28 years, approximately half of those in the Planning Office. Her expertise and knowledge will be coming back to the office in 2021 working part time.

## A Clean Energy Community

In February 2019, Chenango County was awarded a NYSERDA Clean Energy Communities Grant for \$150,000 to undertake energy upgrades, reducing the carbon footprint of the County Office Building.

After a Request for Proposals (RFP), Chenango County contracted with Postler & Jaeckle Corp. to complete the work of installing two Ultra 96% efficient boilers in the 1990 Wing of the County Office Building, replacing piping, fittings, valves and controls, as well as integrating new control software throughout the entire building. The project has an estimated annual energy savings of 1,103.95 MMbtu/year and reduces GHG emissions by 58.63 tons per year.

The project was completed in November 2020 in coordination with the Chenango County Department of Public Facilities.

Special thank you to Terry Carroll, Energy Educator with CCE-Tompkins for his assistance throughout the project.

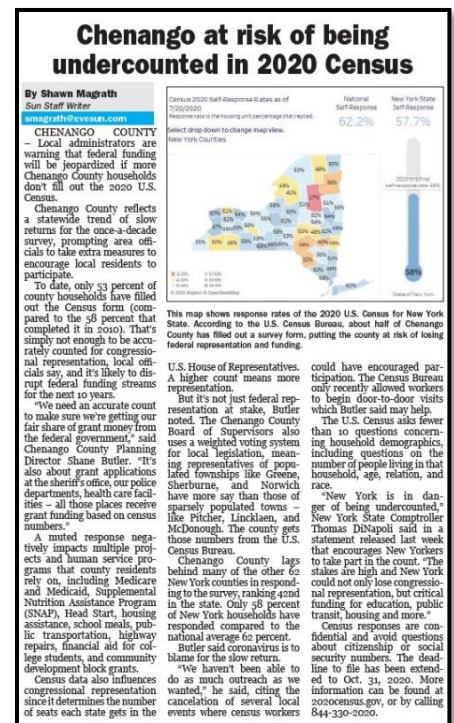


Data derived from the 2020 US Census will be incredibly important to Chenango County because of the many ways Census information is used, including calculating representation at the Federal, State, and Local levels (including our own weighted voting system at the County Board of Supervisors), distributing Federal and State funding to schools, fire departments, and hospitals, and helping to determine the needs of the population and/or gaps in service through community planning.

To make sure Chenango County was counted, in May 2019 the Planning Department reached out to various organizations to see if there was interest in creating a Chenango County Complete Count Committee in partnership with the US Census Bureau. A collaborative including representatives from the County Planning Department, Area Agency on Aging, CDO Workforce, DCMO BOCES, Chenango Links, Guernsey Library, The Evening Sun, US Census Bureau, and other community volunteers met multiple times to discuss opportunities and ideas to promote the 2020 Census to Chenango County residents.

Many great outreach ideas came out of these meetings but, unfortunately, due to COVID-19, many of these were unable to come to fruition. Efforts by the US Census Bureau itself were also delayed and the final Count did not end until October 15, 2020.

Outreach prior to, and during the pandemic included a presentation to the Chenango County Board of Supervisors by Kate Dillon of the US Census Bureau, press releases in The Evening Sun, social media outreach, distributions by the Chenango County Area Agency on Aging of water bottles, pens and printed material, and coordination with US Census Bureau staff on other outreach opportunities including a presentation to high school students at the Otselic Valley CSD. County Departments and area service agencies were encouraged to remind constituents to fill out their 2020 Census during their day-to-day dealings. Information was also made available on the County Website.





Overall, according to the 2020 Census Self-Response Map, Chenango County's self-response rate was 57.7%, compared to 58.1% in 2010. While this isn't as high as we had hoped, we feel this was a great response given the circumstances.

### **Census results are in, slightly lower response than in 2010**

By Zachary Meseck  
Sun Staff Writer  
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CHENANGO COUNTY – Results are in for the census, and officials are saying Chenango County is less represented than the census in 2010.

According to Chenango County Planning Department Director Shane Butler, this year's census had about 57.7 percent response rate compared to a response rate of 58.1 in 2010.

Butler said the slightly reduced response was likely in part due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We had hoped that it would have been more, but given the circumstances of not being able to go to any community events, and the nature of how everything rolled out this time it's not unexpected," said Butler. "The reason we go through all of this is because the census is about our representation, not only is it for the House of Representatives in Washington, but it's also for our board of supervisors."

"Municipalities that have a higher population have a heavier pull when it comes

***"Municipalities that have a higher population have a heavier pull when it comes to county-wide decisions," - Chenango Planning Department Director Shane Butler***

to county-wide decisions," he said.

Butler added that the census impacts schools because funding for our schools is based on census data, among other things. Programs like Head Start, School Lunch Programs, After School Programs, and Capital Projects are also impacted.

He said while services may see some kind of impact by the response reduction, Chenango County may not see the full results for another year or two while federal representatives gather and organize the submitted data.

"It's hard to say when we'll see what kind of impact this has on our funding," Butler said. "It might be another year or two before we see the data results."

According to the US Census website, the New York State average for self-response was approximately 64.2 percent,

and Chenango County's self response rate was 57.7 percent.

Within the county, the Town of Norwich had a response rate of 66.9 percent, the City of Norwich responded at 64.4 percent, the Town of Greene had 66.1 percent, and the Town of Sherburne had 62.6 percent.

The site shows that approximately 39.2 percent of self responses in Chenango County were done online.

Butler said combined efforts of politicians including New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo, Congressman Anthony Brindisi, and Senator Chuck Schumer assisted with the census. He said he appreciates everyone who took the time to fill out the survey, and county officials hope to have an even larger response in 2030.

The three Towns with the highest self-response rates were the Town of Norwich (66.9%), the Town of Greene (66.1%) and the Town of Sherburne (62.6%).

The three Villages with the highest self-response rates were the Village of Greene (67.4%), City of Norwich (64.4%) and the Village of Sherburne (60.7%).

Thank you to everyone who filled out their survey and Made Chenango County Count. Your responses will help Chenango County in the future!

## **Countywide Hazard Mitigation Plan**

A hazard mitigation plan (HMP) is "the representation of the jurisdiction's commitment to reduce risks from natural hazards, serving as a guide for decision makers as they commit resources to reducing the effects of natural hazards" (44 CFR 201.6). HMP's establish and maintain eligibility for grant funds. The planning process is as important as the plan itself because it creates a framework for governments to reduce the negative impacts from future disasters on lives, property, and the economy.

With the existing plan nearing its five-year expiration, in late 2019 the Planning Department was awarded a grant from the NYS Department of Homeland Security & Emergency Services (DHSES) for \$112,500 to update the Chenango County Multi-Jurisdictional, All-Hazards Mitigation Plan on behalf of Chenango County, its Towns, Villages, and City.

After a Request for Proposals (RFP), Chenango County contracted with TetraTech, author of the previous two iterations, to update the plan once again.

While the Planning Department has coordinated the effort, a Steering Committee comprised of Matt Beckwith, Herman Ericksen, Steve Fox, Isaiah Sutton, Kerri Green, Shawn Fry, Lance Lockwood, Jennifer Kelly, and A. Jones has been intimately involved in the decision-making process. A secondary committee, the Municipal Planning

Partnership, comprised of local contacts from each of the county's 30 municipalities, has also met multiple times to provide municipal input.

To get public insight, a community survey was advertised twice in The Evening Sun, multiple times on Facebook, and placed on the County Website. Overall, as of December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 183 citizens have responded to the survey, providing valuable information to the plan.

A stakeholder survey was also sent to school districts, various non-profits and service agencies, Federal and State agencies, and neighboring counties to garner additional information.

Progress, including meeting minutes, presentations, surveys, and other information, including the final plan once adopted (anticipated Summer 2021), can be found here:

<https://www.chenangocountynyhmp.com/mitigation/>.



## Expanding Broadband Availability

While we have known broadband availability, affordability, and reliability has been an issue in Chenango County for some time, with businesses and schools operating remotely due to COVID-19, the lack of high-speed internet in rural areas came to the forefront as a priority need.

A report by Congressman Anthony Brindisi's Office highlighted the disparity between Chenango County and other counties in the region, seen in the chart below.

To try and help solve the issue, the Planning Office has been working on two fronts:

First, we have joined a Regional Broadband Collaborative, encompassing Broome, Chenango, Cortland, Delaware and Tompkins Counties. The collaborative, staffed by Southern Tier 8, is made up of Planning Directors, Emergency Management Directors and Economic Developers from each County who have come together, gathered data from school districts and municipalities, held virtual workshops with presentations by municipalities and service providers, and are now looking for grant opportunities in order to expand access as a region.

Secondly, we are assisting our partner agencies and a local company expand wireless broadband infrastructure into our rural towns, providing data and letters of support for grant applications, establishing connections with other partner organizations and municipalities, etc. The project is promising, and we can't wait to see what comes of it in 2021.

Average internet speeds in counties of New York's 22nd Congressional District (According to M-Lab's database)			
County	Download (Mbps)	Upload (Mbps)	Combined (Mbps)
Broome	29.6	8.5	38.2
Chenango	5.3	0.9	6.2
Cortland	23.2	7.2	30.4
Herkimer	22.0	6.8	28.8
Madison	29.5	9.0	38.5
Oneida	28.4	7.9	36.3
Oswego	31.4	8.6	40.0
Tioga	22.3	4.4	26.7

Table 1: Copied from Congressman Brindisi's Report

Overall, we hope the work we have done on broadband this year has laid a solid foundation for progress solving this problem in 2021.

## Homeownership and Housing Rehabilitation

Chenango County, with sub-recipient Greater Opportunities for Broome and Chenango, Inc. (formerly known as Opportunities for Chenango, Inc.), submitted and was awarded a \$500,000 NYS Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for the Chenango County Housing Rehabilitation Program. The grant, which will run through 2021, or until funds are expended, was intended to assist approximately sixteen (16) low-moderate income owner-occupied households across Chenango County in correcting serious threats to health and safety issues to homeowners. Due to higher than usual costs per household, we expect less households to be served with this grant.

A second CDBG application was submitted with sub-recipient Greater Opportunities for Broome and Chenango, Inc., for the Chenango County Homeownership IX Program. Chenango County was subsequently awarded \$350,000 to undertake this program. The grant, which also will run through 2021, or until funds are expended, will assist approximately fourteen (14) First Time Homebuyers in purchasing their first home.

Thank you to the staff at Greater Opportunities for Broome and Chenango Inc. for their continued support and flawless execution of these grant programs.

# Transportation as a Barrier

Since late 2017, the Planning Department has been contracted by the Rural Health Network of South Central New York (RHNSCNY) to provide support and development of rural transportation and mobility services in Chenango County.

Our plan for 2020 was to attend as many community events as possible to disseminate fliers and meet with people to spread the word about what programs Getthere had to offer. With events cancelled, we had to find a different way.

One of our ideas was to hold a Virtual Transportation Workshop and Information Session for Non-Profits and Service Agencies. With presentations by the Planning Department and Bill Wagner from Getthere, the 25 attendees learned how to use the Getthere Trip Planner, learned about the different programs Getthere offers, and a discussion of what transportation needs were still out there, and how attendees could help. Overall, this was a huge success and we hope to hold more in the future.



As part of our second idea, in November, we contracted with Riger Marketing for an outreach program to develop print and mail 2,000 flyers with information about Getthere programming to homeowners across Chenango County. An additional 2,000 Volunteer Driver flyers were printed and mailed to area churches, not-for-profits and service agencies in Chenango County. Advertisements were also placed in The Evening Sun and the Pennysaver. The outreach effort took place in November and December. We hope to see metrics in Spring 2021 which show how effective this campaign was.

Also in 2020, Chenango County contracted with RHNSCNY through the Getthere program to offer a limited version of the Transportation to Employment Program (TEP) in Chenango County.

As of mid-December, Getthere had 18 referrals to the program, ten of which have had transportation to employment assistance initiated with six achieving 90 days of employment. Additional individuals have not yet reached the 90-day mark but will do so in 2021. Total mileage traveled to and from work was 3228.90 miles. Employment sectors included one from Food & Hospitality, two from Health Care, four from Manufacturing, and three from Retail/Sales.

With this success of the limited program in 2020, Chenango County has agreed to fund the program again in 2021.



# Planning Board Report

General Municipal Law 239-m requires the referral of certain proposed city, town and village planning and zoning actions to the county planning agency or regional planning council. Certain actions include adoption or amendment of a comprehensive plan, adoption or amendments of a zoning ordinance or local law, issuance of special use permits, approval of site plans, use or area variances, or other authorizations under provisions of a zoning ordinance or local law, so long as those actions are within 500 feet of certain parameters including but not limited to State or County roads or highways, municipal boundaries, county or state parks, or the boundary of any farm located in an agricultural district.

The Planning Department coordinates this review process by accepting the applications from municipal boards, referring to outside agencies for feedback if necessary, creating aerial maps of the location, sending applications to County Planning Board members, providing professional input, and sending corresponding decisions by the County Planning Board back to the referring municipality.



The County Planning Board provided 35 239-reviews in 2020, down from 43 in 2019, but in line with the usual cycle. Of those reviews, 24 were for subdivisions, eight site plan reviews, two local laws and one special use permit. Nine applications were referred to NYSDOT for their supplemental review.

## Planning for the Future of Agriculture

Throughout 2020, the Planning Department worked with the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board (AFPB) to update the Chenango County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan, last updated in 2012.

To gather community input and better understand existing conditions, the AFBP sent a survey to approximately 510 landowners across various property classifications, mainly focused on farmers but additional residents as well. A total of 72 surveys were returned prior to the deadline with several more coming after.

This survey data, in conjunction with the 2017 USDA Ag Census data, will be incorporated into the plan and will guide the goals and initiatives for implementation.

Further in the process, additional community input will be solicited as well as a public hearing prior to adoption.

A tentative date of completion has not been established, but it is expected sometime in late 2021 or early 2022.

## Goals for 2021

- 8-Year Review of Agricultural District #2A
- Ag and Farmland Protection Plan Completed
- County-wide Clean Energy Initiatives and Projects
- Expanded Broadband Availability in Rural Areas
- Grant Administration, Writing and Awards
- Hazard Mitigation Plan Completed
- Transportation Promotion

## Workforce Development – Consultant's Thoughts

*Steve Palmatier, President - Walking Ridge Development, LLC.*

What a strange year. In reviewing my calendar for 2020, how my work evolved, and the surprising pace of the change.

In the period leading up to the Covid-19 shutdowns, I was teaching a machining course at UV while also helping them acquire additional equipment, working with Oxford assessing equipment that they had and brainstorming how to create a community Makers Space in the soon to be renovated bus garage and working with Southern Tier 8 and AM&T on workforce development and planning for a regional manufacturing trade show.

With SUNY Morrisville we were working with Unison on a Mechatronics program, planning another manufacturing boot camp for unemployed / under employed individuals and creating a similar program focused on the skills of an electrician's helper.

I was also working with Chris Houghtaling on his project aimed at bringing startups from Eastern Europe to the region. We connected one company with the CASE Center at Syracuse University. The company had developed software to take control of a drone and CASE staff, with expertise in drones and antennas, had committed to helping the

company develop their product. It was our intention to locate the company in Norwich and we were looking at office space for the three employees who planned on relocating here.

All of this stopped in mid-March.

March and April seemed to be consumed with Covid-19 related issues. I fielded numerous calls from companies looking for safety materials like plexiglass for barriers, PPE and other supplies. Also, as a member of the Board of Directors at CMH the time spent on issues related to the Hospital increased dramatically.

Things shifted again in May and everything moved online. I spent hours in online meetings covering topics ranging from grants, workforce, entrepreneurship and business development.

Additional highlights from 2020:

UV - I have worked with the school and the Society of Manufacturing Engineers on the development of an SME Prime School Program. With a goal of raising \$158,000 for the school from local employers I have been in numerous zoom meetings explaining the program.

SUNY Morrisville - We continue to work on expanding our offerings to employers in the region and developing additional offerings outside of manufacturing. We have also had several meetings with the Manufacturing Association of Central NY exploring other ways of delivering our programs to better serve small and midsize manufacturers.

Oxford - The Makers Space concept is still being discussed and we will be meeting with the architects in late January.

Norwich Central Schools - I have been working with Scott Ryan whom will become the Superintendent of the school in January on a vision for the Chirlin Academy.

Tier Energy Network - They meet twice a month, once to address emerging energy regulations and technologies and a second time to address workforce and employment in the "Green Energy" sector. I have facilitated several meetings to introduce local businesses to some of the emerging technologies. Both Chobani and CV Pet Nutrition have been very interested in some of this. I have also had Siemens work with several local companies and schools on energy efficiency projects.

On the workforce side NYSERDA has grants for workforce development. When appropriate I bring them to the attention of local businesses and schools. I have also

worked with SUNY Broome on the outline of a AS program in Mechatronics. This was a program Raymond has asked for and I helped put together the DACUM Committee and participated in the committee meeting.

Grants – I watch several sites for grant opportunities and distribute information on opportunities as appropriate.

I also am a member of a number of professional organizations and have been attending online seminars and meetings. Here are a few examples:

- The Council on Adult and Experiential Learning - This organization focuses on prior learning assessments and career pathways.
- The Business Council of New York State
- National Business Incubation Association – The organization focuses on business incubation and entrepreneurship. Their publication “Best Practices in Rural Business Incubation” written for the Appalachian Regional Commission is a guide to developing an entrepreneurial ecosystem in rural areas.
- The Society of Manufacturing Engineers

Of course, I also attend Planning Board and IDA meetings and am doing some low-level maintenance on the IDA building at the airport. I have also worked with Commerce Chenango on building searches.

Looking Forward to 2021 I think that the following topics deserve our collective attention:

- Workforce development for the adult population.
- Better aligning K – 12 education with the job market.
- Entrepreneurship and the development of an Entrepreneurial Ecosystem in our region. If anyone is interested in the topic in addition to the “Best Practices” book mentioned above I suggest reading “More Good Jobs” by Martin Babinec.
- The potential for reshoring and the shortening of supply chains and how we can be part of that in the region.

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For more information about the Chenango County Department of Planning & Development, visit our website at <https://www.co.chenango.ny.us/planning> or contact us by calling (607) 337-1640 or emailing [planning@co.chenango.ny.us](mailto:planning@co.chenango.ny.us). For up-to-date announcements, you can also “like” our Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/ChenangoPlanning>.