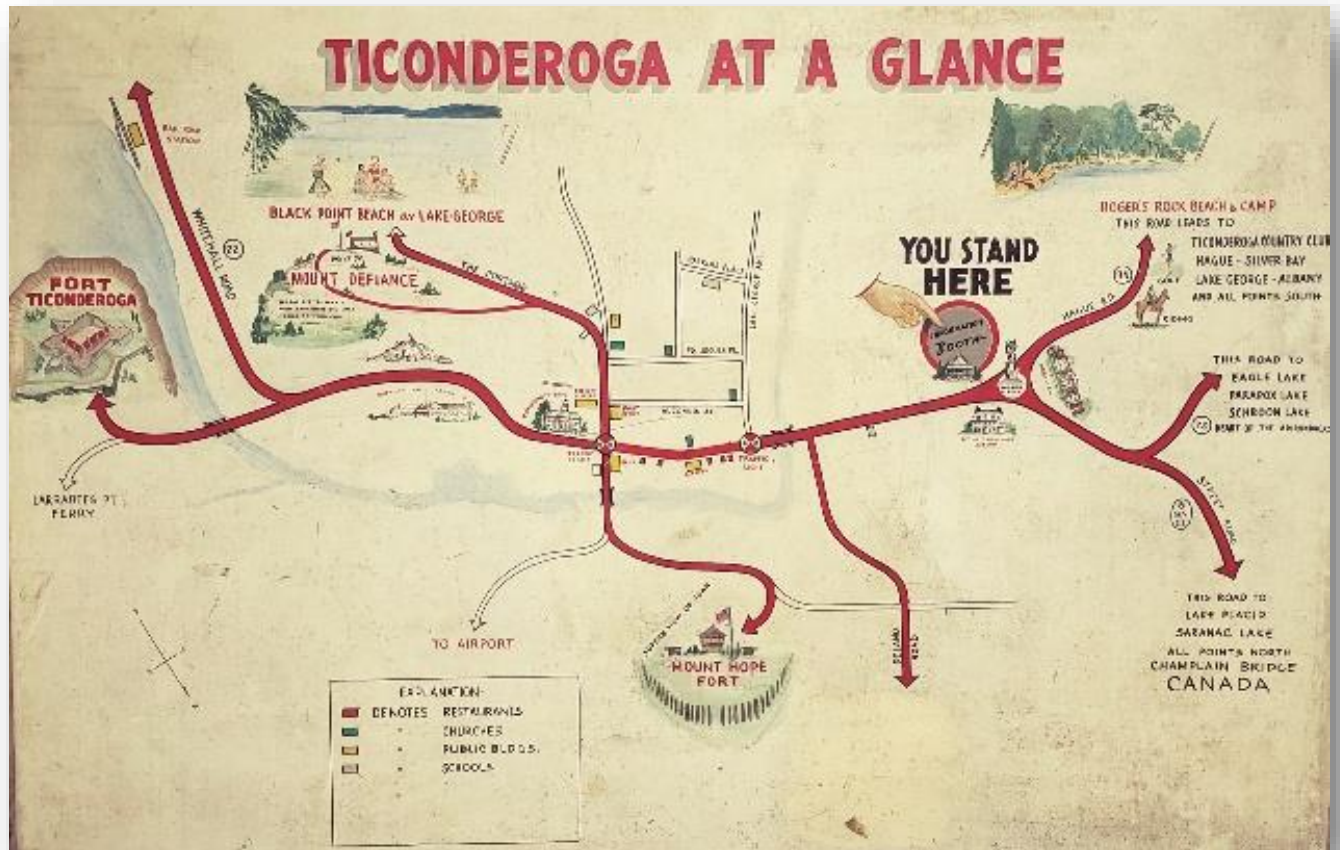


## Year in Review - 2023



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# Executive Summary

The Ticonderoga Town Supervisor is pleased to present this State of the Town report from the Supervisor's office. This is the second State of the Town report issued by the Town of Ticonderoga during this administration. This report is a semi-comprehensive summary of several projects and activities conducted in 2023. The reader may desire to focus on specific sections of interest rather than read the entire report. This State of the Town report documents our successes as well as our shortfalls. It is important to understand that failure is not the opposite of success, it is part of success, and we must always pass through failure on our journey to success.



Ticonderoga continued its aggressive approach in 2023 towards revitalization with the addition of two new revitalization programs – The New York State Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) and the Ticonderoga Microgrant Enterprise (TiME) program. Once again, we understand the extreme workload burden on staff to accomplish day-to-day tasks while increasing our efforts with new endeavors, but the projects in 2023 were important and significant – DRI efforts, Microgrant program, a Comptroller audit, Financial Advisor review of the Town finances, and much more. Many goals were achieved, some projects remain in progress, others laid the foundation for work which will begin or continue in 2024. This report identifies the status of each goal. The following nomenclature applies to tasks regarding goal status:

**COMPLETED:** The goal was completed during the year.

**PARTIALLY COMPLETED:** The goal was expected to be across fiscal years.



**NOT COMPLETED:** The goal should have been or was expected to be achieved during the year and was not.

Some of the goals of this administration included (in no order of priority):

First Term (2<sup>nd</sup> Year)

- ✓ Continue economic development and revitalization activities.
- ✓ Complete DRI project efforts for submission to State.
- ✓ Continue resident access to and communication with the Supervisor's office.
- ✓ Mitigate St. Clair/Grove Street flooding issue.
- ✓ Complete town generator project.
- ✓ Continue employee morale improvement/sustainment efforts.
- ✓ Execute a microgrant program.
- ✓ Review delegation approaches.
- ✓ Improve/maintain coordination and partnership with community organizations.
- ✓ Improve and maintain infrastructure.
- ✓ Advance progress on Chilson/Eagle Lake water solution.
- ✓ Review and scrutinize town budget.
- ✓ Complete Town Internal Emergency Response Plan and building security plan.

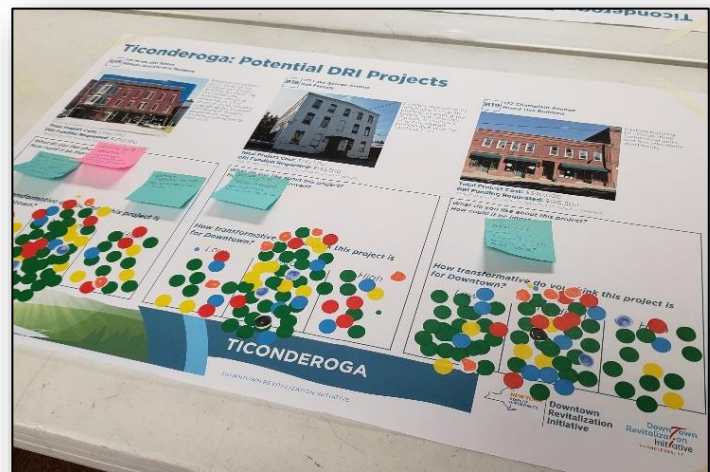
Second Term (1<sup>st</sup> Year)

- Begin DRI project design and planning/construction phase as directed by NYS.
- Update the Town's Comprehensive Plan using grant funding.
- Continue with infrastructure improvements.
- Continue advancement of Chilson/Eagle Lake municipal water solution.
- Move mitigation of St. Clair/Grove Street flooding issue towards completion.
- Monitor Alexandria Bridge construction.
- Begin and complete construction of La Chute Trail Extension project.
- Adopt a Sick Leave Donation policy.
- Investigate airport expansion project.
- Support Regan Development Corporation project.
- Advance efforts on a new home for the Police Department.
- Remove blighted property at 8 Johns Street.

## Economic Development / Revitalization

Economic development in Ticonderoga remains an active and ongoing issue with more investors taking a role in Ticonderoga now than at any time in the recent past. The Town continued the efforts of its Economic Development Committee (EDC) and included the Fort Ticonderoga Association as a new member of the Committee. This has been a successful effort in 2023, and I am pleased to report that all revitalization and economic development organizations have a better understanding regarding status of all their partner organization's revitalization efforts and where they are going in terms of goals. Many of the committee members also participated as New York State

Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) Local Planning Committee (LPC) members which helped to synchronize development efforts and share information.



*Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) public feedback.*

## Access & Communication

There is a noticeable difference in information access and distribution among staff and departments as well as information sharing with the public. The Town continues to ensure projects and roles and responsibilities are more than one level deep. It is not a perfect system yet given the workload and available funding for staff, but there is progress.

The Town Supervisor continues to be available to residents. Walk-ins are encouraged and phone calls/emails are promptly returned. The Supervisor continues to walk the town and attend events which allow further access for residents.

## Employee Morale

The Town continues in its efforts to maintain and increase staff morale with a goal to lower staff turnover, decrease training costs and associated impacts, increase job satisfaction, and to make municipal jobs sought after once again like they once were many years ago. Despite a more relaxed work environment, the Town still has a requirement to give a professional 8 hours of work for 8 hours of pay and to be accountable for one's actions.



## Increase Coordination & Partnership

The Town has been heavily engaged working with the Ticonderoga Area Chamber of Commerce (TACC), the Ticonderoga Revitalization Alliance (TRA), PRIDE of Ticonderoga, and the Ticonderoga Montcalm Street Partnership (TMSP) during 2023 as part of its goal to increase coordination with community partners for the benefit of economic development/revitalization while avoiding reinventing the wheel and the duplication of effort. The Town Supervisor attended TACC, TRA, and TMSP board meetings in the ex-officio role and the Ticonderoga Fire District Board of Fire Commissioner meetings on a regular basis. The Town has also coordinated with Sylvamo, the Fort Ticonderoga Association, Silver Bay, and others.



*National Grid event.*



*Repainting at Town Hall.*

## Improve Infrastructure

Paving of public parking lots and replacement of public sidewalks continued in 2023 using the remainder of former New York State Senator Betty Little funding, ARPA funding, and budgeted funds. PRIDE of Ticonderoga, working with the Town, installed a new children's playground at Black Point Beach, work was completed on the Eagle Lake Causeway, and the municipal airport apron and taxiway were rehabilitated followed by the runway. Design will begin in 2024 for the Alexandria Bridge. Ticonderoga is slowly and responsibly on a road to repair its infrastructure.

## Budget

The 2024 town budget was finely scrutinized and approximately \$670,000 was cut in many areas this year. Despite this effort, a rise in the inflation rate three times higher than the State tax cap, increases in insurance, workers' compensation, and litigation costs made it

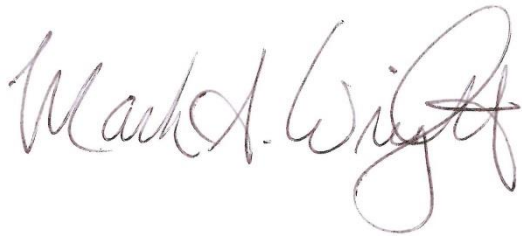
impossible to keep the 2024 budget under the tax cap. Ticonderoga, like many Essex County towns was forced to exceed the cap. The Town employed a financial analyst to review our current and future capital projects, their associated grant portions, and town matching obligations to ensure we do not overcommit valuable taxpayer dollars in an overextended approach to improvement. The Town partnered with the Essex County Office of Community Resources to secure grant funding to obtain a consultant who can update the Town's 2006 Comprehensive Plan. The Town must accomplish this before addressing some very necessary zoning law issues.

## Conclusion

The State of the Town is good and moving forward. There is much we still wish to accomplish. Ticonderoga has several projects and improvements in work, some of which are required for the betterment of its residents, and some which are mandated unfortunately without the funding to complete them such as water meters and compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974 with amendments associated with Gooseneck Pond.

We remain on a positive trajectory and are constantly improving. Ticonderoga is coming back, and many eyes are on Ticonderoga! There is a continued air of positivity, forward movement, and investment by private entities. The DRI effort alone will significantly change the look of the main Montcalm business district for decades to come. This revitalization will improve business, encourage new investment, allow walkability, and play a major role in decarbonization. Many goals have been accomplished, but there are always new projects and tasks on the horizon. Even upon achieving all our goals, there is always room for improvement to make a better life for all residents.

I wish to thank all the Ticonderoga Town staff and town partners who worked diligently every day to make this a successful year for Ticonderoga.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Mark A. Wright". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mark" and last name "Wright" clearly legible.

Mark A. Wright, Supervisor  
Town of Ticonderoga

# 1.0 Employee Morale

The most valuable resource of any organization is its people. It has been a goal to provide an efficient yet pleasant work environment. Employee morale efforts continued in 2023. Staff are encouraged to express their ideas and personalize their work environment. The new and existing teams (HR, Labor Relations, legal, youth, Assessor, etc.) have continued to make the work environment smooth and efficient. All Town staff must complete their assigned duties, but office life need not be unenjoyable and drab.



*Above & Beyond Award*

## 1.1 Employee Handbook

**GOAL:** Implement Updates

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

The Employee Handbook was significantly modified in 2022. Flexibility to change our employee handbook is one of the benefits of a living document. New York State changes in harassment policy, additional State policies, and some other Town changes such as the implementation of a sick leave donation policy necessitated an update in November 2023.

The Town Board has implemented, through resolution, a sick leave donation policy as a new option which allows anyone with available sick leave to donate an amount of their sick leave in 8-hour increments to a full-time employee who has exhausted their own time and is unable to work for an extended period due to a serious health condition. A more specific and descriptive separate written policy was initiated in mid-November which includes forms and paperwork to track participants and donors more effectively in this program. This should be ready in early 2024 for Town Board adoption. We must do everything we can to take care of our staff.

New York State updated their sexual harassment policy and Workplace Violence Prevention Program which are now incorporated. Also included is the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act. The Town's HR consultant provides exceptional support to ensure we have the latest policies and information available to our staff.

## 1.2 Payroll

**GOAL:** Obtain New Payroll Provider

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

The Town officially began its relationship with a new payroll provider, Paychex, in January after having several conversations and discussions with that provider in the preceding months. This effort was not entered into lightly, and the Town interviewed another NYS municipality to obtain their feedback on using this provider as that municipality had used Paychex for a considerable amount of time. This change in provider increased services and reduced administrative burdens and unplanned financial impacts to the town budget.

The Finance Department spent the first month working closely with Paychex to establish all the features and requirements needed to switch payroll systems. This was a significant effort and there were a few hiccups, but it was well worth the challenge and the remainder of 2023 has proceeded rather smoothly. This action also allowed the Town to change the payday back to the original Friday that many staff have requested for years to help them better meet their financial obligations.

## 1.3 Delegation & Eliminating Micromanagement

**GOAL:** Focus on Delegation and Remove Micromanagement

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

Delegation of duties was a major goal to increase productivity and morale and allow staff to become more invested in the mission. These efforts continued in 2023. Ticonderoga has a wealth of talented and skilled town workers with each having the skills and subject matter expertise which keep the town operating. Employing delegation techniques has been effective when dealing with limited resources and time. Staff continue to accomplish their duties without micromanagement and Department heads carry out their responsibilities without unwarranted Town Supervisor intervention.

Staff delegated to manage in the areas of Human Resources and Safety Coordination have done well in taking on these roles and responsibilities and accomplishing related tasks such as interviews and hiring and specific personnel matters while referring more delicate matters to the Town Supervisor and Town HR Consultant. The hiring of a new Recreation Supervisor has allowed the Town Supervisor to delegate after school program, summer program, and beach program responsibilities. Inquiries and comments to the Town Supervisor in specific areas are now referred to the appropriate Department Head and/or position. This has successfully placed the



right role and responsibility with the right person, increasing efficiency and freeing the Town Supervisor to focus on tasks which clearly lie in that role.

## 1.4 Employee Recognition

**GOAL:** Develop Recognition Program

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

Often, what people want most is simply recognition and a word of thanks. The Town Supervisor instituted an “Above & Beyond” award in 2023. This program recognizes town staff who went above and beyond in the performance of their duties. An individual may be recommended by a co-worker, department head, or the Town Supervisor. The Town Supervisor determines eligibility and provides an award which consists of a unique wooden token and a certificate. The Town gave the first award this year to an employee in the Code Enforcement office. Additional awards were provided in 2023 to the summer program counselor staff to recognize their extensive efforts to make this program a success when faced with several challenges throughout the summer.



*Above & Beyond Award*

This program was funded at the Town Supervisor’s personal expense for the design and purchase of the award tokens and certificate stock. This award is very limited and only available to Town staff.

## 1.5 Other Incentives

**GOAL:** Encourage New Incentives

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

Staff morale is important and the use of incentives which do not impact town operations or reflect negatively upon the town were implemented in 2022. Hawaiian Shirt Friday was implemented during 2022 and continued in 2023. Flannel Shirt Friday which was approved and benefited a local charity in 2022 also continued in 2023 to again benefit a local charity in need. Staff plan and participate in occasional department pot-luck lunches to build camaraderie.

Staff are encouraged to think outside the box to add new ideas. Frequent staff “potluck” lunches and birthday recognitions are encouraged as they provide camaraderie and relief to the normal workday routine. As stated in last year’s report, incentives like these will never change the world

but provide a more friendly and tolerable work environment which can lead to greater employee job satisfaction and less employee turnover.



## 2.0 Economic Development

Economic Development is a key issue for Ticonderoga. Ticonderoga is coming back after slowly declining economically over many decades for many reasons. The Town now has excellent working relationships with local/regional revitalization and economic development organizations. The Economic Development Committee is doing well and meets monthly. Committee members include the Town of Ticonderoga (two board members) and representatives from PRIDE of Ticonderoga, the Ticonderoga Montcalm Street Partnership (TMSP), Ticonderoga Revitalization Alliance (TRA), Ticonderoga Area Chamber of Commerce (TACC), and Business. The Fort Ticonderoga Association was added to the Committee in 2023.



*NYS DRI award.*

### 2.1 Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI)

**GOAL:** Finalize DRI Project Slate

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

The York State Secretary of State, Robert J. Rodriguez, announced on January 23, 2023, that Ticonderoga received the Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) for the North Country Region. This provides \$10 million dollars to our community to specifically address our downtown corridor as defined in the DRI application. DRI is meant to aid communities in their efforts to create vibrant centers for community members and visitors alike. This is an amazing and historic opportunity for Ticonderoga and our surrounding communities to significantly boost our current efforts to reduce decades of economic decline. This is a life-changing opportunity for Ticonderoga.

The Local Planning Committee (LPC) was formed in May and met for six (6) formal public meetings over the next several months to evaluate projects and narrow the best of the best to a group of projects totaling \$12M to \$15M. Along the way, resident participation was requested on the projects submitted by project sponsors. The LPC voted on a final slate of projects in November. The State approved consultant team assembled this final slate into the Strategic Investment Plan and submitted this to New York State in December. The State will decide which projects to fund and should notify the Town in Spring 2024.

## 2.2 New & Expanded Business

**GOAL:** Track New Business

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

Many businesses opened their doors, had ribbon cuttings, and/or expanded in 2023. This is a positive sign for Ticonderoga and the Town will continue to track this topic in ensuing years. These new endeavors included:

- Small Town Boutique
- Dolly & the Bean
- Marinelli's Meats
- Blee's Salon & Spa
- Grit & Grace Skincare
- Timeless Boats
- Bails Cuts & Colors
- The Glowtique
- My Hope Flower Farm
- Adirondack Heat Pumps
- North Country Nutrition
- Adirondack Trading Post
- Ledge Hill Brewing Company
- Porter's Pizza
- Walmart Grand Re-opening renovations and upgrades
- Champ Café
- Punky Noodles
- Trek Tours exhibit expansion
- The Women's Center
- Windchill Mexican Grill expansion
- That's RAD



*New businesses at 172 Champlain Ave.*

## 2.3 Microgrants

**GOAL:** Implement Microgrant Program

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

Through the partnership of the Ticonderoga Area Chamber of Commerce (TACC) and the Essex County Industrial Development Agency (EDIDA), the Town implemented the Ticonderoga Microgrant Enterprise (TiME) program. The foundation behind this program was discussed early in 2022 and implemented in August 2023.

This program is funded through occupancy tax money collected by Essex County from those who visit our area and obtain lodging. These same occupancy tax monies have been used in the past in Ticonderoga for businesses that serve the tourism industry. A portion of these monies is provided to the Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism (ROOST) while a portion is provided to the 18 towns in Essex County. This money must be used for tourism development in accordance with New York State law. Towns can use this money in any manner as long as it complies with NYS law and follows the guidelines established and approved by the Essex County Board of Supervisors. The TiME program does just that.

TiME uses a portion of the Town's occupancy tax money allotment. Applicants must meet strict eligibility requirements to be considered and then must follow strict training requirements, reporting guidelines, and meet completion timelines. An eligible applicant must match 10% of the grant and is not reimbursed or paid until the project is complete. A committee of community members reviewed six (6) approved applicants and awarded grants (minimum of \$5,000 and maximum of \$10,000). Recipients received letters of acknowledgement in November. These included Brookwood RV Resort, LLC (\$10,000), Ticonderoga Natural Foods Co-Operative, Inc. (\$10,000), Small Town Boutique (\$10,000), Montcalm Liquors, Inc. (\$8,000), Fox and Fern Adirondack Mercantile, LLC (\$7,000), and Ticonderoga Trading Post (\$5,000).

This program will help strengthen and grow those local businesses which serve the tourism industry throughout the entirety of Ticonderoga and therefore will strengthen and help expand our local economy.

## 2.4 Zoning Issues

**GOAL:** Correct Commercial Parcel Zoning

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

In October, the Town realized that many commercial properties are incorrectly zoned. Specifically, several parcels containing commercial endeavors have zoning lines bisecting them and dividing them into central commercial and high-density residential. This creates issues for future development and can impact the affected business and local economy. The Town Supervisor appeared before the Planning & Zoning Board (PZB) in November and provided details to the Board, requesting the PZB to recommend a solution to the Town Board. The PZB concurred with data provided and recommended the Town change the zoning line to correct the issue. The Town Board implemented these zoning changes in December through a local law. The Town Code Enforcement Office will work with the County to add the new zoning lines to County maps.

## 2.5 Regan Development Corporation

**GOAL:** Secure Housing Development

**STATUS: PARTIALLY COMPLETED**

Regan Development Corporation continues in its efforts to develop a 60-unit apartment complex proposed for the Fireman's Field location off NYS74. This resulted from an invitation from the Town Supervisor in April 2022 to the company President citing a potential housing development opportunity in Ticonderoga. Not only does this project bring drastically needed housing to our community but a part of the project also proposes a section of daycare within the facility satisfying a second critical necessity.

The Supervisor continued to work with the developer, Town Attorney, Code Enforcement Officer, Water/Sewer Department, local business, Ticonderoga Revitalization Alliance, ROOST, and the Town Planning & Zoning Board during the year. It is expected that the developer will appear before the Planning & Zoning Board in 2024.

## 2.6 Solar Projects

**GOAL:** Support Solar Projects

**STATUS: PARTIALLY COMPLETED**

Ticonderoga continues to facilitate solar projects through Town staff and partners with Essex County Office of Community Resources to execute a Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) schedule that has become attractive and affordable for solar companies, while also generating revenue for the town and property owners. Ticonderoga has an abundance of level ground and proximity to high-voltage transmission lines which are two conditions essential for solar farms.

Six (6) solar farms have been approved to date through the Planning & Zoning Board for construction. Two of the projects are 99% completed (Pivot 1, Commerce Park, and Pivot 9, Street Road) as of this report. Both are awaiting witness tests from National Grid to verify compliance with the National Electrical Code.

Construction at Pivot 6, Old Chilson Road, and Pivot 5, Delano Road, are still in progress and should be completed in early 2024. Construction at Ticon Solar, Charboneau Road, is in progress and is anticipated to be online early to mid-summer 2024. These above-mentioned systems will all supply energy into the local distribution system for consumption. ELP Solar, Veterans Road, finalized the construction permit process to begin construction in November 2023. This Solar Farm is the largest system planned for Ticonderoga at 20 Mega-Watts and will be supplying energy into the high voltage lines for delivery to areas outside of the Ticonderoga boundaries.

## 2.7 Lowe's Property

**GOAL:** Aid in Finding a Tenant

**STATUS: NOT COMPLETED**

The Town continues to respond to requests for information and provide points of contact by those agencies and organizations seeking an inroad into securing the Lowe's property for commercial development. The property is owned by a publicly traded real estate investment trust, which leases the property to Lowes. This lease expires in February 2029. Lowes has a renewal option to extend the lease until 2090 but this will probably not occur. The current owner has stated that it has no interest in leasing or selling as it recently acquired the property pursuant to a merger with the previous owner and therefore, the property is a tax benefit.

The Town, although it desperately seeks to make this property commercially viable once again, has no authority to influence or direct the future of the property. The Town coordinated with the Ticonderoga Fire District, the Essex County Industrial Development Agency (ECIDA), and others during the last two years to aid those organizations in their attempts to purchase or discuss use of the facility. To date, no efforts to obtain the property have been successful.

## 2.8 Essex County Land Bank

**GOAL:** Transfer Property

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

The Town worked with the Essex County Board of Supervisors, PRIDE of Ticonderoga, and the Essex County Land Bank in 2023 to transfer foreclosed property scheduled for County auction into the Essex County Land Bank for further development. The Essex County Land Bank will rehabilitate these properties into affordable housing and return them to the County or applicable town tax registers while helping to fill the need for housing in our County and town. County property at 175 The Portage was transferred to the Land Bank in 2023. The Town Board also approved transfer of the property at 130 The Portage to the Land Bank in December.



*Land Bank property at 130 The Portage*



## 3.0 Infrastructure Improvement

The improvement of our infrastructure is not only important from the standpoint of safety, but also ties directly to the economic development of Ticonderoga and how our town appears to not only our residents, but also to our visitors. Why would anyone invest in a town which is unwilling to invest in itself? This is the rationale for continuing efforts to improve our infrastructure.



*Eagle Lake Causeway*

### 3.1 Sidewalk Removal & Replacement

**GOAL:** Continue Sidewalk Replacement

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

Ticonderoga's sidewalks have been a prime example of crumbling infrastructure for many decades. Sidewalk replacement was a critical goal for the new Supervisor in 2022 and continued in 2023 with an approximate 3,364 square feet of existing sidewalk replaced in the town. This included areas along Lake George Avenue, Amherst Avenue, Iroquois Street, Champlain Avenue, Montcalm Street, and Father Jogues Place. The 2023 replacement program was completed in early November.



*Sidewalk replacement on Lake George Avenue.*

### 3.2 Public Parking Lot Improvements

**GOAL:** Pave Public Parking Lots

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

Ticonderoga seeks to become a destination for tourism while providing safe infrastructure for its residents. The longer maintenance is postponed, the further the degradation becomes and the more expensive it becomes to mitigate and correct issues. The Town used millings to cover the Black Point Beach parking lot in 2023. This was a cost-effective solution to help keep down the dust and mud during the summer season.



### 3.3 St. Clair/Grove Flooding

**GOAL:** Mitigate St. Clair Flooding

**STATUS:** PARTIALLY COMPLETED

As reported in the 2022 State of the Town report, the pooling of excessive storm water during heavy, consistent rain events has caused large buildup of water at the intersection of St. Clair Street and Grove Street for many years due to several factors. The Town's efforts to correct this have also occurred for many years but significant progress was made in 2023 to alleviate the issue. Correcting this deficiency remains a high priority project for the Town and current administration.

Efforts to correct the issue have been obstructed by a select few residents who were critical to the solution and a successful effort could have been funded and completed if better cooperation with the Town was achieved. One solution required the enactment of needed easements with the Town which would have allowed the town to install a new drainage pipe through private property and return the property to its original condition. Town efforts were impeded from refusal to sign easements, to harassment during site inspections, to threats of violence upon town contracted surveyors. Despite these impediments, the Town continues to move forward towards a solution.



*Before Mitigation: St. Clair and Gove Flooding.*

One area which received attention this year involved the existing drainage pipe which traverses several private properties before exiting and depositing the runoff water in a safe fashion. Highway and Water Department personnel discovered this pipe, daylighted and extended the drainage pipe thanks to the great generosity & cooperation of a nearby resident. This pipe had been somewhat crushed by fill over the years by a nearby property owner. This effort has made a significant difference in eliminating water buildup, but we are not convinced that this has completely solved the problem given a 100-year storm type of rain event.

Another area which received attention this year was the Lowe's retention pond upstream of the flooding area. The Town Code Enforcement Officer contacted Lowe's property management requesting them to investigate the status of their retention pond. Individuals were on site to clear

both the drain leading into the retention pond and the overflow. The Town has not completed its focus on this area and has contacted Lowe's regarding continuing maintenance of this retention pond.

The Town and neighbors witnessed very positive results during a subsequent 4+ inch rain event over several days in July and a second storm on December 18. Although similar events in the past have flooded this area with over 3 feet of water, no road flooding occurred during both events although some neighbor lawn flooding was still present. This work by Town Water/Sewer and Highway along with the cooperation of one resident has made a significant difference, and the Town will continue its efforts. The Town is completing an engineering report to address drainage and other originating sources of runoff water which affect this area.

### 3.4 Water District Consolidation

**GOAL:** Consolidate Water Districts

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

The effort to consolidate the Ticonderoga water districts of 9N & 74 Water District (SW01), Street Road Water District (SW02), Alexandria Water District No. 1 (SW03), Homeland Water District (SW04), Alexandria Water District No. 2 (SW05), Central Water District (SW06), Park Avenue Water District (SW07), and Shore Airport Road Water District (SW09) and extension was completed in October 2023. This became effective in January 2024.

The consolidation did not change the water service but condensed the multiple districts into one district. Some districts still have debt, and those district users will pay their own debt that is applicable only to their own district. In the future, any projects that require debt will be paid by the entire consolidated district.

This effort will eventually save time and money. Currently, bookkeeping is required separately for all water districts. Once debt for individual districts is paid off, any future repairs anywhere in the consolidated district will be borne by the consolidated district. In addition, O&M that is currently billed among all the districts, will now be billed in one consolidated billing. This will not immediately solve the difference in debt, but as that debt is retired, continued savings should accrue. The Town will pursue a similar effort to consolidate its sewer districts.

### 3.5 La Chute Trail

**GOAL:** Replace Trail Signs

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

The waterfront and waterfalls of La Chute River please residents as well as attract visitors from many areas. This is one of Ticonderoga's unique gems. La Chute Trail encompasses several historical signs that depict Ticonderoga's water and industrial heritage. PRIDE of Ticonderoga initially began the installation of these signs in 2007. Over time, these signs and their support structures have been beaten by weather and some vandalized. PRIDE of Ticonderoga initiated an effort in 2023 in cooperation with the Ticonderoga Historical Society and the Town to replace and update these interpretive signs including new pictures and data. PRIDE funded the effort and Town Parks & Recreation crews repainted the support structure, removed the old signs, and replaced the new signs in October.



*New La Chute Trail signs.*

### 3.6 Repair Flood Damage

**GOAL:** Define FEMA Projects

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

Heavy rains on July 9 and 10 of 2023 caused significant damage to areas of Essex County. Ticonderoga was affected and one major washout occurred on Old Chilson Road which was repaired and returned to service. The Highway and Water/Sewer Departments also completed damage and repairs at DeLano Road, Abercrombie, and the Wastewater Treatment Plant. The Town declared a Local State of Emergency during this event.



*Old Chilson Road washout.*

In September, the Town began working with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and NYS Department of Homeland Security (NYS DHS) to examine projects which could be subject to FEMA reimbursement. These were completed and submitted in December.

### 3.7 Police Station

**GOAL:** Evaluate Proposals

**STATUS: PARTIALLY COMPLETED**

The Town continues to work on a proper solution for a permanent home for the Ticonderoga Police Department. The current facility is deteriorated and insufficient for law enforcement operations. The Municipal Facility Evaluation Committee (MFEC) has discussed this issue and tasked the Town Engineer to develop cost estimates for a new facility. The Committee determined the appropriate location as the Highway Garage property already owned by the Town.

In February, a group approached the Town with a proposal to purchase the Hudson Headwaters Health Network building on Racetrack Road, now vacated, and offered to lease a portion of that structure to the Town for a new police department home. The potential buyers provided their proposal to the Town Board and both parties exchanged information and questions throughout the remaining months regarding the lease and other details. In October, the Town discussed completing a cost benefit analysis proposal with its financial consultant to examine the options of building new versus leasing. In December, the MFEC recommended to the Town Board that it no longer pursue a leasing option and begin an effort to examine financing options associated with constructing a new building. This closed all leasing efforts for that building as an option. The activity to develop a new station will continue into 2024.

### 3.8 Other Improvements

**GOAL:** Building Improvements

**STATUS: NOT COMPLETED**

The Community Building, Black Watch Library, and Ticonderoga Heritage Museum buildings were submitted as NYS Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) projects. Improvements included 2<sup>nd</sup> floor air conditioning, exterior cleaning, new windows, cupola work, and electrical work for the Community Building; brick pointing, new windows, a heating system, and grading at the Museum; and a story walk and other amenities for the Library. The Local Planning Committee (LPC) did not move these projects forward during the review cycle. Any efforts to improve these facilities in the future will require additional funding sources. The Town began investigating other avenues for funding with PRIDE of Ticonderoga in December.



## 4.0 Coordination Efforts

Coordination is critical to the successful implementation of any activity and frequent, inclusive communication remains a major core value for this administration. The Town Supervisor continued to ensure email and phone communication was frequent on issues that required coordination among all relevant organizations in 2023. The Supervisor supported all organizational meetings with town partners when they did not conflict with town obligations.

These included coordination with emergency services, ex-officio obligations, and other internal and external requirements. Specific partnership communication metrics may be found in section 5.0.



### 4.1 Ex-Officio Responsibilities

**GOAL:** Participate as Ex-Officio

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

The Ticonderoga Town Supervisor is an ex-officio member of the Ticonderoga Area Chamber of Commerce (TACC) Board, the Ticonderoga Montcalm Street Partnership (TMSP) Board, and the Ticonderoga Revitalization Alliance (TRA) Board as well as an alternate to the Essex County Land Bank Board. Prior town support to these organizations was not provided or provided in a limited capacity. The current administration continues to consider these partnerships as critical and vital links to Ticonderoga's successful revitalization and economic development efforts. As was accomplished in 2022, the Town Supervisor continued to attend these organizational meetings and events, shared information, and coordinated with their annual activities in 2023.

### 4.2 Ticonderoga Fire District Board of Fire Commissioners

**GOAL:** Attend Fire District Meetings

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

The Ticonderoga Fire District, as a separate taxing district, provides a budget to the Town of Ticonderoga each fiscal year in accordance with its charter and the Town collects this levy on behalf of the fire district. The Supervisor recognizes the importance of cooperating and

partnering with the Fire District if for nothing else, situational awareness. The Town Supervisor attended more than 40 Fire District and Fire Commissioner meetings and District budget hearings as a member of the public and occasionally provided input when requested by the Board of Fire Commissioners. The Supervisor also provided monthly statistics to the Volunteer Fire Company (Fire Chief) compiled by Essex County Emergency Services.

During 2023, the Town Supervisor began attending Fire District workshops which were implemented to discuss and plan a new fire station structure to house valuable fire apparatus and properly treat and store gear to protect firefighters from toxic conditions. The Town Supervisor also coordinated with PRIDE of Ticonderoga and TACC regarding potential grants and other funding options to aid in the cleanup of a mold situation in the firehouse.

### 4.3 Ticonderoga Emergency Squad

**GOAL:** EMS Support Solution

**STATUS: PARTIALLY COMPLETED**

EMS services for county municipalities have become a crisis in Ticonderoga and Essex County. The Town worked with the Ticonderoga Emergency Squad during the year in the Squad's effort to gather signatures to petition the Town to create an EMS District. An EMS District, outside a more global County approach, is the only viable and fiscally achievable method to provide emergency medical care to residents without severely impacting the town budget. A district allows the accumulation of exempt property to lower the overall levy cost per thousand.

Ti EMS had difficulty during the year in accumulating sufficient signatures and property values needed to initiate a permissive referendum. The Town and Ti EMS have not arrived at a final solution, however, in October, the Ti EMS requested the Town to skip the permissive referendum process and go directly to the Town Board initiating the EMS District process. This would place the task of defining a district boundary and beneficiaries of the district through a map planning report on the Town. Ti EMS has also petitioned Essex County to provide 2-4 county personnel which would lower the local EMS expenditures. Discussion of these topics and plans for any type of district will continue into 2024.

### 4.4 Silver Bay Association

**GOAL:** Continue Coordination

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

The Supervisor continued cooperative efforts with Silver Bay Association in 2023. The Town Supervisor coordinated with Peter Doliber for a discussion with a Silver Bay marketing analyst in



March. The Town Supervisor also met with Silver Bay Representatives in March to discuss Armory activity status and potential ways that Silver Bay could become more involved in the Ticonderoga community. The two organizations discussed the town after school and the summer programs. Ticonderoga has continual challenges in obtaining interested parties to serve as summer counselors or after school activity attendants. Unfortunately, Silver Bay could not fulfil these roles if this remains a town service because such individuals must be town employees but discussions on how to work future coordinated efforts are still on the table. The Town was unable to support a panel in August, but the Town Supervisor provided input for the discussion. The Town also provided a letter of support in October for Silver Bay's proposal for the St. Mary's School daycare project.

## 4.5 Internal Communication

**GOAL:** Improve Water/Assessor/Codes Communication

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

Communication between departments is critical to ensure changes in one area are reflected in other departments. For example, a change in assessment or a building inspection can impact the Water/Sewer department if there is a resultant change in EDU (equivalent dwelling unit). Without proper notification, a resident could be over or under charged.

The Town created a Sole Assessor / Code Enforcement Inspection Results form to capture the results of a building inspection. This form identifies specific information that would be important for the Water/Sewer, Code Enforcement, and Assessor departments. This is still a work in progress to ensure all departments routinely use the form and remember to coordinate it with their partner departments.

## 4.6 Other Communication

**GOAL:** Support Amtrak Reopening

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

Amtrak passenger service to and from Montreal through Ticonderoga was discontinued in March 2020 when COVID necessitated the closure of the rail border crossing between the United States and Canada due to the pandemic and staffing issues. Amtrak officials coordinated with The Town Supervisor for a stop on April 3, 2023 upon the reopening of the line. The Town Supervisor and Ticonderoga Area Chamber of Commerce met Amtrak officials briefly



*Amtrak returns service to Ticonderoga in April.*

on their journey when the train stopped at Ticonderoga station. Town officials coordinated again in August regarding vandalism at the Ticonderoga station.

## 4.7 Consultant Coordination

**GOAL:** Continue Coordination

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

The Town has several consultants who aid the town in its many duties and obligations. These include but are not limited to legal consultation, human resource and employment issues, municipal airport operations and FAA coordination, labor relations and collective bargaining issues, health and liability insurance, town engineering, and payroll services. Figure 4-1 depicts the amount of coordination during 2023.

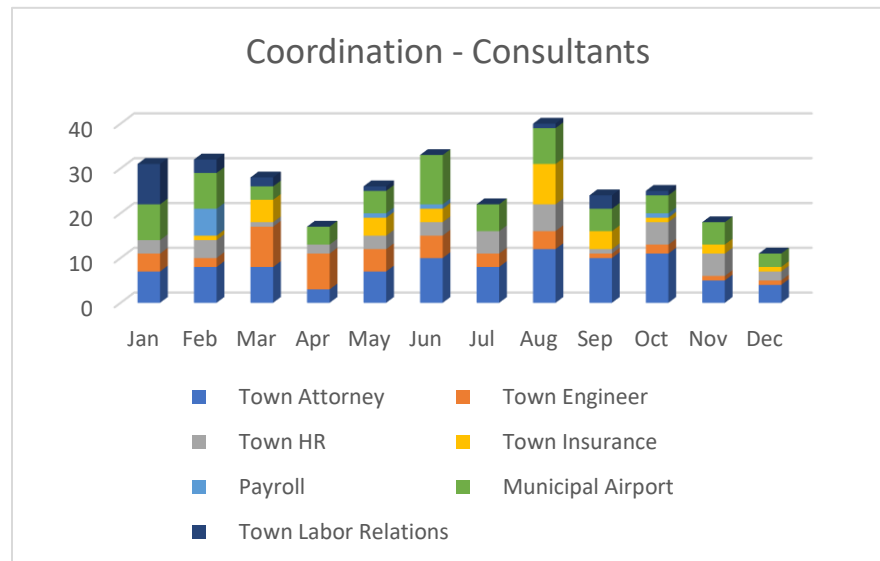


FIGURE 4-1

## 4.8 Eagle Lake Boat Launch

**GOAL:** Support Opposition Effort

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

The Town learned of the planned closure of the Eagle Lake Boat Launch by the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) and NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to all trailered boat access in late January. The Chairman of the Essex County Board of Supervisors was also notified. These two agencies briefed the Town in February on the details of their plans.

The Town Supervisor coordinated with the Eagle Lake Property Owners, Inc. (ELPOI) to share the impact on residents as a result of these plans with the APA and DEC. The Ticonderoga Town Board and Essex County Board of Supervisors both issued resolutions in opposition to the plans, as they were decided without County or town input. The Town additionally stated this decision resulted in a negative impact on residents, visitors, and the economy. It also constituted a public safety and property access issue. The Town Supervisor discussed the issue with NYS Senator Stec. The Town Board issued letters of concern and opposition to Senator Dan Stec, Assemblyman Matt Simpson, and Congresswoman Elise Stefanik. ELPOI, the Town, a representative from

Congresswoman Stefanik's office, and two other town Supervisors met in April to discuss the way forward.

Although the coordination effort for 2023 was completed, the Town continues to oppose the action by APA and DEC to limit access and work with ELPOI and others in their efforts.

## 5.0 Resident & Staff Communication

This section reviews specific communication tools used by the Town Supervisor to communicate and receive information and news to/from residents. A major element of effective communication involves allowing the public to have access to their leadership and leadership keeping the residents informed on what is occurring in their town – good or bad. The Town Supervisor should be available to listen to residents' concerns and address their issues. Phone calls should be answered, emails promptly returned, and an open-door policy implemented. Additional communication occurs in the town offices each day between staff and leadership on a variety of issues. Metrics comprise an excellent method to track not only the volume of communications but also the responsiveness of the Town Supervisor. The following metrics demonstrate the amount of activity in 2023 regarding communication.



### 5.1 Walk-in Visits & Appointments

**GOAL:** Enable Walk-in Visits & Appointments

**STATUS:** COMPLETED

Walk-in visits include unplanned and non-scheduled appointments where residents or other individuals arrive unexpectedly wishing to speak with the Town Supervisor. All walk-ins were welcomed at any time unless the Supervisor was engaged in another activity. In this case, the resident or individual was provided with a mutually agreeable time in which to return.

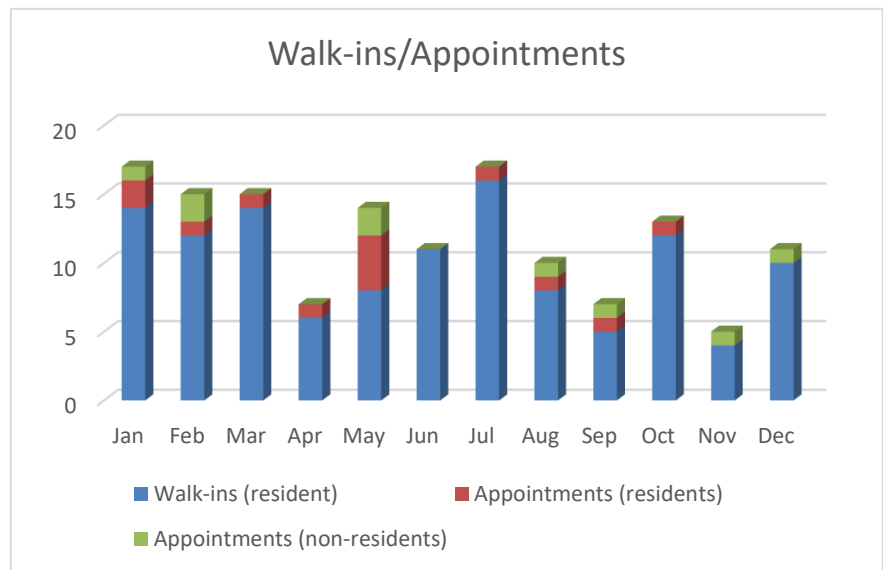


FIGURE 5-1

Scheduled meetings between the Supervisor and residents (or others) allow for dedicated time to discuss more lengthy issues and aid in better scheduling the Supervisor's and the resident's time. Figure 5-1 indicates the number of walk-in visits and appointments during 2023.

## 5.2 Phone Calls/Emails/Messaging

**GOAL:** Return Communication

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

It is the policy of this administration to promptly return phone calls and emails. Most are returned immediately. Some at the end of the day or the following day. Some communication comes to the Supervisor via social media messages and is returned as soon as practical. Figure 5-2 depicts the metrics associated with the volume of resident phone calls received and those which were required to be returned.

Figure 5-3 depicts the metrics associated with the volume of email and social media incoming communications and responses for 2023.

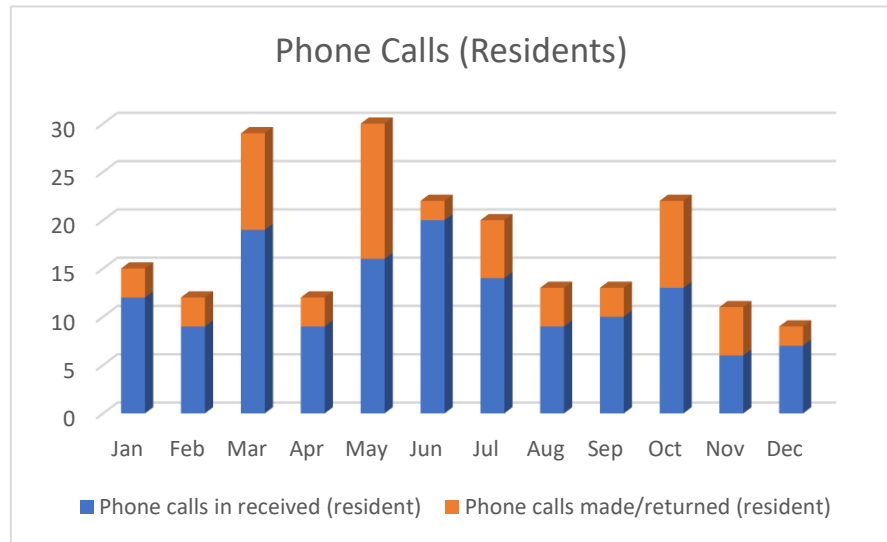


FIGURE 5-2

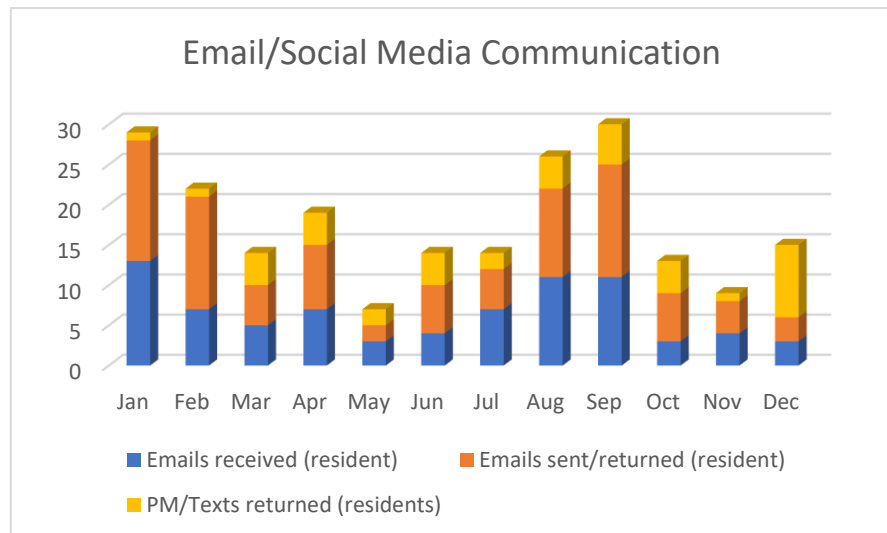


FIGURE 5-3

### 5.3 Partnership Communication

**GOAL:** Communicate with Partners

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

Communication with the Town's partners, who for the most part are also town residents, is critical for the success of town wide initiatives, endeavors, and goals. The Town has many partners including those in business, economic development and revitalization, utility providers, county and state government organizations and officials, media representatives, educational providers, and other areas.

Figures 5-4 and 5-5 identifies these partners as well as provides the metrics associated with the volume of communications in 2023.

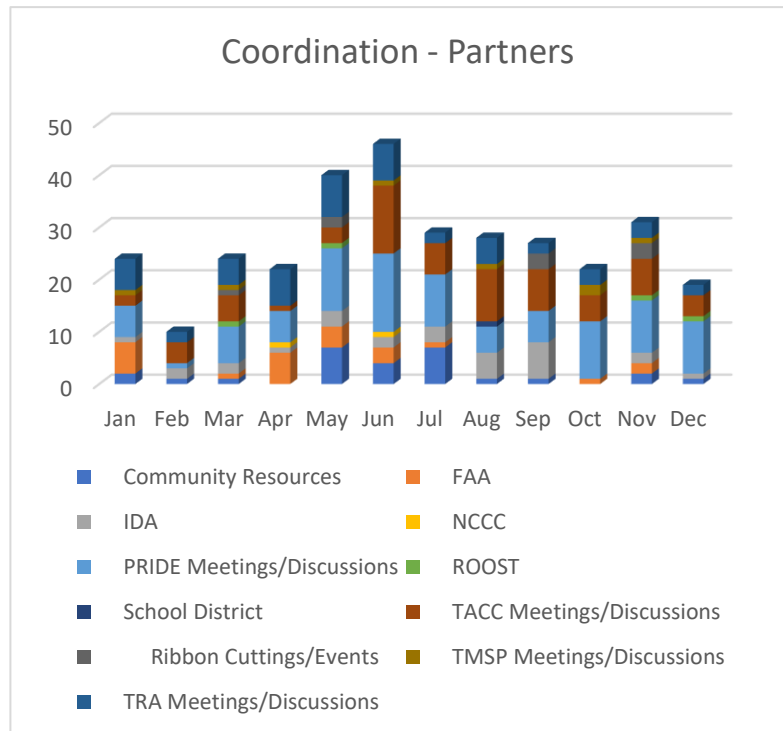


FIGURE 5-4

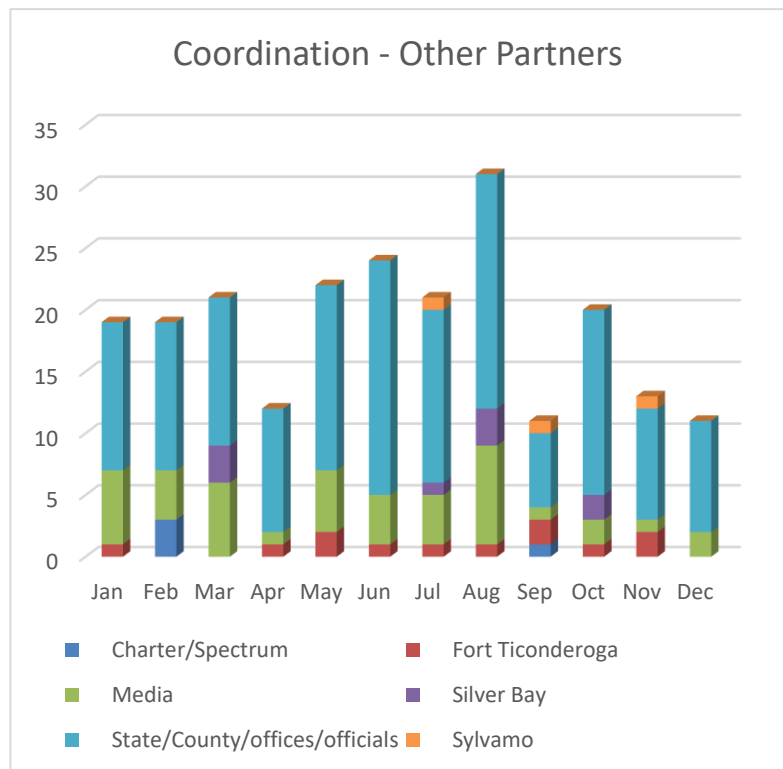


FIGURE 5-5



## 5.4 Community Interaction

**GOAL:** Check-ins & Visits

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

It is important for the Town Supervisor to occasionally check in on businesses and visit areas within the town for specific issues when the need arises. Figure 5-6 provides the metrics associated with the volume of check-ins and visits in 2023.

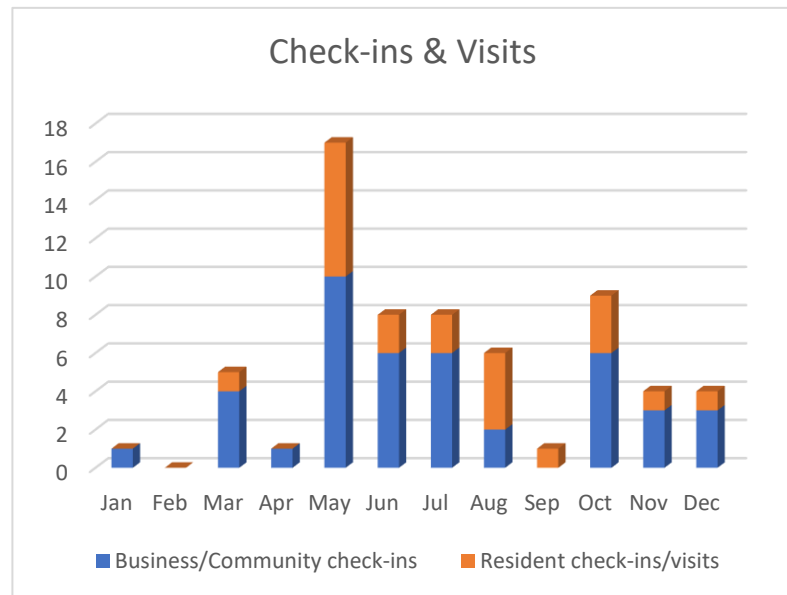


FIGURE 5-6

## 5.5 Town Facebook Page

**GOAL:** Facebook Page Posts

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

Facebook is both a useful communication tool and a challenge, but the benefits for disseminating and receiving information cannot be ignored. The Town removed its Facebook page in 2021, but it was reinstituted in April 2022 by the current Town Supervisor and has been an effective tool during 2023. This page disseminates official town information and notifications including meeting dates and changes, closure information, weather warnings, county information, etc. It is not a panel for discussion.

In addition to the Town Facebook page, the Town Supervisor also communicates using a second Facebook page which provides information of interest from the Supervisor such as regular reports of activities and local town issues through the “From the Supervisor’s Desk” series.

Facebook has proven to be an effective tool even though the audience may be somewhat limited due to the availability of the platform to some residents. Its use will continue in 2024.

## 5.6 Town Website

**GOAL:** Maintain Website

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

The town website is an important tool for communicating with the public. It is updated regularly with town board meeting agendas and minutes comprising the most frequent information

updated. The event schedule and important information from other sources (County, etc.) is also updated frequently.

The Town Supervisor continued to maintain the town website during 2023 which included two major changes. The company which previously administered the Ticonderoga Police Department's information and police blotter data discontinued service in 2023 resulting in that department's inability to maintain communications with the community when the link through the town website was broken. The Town Supervisor worked with the police department to ensure police department information was moved and included on the main town website. The police blotter was also reestablished and hosted on the town website in September. In October, the Black Watch Library requested the town website host specific information relative to their operations. This was completed the same month. The website format was changed slightly to provide better readability.

## 5.7 Daily Updates & Discussions

**GOAL:** Internal Discussions/Direction

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

A considerable amount of communication and decisions occur in the town offices each day on a multitude of issues/topics so the Town Supervisor must be present during regular business hours to participate in these discussions with residents, staff, department heads, council members, organizational partners, business owners, and others.

Many of these discussions

involve staff providing input and seeking direction or clarification, providing status input regarding ongoing events or activities, discussions with individual board members on their projects or current issues, budget discussions, financial issues, personnel issues, highway activities, committee action items, etc. Figure 5-7 depicts the approximate number of such inquiries and discussions on significant issues over the last year.

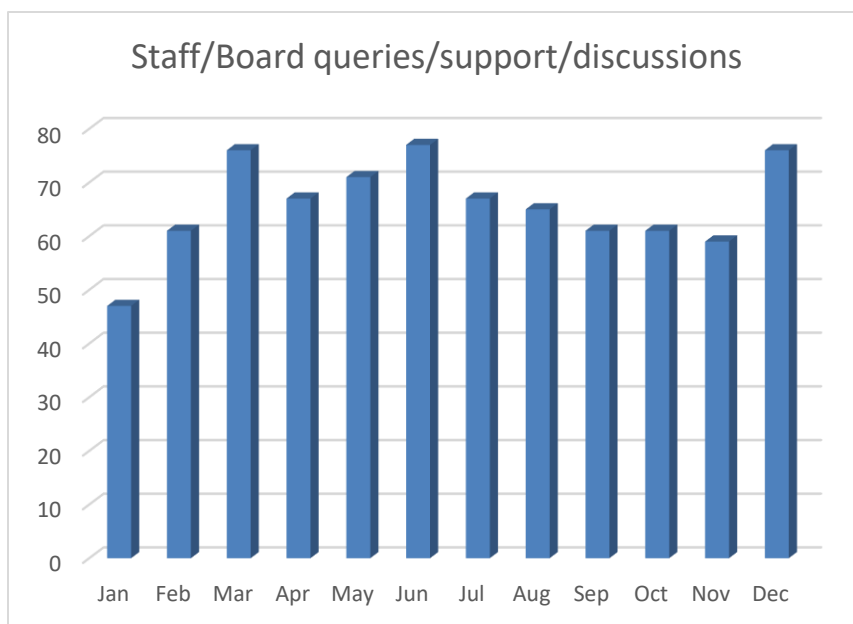


FIGURE 5-7

## 5.8 Public Meetings

**GOAL:** Ensure Open Meetings

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

The Town adheres to the New York State Open Meetings Law. Residents are welcomed and encouraged to observe their local government in action.

Town Board meetings and committee meetings are open to the public and are held at times which best accommodate the greatest majority of the public while limiting staff overtime costs. Regular Town Board meetings and committee meetings offer a public comment period subject to discussion and time limitation guidelines which are typical in the municipal industry (see the link to these guidelines on the town website). Other board meetings do not accommodate public comment but still allow observation in accordance with NYS law. The public may also provide written comments to the Town Clerk for inclusion in the minutes for any town meeting.

Figures 5-8 and 5-9 provide the metrics associated with the volume of government meetings in 2023.

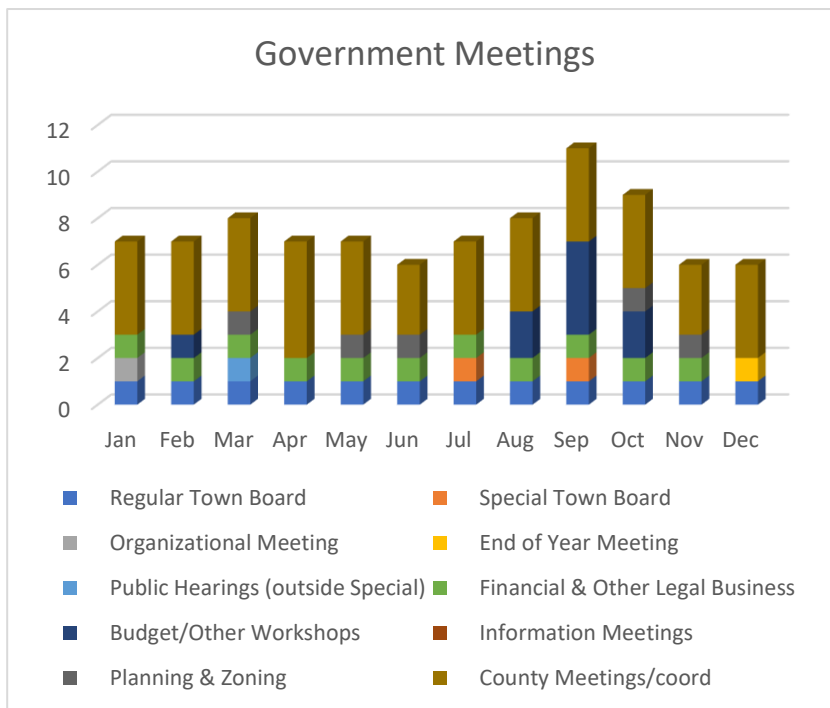


FIGURE 5-8

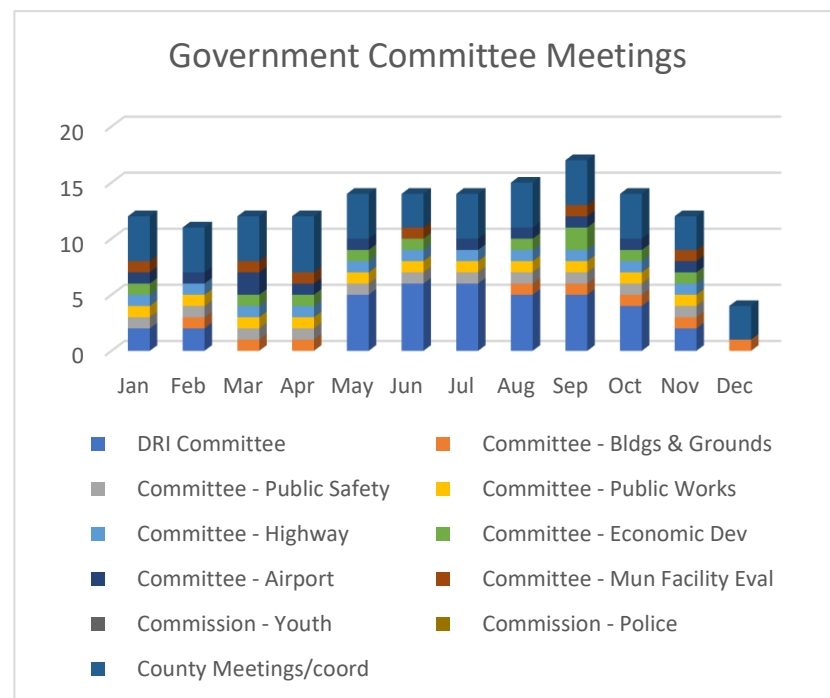


FIGURE 5-9

## 5.9 Community Visibility

**GOAL:** Community Participation

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

Another form of communication and access to town government occurs when elected officials are seen in the streets of the town and participating in community events. The Town Supervisor maintained this form of access and communication in 2023. The Town Supervisor's availability using this method was successful in allowing residents to take the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback.



## 6.0 Major Capital Projects

### 6.1 Chilson/Eagle Lake Water

**GOAL:** Municipal Water Solution

**STATUS:** NOT COMPLETED

The current town noncompliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974 has existed for many decades through multiple Supervisors, but the project to bring the water system into compliance was most active during the prior and current administrations as these two administrations were under



*Gooseneck.*

a 2018 Consent Decree with the Department of Justice (DOJ), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and New York State Department of Health (DOH), to remove Ticonderoga from the filtration avoidance criteria that existed since 1991. Compliance equates with either abandoning Gooseneck as a municipal water source or fixing it to bring it into compliance. Prior and current Town Boards made the decision that fixing Gooseneck is cost prohibitive and unaffordable for residents due to the limited number of residents who would be required to pay for this project and the fact that they do not desire to become a new water district (the only method by which a municipality can supply water).

A small minority of residents disagreed with the town elected officials, engineers, Town Attorney, and the Department of Health on the approach and professional analysis in terms of using Gooseneck water. Town elected officials and consultants continued working on another approach and pivoted several times when presented with engineering and funding challenges. Activities in 2023 began with a process by which the Town would use federal grant and low interest monies to provide private wells for residents. A study was completed to examine the viability of wells on the parcels in the area. This became untenable when the Town was informed the grant money could not be used for that approach. The latest proposed solution involves a municipal well-based drinking water distribution system which would also require the formation of a new water district. The Town Board continued to communicate its progress with residents during the year. However, efforts to provide a solution were challenged in October when three residents filed a lawsuit against the Town, Department of Justice, and New York State Department of Health. This project will continue into 2024 but the Town's ability to provide safe drinking water to residents in this area will be significantly delayed due to litigation.



## 6.2 Alexandria Bridge

**GOAL:** Replace Alexandria Bridge

**STATUS: PARTIALLY COMPLETED**

The project to replace the Alexandria Avenue bridge is a NYS DOT project which is funded by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Detailed design is currently in progress. Utility work agreements were completed and approved in July. The project is expected to begin in 2024 with anticipated bidding. Although the actual design is unknown at this time, the bridge could be similar in design to the bridge constructed in Elizabethtown depicted here.



*Elizabethtown bridge.*

## 6.3 Airport Rehabilitation

**GOAL:** Apron/Taxiway & Runway Rehabilitation

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

The Ticonderoga Municipal Airport is an economic benefit to Ticonderoga as one of several key transportation arteries serving the community and the area. It also provides income from the sale of aviation fuel and landing and rental fees. The rehabilitation projects completed in 2023 help to ensure Ticonderoga has a safe and inviting asset to serve the community and visitors.



*Municipal Airport Runway 2.*

The Apron & Taxiway Rehabilitation was awarded to Reale Construction in March 2022 with FAA grant approval.

Construction began in June 2023 and was completed in September. Work on Runway 2-20 rehabilitation began immediately following the apron and taxiway rehabilitation completion. Rifenburg Construction completed this project in September 2023 and the airport was reopened. Additional improvements to the airport included new signage in November to replace the current deteriorating wooden sign.

## 6.4 La Chute Walking Trail Extension

**GOAL:** Begin Construction

**STATUS: PARTIALLY COMPLETED**

This project will connect the upper and lower La Chute trail sections with an approximate 0.25-mile addition. The Town partnered with the New York Department of State, Office of Planning, Development, and Community Infrastructure and the Essex County Office of Community Resources on this project. Discussions occurred throughout 2023 leading to the issuance of an RFP and the selection of M.J. Engineering and Land Surveying for construction services in August. The Town conducted a kickoff meeting with MJ Engineering that same month. A MJ survey team inspected the area in October 2023. Construction is expected to begin in 2024.

## 6.5 Lead Service Line Replacement Project (LSLRP)

**GOAL:** LSLRP Verification

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

The New York State Governor's Office and Department of Health selected Ticonderoga to receive a grant award in the second round of funding in 2019. Town engineers identified properties that were built prior to the use of non-leaded pipe, those who performed a lead scratch test, and or a water sample to help confirm the likelihood of a lead at certain property. It was not possible to confirm the presence of lead until the service was excavated and in many cases throughout this project, a property that confirmed lead in the house did not have a lead connection.

Physical work on this project commenced in 2022 and was extended into 2023 with additional available funds. Work in 2023 began in April and the LSLRP project was completed in May. The Town investigated a total of 109 properties and of these, 38 had lead components replaced. This is roughly a 35% replacement rate. As part of the next phase, required by NYS Department of Health (DOH), the Town will use this information to update our GIS database to track what the Town has already been able to confirm through this project and use the data for populating the NYS DOH form for Lead Service Line Inventory (LSLI).

## 6.6 WPCP and Collection System Upgrades

**GOAL:** Bond and Fund

**STATUS: PARTIALLY COMPLETED**

The Town is currently pursuing a major project to upgrade the Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) and Collection System. Ventilation heat systems have reached their useful life and are due for upgrades and replacement to meet existing codes and standards. The WPCP system also

requires upgrades to various other treatment systems. In addition, the current plant status presents a health and safety issue for the staff who work there.

The Town Board passed a resolution in June authorizing the design, construction, and funding of the project. This is a projected \$30.9M project and will require significant funding through grants and zero interest loans. If the Town can secure a major portion of grant funding for the entire project, Ticonderoga taxpayers could realize over \$30M of needed upgrades for a total Town investment of around \$4M. This would be an incredible achievement. The Town completed the bonding action in June. This does not obligate the Town to spend this amount but does authorize the Town to do so.

Ticonderoga received Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funding, having the highest score in the State, in the amount of \$8,559,500.00 for this effort and another \$7,743,293 in funding through a New York State Water Infrastructure Improvement Act (WIIA) grant in December. This provides approximately half of the project cost. The plan calls to apply for additional grant monies to lower the final cost. The Town will then borrow the balance of those funds from NYS EFC State Revolving Loan program. The Town qualified for a subsidized interest rate at zero percent. This project will continue into 2024.

## 7.0 Other Town Projects & Issues

### 7.1 Senior Bus Policy

**GOAL:** Develop Senior Bus Policy Update & Training

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

The Ticonderoga Senior Bus has operated for years under unofficial, unwritten operating procedures and verbal guidelines in terms of eligible ridership, patron cost, rules of operation, area of operation and more. The Town Supervisor initiated a project in 2022 to pull this information into a comprehensive, written policy for the sake of clarification, referral, efficiency, and training. This was updated in 2023 to incorporate emergency situations and other issues that required attention throughout the year. The Town Board adopted this revision in March. A senior bus driver training program was developed and held in November.

### 7.2 Airport Beacon & Tower

**GOAL:** Erect Tower

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

A private 2021 effort emerged to save the old Ticonderoga Intermediate Airfield beacon and tower located at the old airport location on Sylvamo property. Efforts to move, erect, and preserve this non-operational 1939 tower at the entrance of the Ticonderoga Municipal Airport were successful in 2022 when the Town coordinated and cooperated with this private effort to achieve this preservation goal. The tower was moved from Sylvamo property and refurbished which included reducing the tower height to 35' to stay below regulatory agency restrictions.



*The beacon tower in place.*

Coordination with the FAA to erect the tower began in August 2022 and was completed in April 2023 when that agency stated it had no objection to the erection of the tower on airport property. Through the efforts of this volunteer group and the generosity of Sylvamo Paper, the tower and beacon were erected in May 2023. A historical sign will be added by a private group to convey the story of this significant piece of Ticonderoga aviation history.

## 7.3 Use of Town Property

**GOAL:** Create Park Policy

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

Events and issues have continually challenged the Town regarding town-owned property, especially regarding the town's many parks. The Town is continually challenged with illegal camping and refuse left on Town property. Those found violating local town law are prosecuted and charged to provide restitution. However, when this is not possible, the Town is left to clean up debris and trash using unplanned taxpayer dollars.

The Town Supervisor directed the Parks & Recreations Committee to develop a written Park Policy document to address the standard guidelines for our parks and use of town property. The Committee provided its input including guidelines and mission statements. The Town Supervisor combined these using past policy writing experience to develop a template and eventual policy document approved by the Committee. The policy was completed and adopted by the Town Board in October. This was a significant step in park planning for Ticonderoga.

## 7.4 FAA GPS Nighttime Landing Restriction

**GOAL:** Clear Additional Tree Obstructions

**STATUS: PARTIALLY COMPLETED**

The FAA placed a GPS nighttime landing restriction on the Ticonderoga Municipal Airport (4B6) in June 2015 due to an obstruction. The Town physically removed the obstruction (tree) in the Fall of 2015 and in the FAA's Obstacle database in 2022. In 2023, the FAA informed the town of additional tree obstructions that must be removed. These were identified by the Airport Committee in September which coordinated with Sylvamo Paper upon whose property these are located. The Airport Committee is to work with Sylvamo to remove the obstructions in 2024.

## 7.5 Develop Sick Leave Donation Policy

**GOAL:** Adopt Written Sick Leave Policy

**STATUS: PARTIALLY COMPLETED**

The development and establishment of a sick leave donation policy began late in 2023. The policy outlines the requirements for an individual who is unable to work for an extended period due to a serious health condition, to allow for other eligible employees to voluntarily donate their sick leave credits to the sick or injured employee. This project was scheduled to begin in 2024 but was initiated and the policy and related forms completed in November of 2023. The policy is

currently under review. The goal for 2024 involves Town Board adoption of the policy as written or modified.



## 8.0 Youth Activities & Projects

### 8.1 New Beach Playground

**GOAL:** Install Beach Playground

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

PRIDE of Ticonderoga through the Town's Parks & Recs Committee and the leadership of Councilmember Joyce Cooper coordinated an effort to replace the existing playground equipment at Black Point Beach with new ADA compliant equipment. The Town understands the importance of ensuring accessibility and inclusivity in public spaces, specifically parks and recreational facilities. PRIDE initiated this effort in May and secured grant money. Coordination between the Town and PRIDE continued throughout the summer. The playground equipment, which accommodates children from ages 3-12, was delivered and assembled in August. On a side note, the rules for playground and park use may now be found on the Town's website (Departments/Parks & Recreation/Ticonderoga Park Policy).



*New Ticonderoga Beach Playground.*

The success of this effort was aided with the generous gift of time and talent by many local volunteers and contractors which helped avoid significant costs associated with installation. The Town of Ticonderoga is grateful for the efforts of PRIDE in securing this for our residents and visitors.



*Summer Camp program.*

### 8.2 Summer Camp

**GOAL:** Execute Summer Camp Program

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

Finding sufficient labor for town positions and activities was a challenge again in 2023 as it was for many businesses and industries. This was further complicated when the current Recreational Supervisor resigned just before the start of the summer program. However, unlike the previous year, the Town was able to successfully find the necessary leadership and staff to offer the 2023 program. The Town was extremely grateful to those individuals who stepped forward to provide oversight and leadership for this program. Budgeted funds support this and other similar programs, however, the success of these programs relies on the generosity of residents to step forward and support these programs as counselors, cooks, and activity attendants. The Town hired a new permanent Recreational Supervisor in August. This individual began efforts to organize this and other youth programs.

### 8.3 Skating Rink

**GOAL:** Submit Ice Rink DRI Project

**STATUS:** NOT COMPLETED

The Town skating rink at the corner of Tower Avenue and Burgoyne Road is a popular recreational resource for residents and visitors and enables Ticonderoga to continue a path to become a 4-season destination. During the year, PRIDE of Ticonderoga sponsored the ice-skating rink improvement as a project in the NYS Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI). Unfortunately, this project was removed from those going forward. The Town is working with PRIDE of Ticonderoga to seek other available funding for this project.

## 9.0 Budget & Finance

### 9.1 Annual Budget

**GOAL:** Scrutinize Budget

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

A major financial goal remains the close examination of the town budget, looking for ways to better refine the expenditures and revenues thereby eliminating excessive taxation which has the potential to build an unnecessarily high fund balance. This year's efforts in the construction of the proposed 2024 budget were no exception. The Town conducted eight (8) public budget workshops this year.

The inflation rate for 2024 was projected as 6.26% following the previous year's 7.17%. This is three times higher than the NYS 2% tax cap which has remained fixed despite four (4) consecutive years of inflationary levels which have been three times higher than the cap. Fuel and electricity prices increased above 2023 budgeted levels. Other increases included 11.2% increase in insurance costs, a 44.4% increase in Workers' Compensation Participant share with Essex County, 3% and 4% increase in retirement withholdings, and 4% non-bargaining unit employee salary increase w/subsequent increases in NYSLR retirement and Social Security withholding amounts to name a few.

The Town Board, Town Clerk, department heads, and staff accomplished an incredible effort this year to make some significant cuts and postpone some necessary upgrades to control spending for 2024 to remain below the cap. An approximate total of \$670,000 was cut or reduced in the budget. Despite these attempts, the Town was unable to operate the town budget under a 2% cap without the elimination of several social programs, desperately needed staff, or using unexpended fund balance. The use of a fund balance as a revenue source is a dangerous practice and cannot continue indefinitely without leaving the town vulnerable to unknown financial situations and having no means to address them. The purpose of fund balance and contingency funds is to have a means to address unknown and unpredictable financial issues. The Town Board had no alternative but to pass a local law to exceed the tax cap in accordance with NYS General Municipal law §3-C.

### 9.2 Budgeting for Capital Projects

**GOAL:** Obtain Financial Expert

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

Ticonderoga has many capital projects which require tracking by the Supervisor, Town Council, Water/Wastewater, and Finance Departments. One major area of concern identified in 2022 by the Supervisor and Town Council Members was the town's ability to continually add capital projects to an already overburdened tax base and limited financial capability. A challenge arises when several projects exist, each of which may be partially funded via grant monies, but for which the town has a local share (or match) of financial responsibility. Over time, the town's portion of grant matching adds up to a significant amount and there is a point where the town could easily overextend its ability to fund additional projects. The Town left 2022 with a plan to solicit a financial consultant to address these issues.

In 2023 the Town issued a request for proposal (RFP) and selected Baker Tilly Municipal Advisors. These advisors provided a look at potential water and sewer rates taking into consideration future water projects. This partnership will continue in 2024.

### 9.3 Comptroller Audit

**GOAL:** Support Audit

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

The Town received a letter from the New York State Comptroller (OSC) dated September 23, 2021, to the then current Supervisor notifying of an upcoming audit. OSC contacted the Town on July 7, 2022, about beginning the audit and stating this was a random audit. This audit extended to June 2023.

The capital projects audited included 8 projects, going back to 2018. The audit was challenging at times in the retrieval of data by those who had no firsthand knowledge of those projects because project information and status were minimally shared with staff by the prior administration.

The audit did not reveal anything that we in the town had not already realized when examining the status of a couple of key projects during water meetings before the audit even started. The Town Supervisor had already begun creating project tracking files for the Veteran's Road Culvert project and for both the airport apron/taxiway and airport runway rehabilitation projects. This was a process similar to what OSC would eventually recommend so the Town was moving in the right direction on these new projects.

The audit report, in summary, stated the town needed to better track capital projects and report status to the board to ensure expenditures do not exceed authorized budgets. The Town agreed in its response and provided a corrective action plan in September. The Town did not exceed

those budgets, but we must improve to ensure we never do. Audits, inspections, inspector general visits, etc. will always identify areas of improvement and will definitely identify violations if found. We had no violations. This was a good and successful audit result for the town.

## 9.4 Enhanced Reporting

**GOAL:** Complete Enhanced Reporting

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

Ticonderoga received notification from the New York State and Local Retirement System (NYSLRS) in early December 2022 that the town must fully implement employer enhanced reporting. The Town engaged with NYSLRS to begin the transition process to meet the deadline at that time and into 2023. The Town is happy to report that this effort has been accomplished albeit with some bumps in the road. Both NYSLRS and Paychex have been working with the Town throughout 2023 to fine tune the process and work out the challenges. The deadline was satisfied, but additional adjustments and corrections are likely to occur in 2024.

## 10.0 Public Safety & Security

The Town investigated and/or implemented several actions and plans in 2023 associated with public safety and security. These included plans for emergency response, continuing operations, vehicle & traffic issues, and staff/visitor security.

### 10.1 Local Emergency Response Plan

**GOAL:** Complete Internal Town Response Plan & Checklists

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

Preparation, planning, and rehearsal are key factors to a successful emergency response. Ticonderoga should be prepared and not assume that “it will never happen here.” In conjunction with this goal, the Town Supervisor attended a chlorine dioxide drill at Sylvamo in September. Following the completion of the development of an emergency response plan in 2022 between the town and Essex county, the Town began developing a response plan and checklists on a more local response level.

The Town completed draft response actions, areas of responsibility, rally points, defined essential personnel, and other related emergency response procedures and actions. Part of this effort was to develop simple to use checklists for specific response functions. The plan was completed and will go before the Town Board for adoption in 2024.

### 10.2 Emergency Backup Generator

**GOAL:** Obtain Backup Generator

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

The Town initiated the process for procuring a backup generator in 2022 to allow continuity of town operations during an emergency and potentially allow the Community Building to operate as a warming and cooling center during times of power outages. This effort ties closely with the effort to free space in the basement to accommodate an increased temporary population. The Town successfully issued a request for proposal (RFP) in 2023 and awarded a bid.



*Generator is lifted into position.*



Town crews and elected officials worked together to prepare the site for the generator, drilling through walls, and laying conduit which saved taxpayers for those associated costs. The generator arrived in September and was lifted into position, fueled, and successfully tested in October. It experienced its first real-time event on November 16, 2023, when the counties of Essex, Warren, and Washington went dark for over 3 hours. The generator functioned properly and again in December during a scheduled 8-hour power outage where the Community Building supported for the first time as a warming center with the Town Supervisor and some Council Members providing on-site supervision during the outage. This was a significant achievement for Ticonderoga to provide resident assistance during an emergency.

### 10.3 Community Building Security Review

**GOAL:** Conduct a Threat Assessment

**STATUS: COMPLETED**

The Community Building is a publicly accessible space but is vulnerable to several security issues. The safety of the staff and visitors is of the utmost importance. Additional security discussions, reviews, and actions continued during 2023 to ensure staff and visitors are safe. Several endeavors were developed to address the threat assessment for the building.

In May, the Town Supervisor, New York State Police, and Ticonderoga Police Chief conducted a threat assessment of the Community Building. The goal was to identify threats and potential mitigation measures. This was a very successful effort. While all threats and mitigations are not reported here for security reasons, some mitigation measures that the Town is investigating include:

- Establishing a single point of entry.
- Installation of Dutch Doors or similar to some departments.
- Use of restricted area barriers and signage.
- Distribution and use of bomb threat sheets.
- Implementing after-hours security measures.
- Removal of the library section in the basement.
- Restriction of non-authorized personnel to basement level.
- The creation of rally points for use during an emergency.
- Lobby signage to reduce confusion and staff interference.

## 10.4 Speed & Parking Restrictions

**GOAL:** Complete Speed & Safety Actions

**STATUS: PARTIALLY COMPLETED**

The safe operation of vehicles and appropriate speed restrictions within Ticonderoga are an important public safety issue. Safety efforts to reduce speed and address safety issues continued during 2023. Some of these were initiated by resident input while others were noticed and addressed by Public Safety Committee members and the Town Supervisor.



*Crosswalk protection.*

A plan to stripe the three major intersections with “STOP” was unable to be implemented due to weather conditions and mechanical issues. This will be completed in 2024. Vehicle parking along the west side of Champlain Avenue between Algonkin Street and Father Jogues Place was addressed. This had become a choke point for traffic and a safety issue. A no parking restriction was implemented at this location and appropriately signed. Speed restrictions were addressed in the Recreational Park to address the hazards to children and patrons at sporting events in this location. A 5 MPH speed zone was implemented and speed bumps will be investigated in 2024. Additional speed and visibility issues were addressed in the Eagle Lake area. The Town forwarded these concerns to NYS DOT for review and analysis as this is a NYS roadway. Finally, concerns for school children and bus safety were addressed with the elimination of a parking space near a crosswalk near the Ticonderoga High School. This provided a safer situation by increasing visibility. Portions of the corner of Calkins Place and Lake George Avenue were restricted for parking to allow more visibility and maneuvering room for school buses.

## 11.0 Summary

The state of our town has improved and continues to improve. Ticonderoga has witnessed significant positive economic changes during 2023 beginning with the New York State announcement of Ticonderoga receiving the \$10M Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) award. This, in combination with other revitalization successes during the year will aid in putting Ticonderoga back on the economic development track to success. The Town of Ticonderoga is thankful for all those who have invested and expanded during 2023.

Recognition and thanks go to our dedicated local area business development, revitalization and economic development organizations such as the Ticonderoga Area Chamber of Commerce (TACC), PRIDE of Ticonderoga, Ticonderoga Revitalization Alliance (TRA), and Ticonderoga Montcalm Street Partnership (TMSP) as well as our regional partners including the Essex County Industrial Development Agency (ECIDA), Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism (ROOST), Essex County Board of Supervisors, and Essex County Office of Community Resources to name a few. In partnership with the Town of Ticonderoga, much success has occurred, and the cooperation level among organizations is exceptional.



*Star Trek Original Series Set Tour is a major economic asset in the Town with 12,016 visitors in 2023.*

Finally, considerable thanks go to the staff and department heads in the Town of Ticonderoga who were responsible for many of our achievements and who continue to run our operations and maintain our infrastructure day and night, workdays, and holidays. They, with those mentioned above share responsibility for our achievement and success during 2023 to make Ticonderoga a destination and an exceptional place to live, work, play, invest, and raise a family.

### Our Town...Our Future.