

Building a Modern Municipal Website

By: Digitaltowpathny.gov

Digital Towpath Supports Efficiency and Transparency through Shared Technology Resources

Digital Towpath Annual Meeting - September 27th - [Register now](#)

Who we are:

Digital Towpath is a cooperative of New York local governments that have joined together through an inter-municipal agreement to minimize technology costs through shared infrastructure, maintenance and support. The cooperative provides website content management, email, email archiving and an electronic records management systems.



Digital Towpath History

The Evolution of Digital Towpath

Digital Towpath was born out of the frustration that local government officials in small and rural towns and villages experience in their attempt to provide full-time services with part-time resources. Of the nearly 1600 governments in New York, more than 1000 serve populations of less than 5000 residents. Nearly 300 governments serve communities of less than 1000 residents. Most officials in these small communities work a few hours a week or month. Few work full-time. In some communities no one holds a full-time position. These jobs are more volunteerism than vocation.

In 1998, officials from ten municipalities in northern Oneida County met with staff from the Office of Continuing Professional Education at SUNY Institute of Technology in Marcy (SUNYIT/CPE) to explore ways they might bring use of the internet into the equation. SUNYIT/CPE was working with Niagara Mohawk/National Grid (NMNG) through their Community Development Department to explore establishing commercial websites to stimulate economic development in the NMNG service area. When the local government officials and SUNYIT/CPE suggested to them that supporting the development of municipal websites could further their objectives as well, NMNG agreed to support the initial stage of Digital Towpath development.

By concentrating on what all towns and villages have in common, the pioneer group of local officials worked with a website developer to devise a web-based website content management system that addressed both the need for specific functionality and the realities of the business process in small, rural governments. Because the Digital Towpath software is web-based, the local governments do not need special equipment or local software, other than an internet browser, to use it.



Membership in Digital Towpath Provides Access to these Services for One Low Cost

eMAIL



The email system provides each domain with official email addresses. There is no limit to the number of email accounts or the mailbox size

[More details](#)

eMAIL Archiving



The Email Archiving System (EAS) gives Digital Towpath member municipalities the option to capture all email sent and received through municipal email accounts automatically and collect them in a centralized location where retention policy can be set by folder, as well as overall.

[More details](#)

Websites



Website designed for local governments. Customized modules make posting of content quick and easy.

[More details](#)

Electronic Records Management



The ERMS is a virtual records room with tools to help you manage electronic records of all kinds. Giving you the power to manage electronic records from any source - in one place.

[More details](#)

DNS Hosting

DTC will host the DNS setup for any member. This includes the ongoing

Mailing List Server

DTC maintains a dedicated server that allows for setup and use of mailing lists for



Oneida County, NY

Minutes

Meeting Minutes are posted to this page after approval by the board or committee producing them. Minutes postings are for information purposes only.

If you require an official copy of minutes, please contact the [Town Clerk](#).

Draft minutes of current meetings and other minutes not posted here are available from the Town Clerk's office.

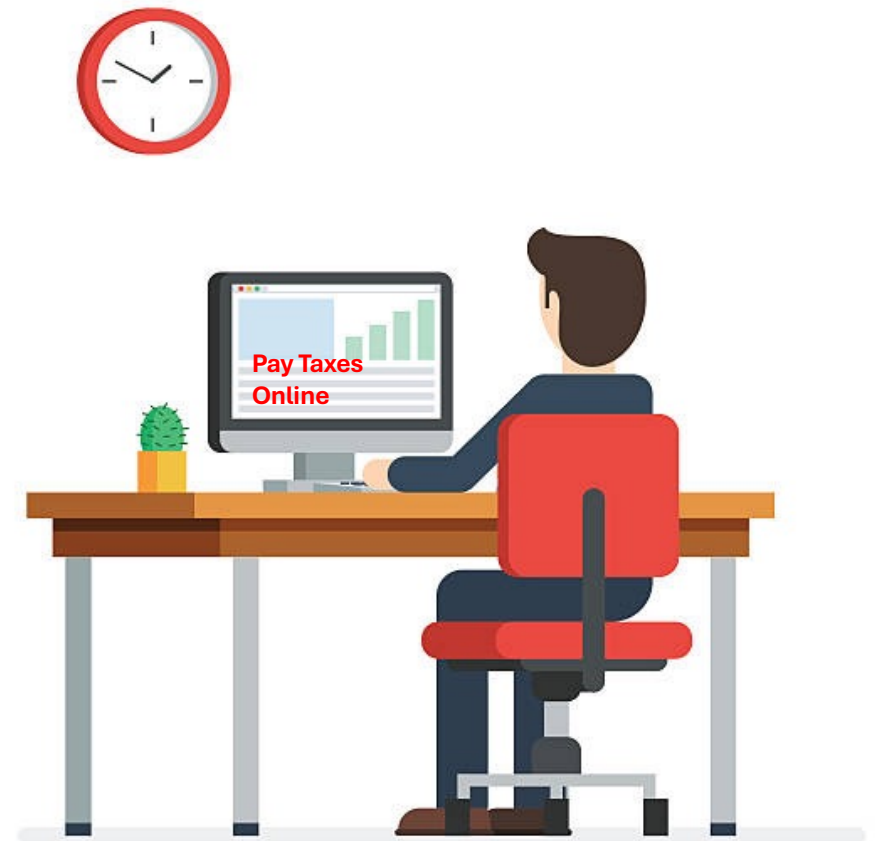
[Greenbelt Committee](#)

[Planning Board](#)

[Town Board](#)

[Zoning Board of Appeals](#)

[Home Page](#)
[Search Website](#)
[Annual Drinking Water Quality Reports](#)
[Applications & Forms](#)
[Assessment Information](#)
[Barneveld Historical Photos](#)
[Barneveld Sketches](#)
[Boards & Committees](#)
[Calendars](#)
[Community Groups](#)
[Courts](#)
[Demographics](#)
[Departments](#)
[Educational Facilities](#)
[Employment](#)
[History](#)
[Infrastructure Projects](#)
[Internet Dog License Renewals](#)
[Internet Tax Services](#)
[Laws](#)
[Links](#)
[Map of Town Buildings](#)
[Master Plan](#)
[Minutes](#)
[News](#)
[Newsletters](#)
[Officials](#)
[Parks & Recreation](#)
[Prospect Area Scholarships](#)
[Trenton Falls Photos 1917-1918](#)
[Trenton Falls Scenic Trails](#)
[Voter Information](#)



1. What do we find there. (Content)

Building Permits
Marriage Licenses
Forms & Applications

Public Notices
Emergency Notifications
News

Contact Public Officials
Engage with Departments & Services



Meeting Information
Community Events



Web Content

- Government Officials
- Available Services & Programs
- Obtaining Permits & Licenses
- Communication Platform
- [Vehicle for transparency & Accountability](#)
- Civic Engagement - [calendar](#)
- Emergency Management - Alerts

Forms/Pay

HOW TO MAKE A PAYMENT ONLINE

Forms (+ Applications + Licenses)

At the above link, you will find forms, applications and licenses from these departments:

- Assessor
- Building Department
- Highway Department
- Historical Preservation Commission
- Lighthouse TV23
- Parks, Recreation and Buildings
- Planning Board
- Zoning Change
- Town Clerk (FOIL, Birth, Death, Marriage)
- Water/Sewer

Pay

- [Town Taxes](#)
- Town Court Fines:
 - [Fees from the court of the Honorable Stanley R. O'Dell](#)
 - [Fees from the court of the Honorable Chris Kraft, Town Justice](#)
- [Town Water/Sewer](#)

2. Commitment to serving every community member equally – Accessibility

- “Web Content Accessibility Guidelines” (WCAG) provides a detailed criteria for accessible websites and is recognized as the industry standard for ADA compliance.
- Prioritize adherence to WCAG, by implementing features like:
 - alt text for images
 - ADA-compliant graphics
 - keyboard navigation
 - screen reader compatibility

4 pillars of accessibility

Perceivable.

- Perceivable – Information and interface is presented to users in a way they can perceive with their relevant senses. Captions to videos.

Operable.

- Operable - Users can effectively interact with the interface. Keyboard accessible- everyone can interact with your site on equal ground.

Understandable.

- Understandable – Users can understand and comprehend the information and interface. Consistent Navigation. Easy to understand and Navigate

Robust.

- Robust – Interface and content integrate with assistive technologies and a variation of modes of engagement interact with the interface. Screen readers.

Incorporating accessible design principles into your site.

- Better overall user satisfaction
- Improves SEO Rankings -Accessibility websites are preferred by search engines
- Audit your website for accessibility
 - WAVE extension for Chrome
 - <https://wave.webaim.org/extension/>

3. Reflection of the Community – How does it look.

Modern Design

- [Open & Inviting Home Page](#)
- Mobile Responsiveness
- Navigation –simplify access to information
- Prioritize in-demand content
- Offer online user-friendly form and applications
- Feature images that highlight the area
- FAQ



Security

When it comes to SSL certificates, choose wisely:

Don't use any self-signed certificates, but use **Publicly Trusted Certificates**:

- Issued by trusted third-party Certificate Authorities like DigiCert, Let's Encrypt, Comodo etc.
- Require identity and/or domain validation vetting process.
- Trusted automatically by all browsers without manual intervention.
- Need regular renewal upon expiry to maintain trust and avoid warnings.
- Test the web site using tools like ["https://www.ssllabs.com/ssltest/"](https://www.ssllabs.com/ssltest/).
- .gov domains provide visitors to your site with confidence in the security of operations.

 An Official Website of the United States Government – Here's How You Know

 Upcoming Events  All Departments




Official websites use .gov.


A .gov website belongs to an official government organization in the United States.



Secure .gov websites use HTTPS.

A lock (🔒) or https:// means you've safely connected to the .gov website. Share sensitive information only on official, secure websites.

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- Within your CMS
 - Regular software updates and Security patches should be applied.
 - Application firewalls
 - CMS user management should employ principle of least privilege – only what is absolutely necessary to do their jobs.
 - Some CMS's have granular permissions to the page level – use them to only give content creators access to the pages they are going to be keeping current.

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- Conduct Frequent Scans for Malware
 - Schedule Regular data backups.
 - Your site should enforce strong password management.
 - Limit login attempts from the same IP Address (3).
Account is locked – stop the try & try again
 - Use a CDN (content-delivery-network) if you anticipate very high traffic on your web sites (see <https://geekflare.com/free-cdn-list/> for a list).

5. Continuous Improvement & Innovation

- Choosing a CMS built on Open-source software rather than propriety software generally allows for greater flexibility and innovation for your website.
- You benefit from strong communities of developers who contribute to improving the software while not paying for the development effort.
- Themes, plugins, and modules continually being released by these communities allow you to integrate new features, emerging technologies and apply digital tools to keep your citizen's engaged in using the website.

Building a new website?

- Planning – take time to think about the needs and how best to meet them.
- Design must provide the ability to add content quickly (Emergencies) & easily (keeping site up to date shouldn't be a chore).
- Component Based design. Easy customization, consistent layouts, colors and templates. Creates a “brand” consistency
- Content Governance – Clear Roles & access levels = accountability
- Engage a partner that provides ongoing training & support
- Prioritizes Accessibility
- Mobile Responsiveness
- Online forms & applications
- Alerts & notifications
- Robust Calendars

The background is a dark blue gradient with abstract geometric shapes. A large, semi-transparent circle is positioned on the right side, and a vertical rectangular bar is on the left. The word "Questions?" is centered in the middle of the image in a white, sans-serif font.

Questions?