

25th Annual Town Finance & Personnel School
Saratoga Hilton · April 22 – 24, 2025
Agenda & Schedule of Events



Tuesday, April 22 (Day 1)

2025 Finance & Personnel School Event Sponsors

7:30 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. Breakfast and Registration

8:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. Welcome and Opening Remarks



Concurrent Block 1

9:00 a.m. - 10:15 a.m.

Overview of the Town Supervisor's Accounting Responsibilities

- *Track One: Town Finance (Saratoga 2 & 3)*

William Naylor, Auditor 2, NYS Office of the State Comptroller

This session will provide an overview of the accounting process for NYS local governments. We will discuss the elements of the accounting system including fund structure, coding and chart of accounts. In addition, we will discuss the Supervisor's role in maintaining accounting records and required filings.

Conducting Effective Workplace Investigations

- *Track Two: Town Personnel (Saratoga 1)*

Benjamin Mudrick, Harter Secrest & Emery LLP

HR professionals are routinely required to conduct and/or manage workplace investigations involving allegations of harassment, discrimination, violation of company policy, etc. This presentation will provide practical advice for conducting investigations that are thorough, impartial, and effective. The training will cover topics such as: preparing for an investigation, interviewing witnesses, gathering evidence, navigating union-related matters, and documenting the investigation process and findings. The session will also include an interactive workshop portion where participants will have an opportunity to practice skills learned during the presentation.

10:15 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. Break

Concurrent Block 2

10:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.

Policies and Procedures to Manage Your Local Government

- *Track One: Town Finance (Saratoga 2 & 3)*

Ingrid Otto, Auditor 2, NYS Office of the State Comptroller

Information about mandated policies related to ethics, investments and sexual harassment prevention is provided. Policies related to computer, vehicle and credit card use are also discussed.

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Where's the Activity (and Cost) in New York Workers' Comp Claims?

- *Track Two: Town Personnel (Saratoga 1)*

Joseph Cavalcante, Ombudsman, NYS Workers' Compensation Board

The NYS Workers' Compensation Board is now reporting where payer/employer, worker and board resources are expended in the New York system. This unprecedented data shows the numbers of hearings and controversies; IMEs; effort spent to access medical care; and other elements. It's all reported by type of claim, so members can consider the impact on their towns. It's high-level, easy to follow, and comes with summaries, delivered by the ombudsman, a long-time participant in NYSAOT conferences.

11:45 a.m. 12:30 p.m. Lunch

Concurrent Block 3

12:30 p.m. – 1:45 p.m.

Improving the Effectiveness of Claims Processing

- *Track One: Town Finance (Saratoga 2 & 3)*

Leslie Richard, Auditor 2, NYS Office of the State Comptroller

This session will assist local officials in learning how to establish an effective and efficient claims processing system. A well-designed system ensures proper use of municipal resources, provides local officials with useful information and complies with all applicable laws and regulations.

Employee Evaluation and Discipline: Know the Procedures and Best Practices for Success

- *Track Two: Town Personnel (Saratoga 1)*

Jeffrey F. Swiatek, Partner, Hodgson Russ LLP

Unacceptable employee performance and conduct can be endlessly frustrating to deal with. Review the best approaches for establishing clear performance standards, and effectively evaluating your employees in light of those standards. Also explore the best practices for confidently preparing for and implementing employee discipline including termination from employment.

1:45 p.m. 2:00 p.m. Break

Concurrent Block 4

2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Budgetary Impacts of Workplace Safety

- *Track One: Town Finance (Saratoga 2 & 3)*

Michael Kenneally, Esq. & CEO, Comp Alliance

Workplace accidents and injuries can have significant impacts on municipal budgets. Whether it's the direct costs associated with a claim or the indirect cost of paying overtime to fill the gap in service, this session will tell you all you need to know to understand and manage the budgetary risks inherent to workplace injuries.

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Collective Bargaining Refresher: Planning for Your next Union Negotiation

- *Track Two: Town Personnel (Saratoga 1)*

Robert Schofield and Nate Nichols, Whiteman Osterman & Hanna LLP

This session will prepare you for negotiating a union collective bargaining agreement in these turbulent times. Attention will be given to Compliance with the Taylor Law, identifying and preparing bargaining proposals, researching relevant data, engaging consultants, and planning for a successful outcome.

3:15 p.m. 3:30 p.m. Break

Concurrent Block 5 – 3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Avoiding the Fiscal Cliff: A Lesson in Budgeting

- *Track One: Town Finance (Saratoga 2 & 3)*

Dan Acquilano, Manager of Local Official Training, NYS Office of the State Comptroller

When reviewing the annual budget or preparing next year's budget, there are many commonly misunderstood terms or concepts that can lead to poorly structured budgets, or unmanaged financial condition. This session will identify those concepts commonly misunderstood by Town management, help explain how to properly implement these concepts and ways to prevent pitfalls in the budgeting process.

From Recruitment to Retention: Effective Workforce Development in Local Government

- *Track Two: Town Personnel (Saratoga 1)*

Dr. Robert Hinckley, Assistant Dean, Academic Programs and Curriculum, SUNY Potsdam; Christopher A. Koetzle, Executive Director, NYAOT and Katie Hodgdon, Association Counsel, NYAOT

The labor shortage isn't just coming – it's already here. Local government officials across the board are struggling to compete with private sector wages and benefits, making it increasingly difficult to attract and retain talent for critical roles, from town comptrollers to highway motor equipment operators. Join Chris Koetzle, NYAOT Executive Director; Dr. Robert Hinckley, Assistant Dean for Academic Programs and Curriculum at SUNY Potsdam; and Katie Hodgdon, NYAOT Association Counsel, as they explore practical solutions to this workforce crisis. Learn about innovative strategies, including a cutting-edge microcredential program developed by SUNY Potsdam and NYAOT, designed to strengthen public sector recruitment and retention. Bring your questions and engage in this vital conversation to help your community thrive.

5:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. Reception sponsored by NYMIR & Comp Alliance, Saratoga City Center

6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. Dinner with NYS Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli, Saratoga City Center

Wednesday, April 23 (Day 2)

7:30 a.m. 8:30 a.m. Breakfast & Registration

8:30 a.m. 9:00 a.m. Opening Remarks

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Concurrent Block 1

9:00 a.m. - 10:15 a.m.

Purchasing and Claims Processing

- *Track One: Town Finance (Saratoga 2 & 3)*

William Naylor, Auditor 2, NYS Office of the State Comptroller and Katie Hodgdon, Association Counsel, NYAOT

This session will provide an overview of the applicable laws related to procurement, exceptions to the law, building a sound procurement policy and a review of the claims auditing process.

Who's the Boss?

- *Track Two: Town Personnel (Saratoga 1)*

Lori Mithen-DeMasi, Chief Counsel, and Sarah Brancatella, Deputy Director, NYAOT

Who has the authority to hire and fire a court clerk or heavy equipment operator? Can the town board reduce a justice's salary? Town departments and town boards can clash when there is a misunderstanding regarding their respective roles and authority. This class goes over the legal authority and interactions between the various elements of town government.

10:15 a.m. 10:30 a.m. Break

Concurrent Block 2

10:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.

Developing an Effective Fund Balance Policy

- *Track One: Town Finance (Saratoga 2 & 3)*

Joseph Testa, Auditor 1, NYS Office of the State Comptroller

This presentation will provide an overview of fund balance and outline the recommended components of an effective fund balance policy. The presenter will also discuss what to consider and the methods local governments can use to determine what amount of fund balance is appropriate and reasonable for their operations.

Town Personnel on Defense: Understanding Fraud and the Importance of Internal Controls

- *Track Two: Town Personnel (Saratoga 1)*

Ingrid Otto, Auditor 2, NYS Office of the State Comptroller

This session will identify steps local officials can take to help detect and prevent fraud and abuse. Participants will learn about the fraud triangle, which consists of common red flags, organizational vulnerabilities to fraud and how to minimize risks.

11:45 a.m. 12:30 p.m. Lunch



Concurrent Block 3

12:30 p.m. – 1:45 p.m.

Common OSC Audit Findings for Towns

- *Track One: Town Finance (Saratoga 2 & 3)*

Leslie Richard, Auditor 2, NYS Office of the State Comptroller

While OSC auditors may review financial activities, our audits often focus on whether a local government is performing activities in line with established criteria. In this session we will discuss several examples of OSC audits to illustrate the various scope areas auditors may review, some specific audit findings, and our recommendations.

Strategies and Best Practices for Worker Safety

- *Track Two: Town Personnel (Saratoga 1)*

Robert Blaisdell, Director of Loss Control, Comp Alliance

Join us as we explore innovative strategies and best practices to enhance safety across public sector operations. This presentation will cover the critical role of safety committees to prevent accidents, proactively manage risk and implement a safety-first culture that protects public employees and the community alike. Together, we'll shape a safer future for your town.

1:45 p.m. 2:00 p.m. Break

Concurrent Block 4

2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Annual Financial Report Common Reporting Errors

- *Track One: Town Finance (Saratoga 2 & 3)*

Joseph Testa, Examiner 1, NYS Office of the State Comptroller

This presentation will provide an overview of how to access and complete the Annual Financial Report (AFR), a required filing for local governments. The presenter will demonstrate the application features, discuss of common reporting errors, provide training resources and answer questions during the presentation.

Being Human in Human Resources

- *Track Two: Town Personnel (Saratoga 1)*

Sarah Brancatella, Deputy Director, NYAOT

Life happens, and challenges are inevitable. Too often, the law is seen as a barrier to creating employee policies that are both compassionate and compliant. This class reframes that perspective, going over legal requirements and how they can work hand-in-hand with empathy to support employees during difficult times. Additionally, through real-world examples and actionable strategies, you'll learn how non-legal, small, thoughtful gestures can make a big difference.

3:15 p.m. 3:30 p.m. Break

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Concurrent Block 5

3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Ask the Auditor, Ask the Attorney

- *Track One: Town Finance (Saratoga 2 & 3)*

Dan Acquilano, Manager, Division of Local Government & School Accountability, OSC and Katie Hodgdon, Association Counsel, NYAOT

Whether they come from classes at this event or you bring them with you, OSC auditors and AOT attorneys will answer your questions in an open forum.

Sexual Harassment and Discrimination Prevention Training

- *Track Two: Town Personnel (Saratoga 1)*

Karen Buckley, V.P. Marketing & Member Services, NYMIR Division, Wright Risk

This training complies with the New York State mandated annual training. The latest updates from the Department of Human Rights will be reviewed and discussed. Examples of inappropriate behaviors in the workplace will be provided. The importance of complaint handling and the investigation process will be covered. After completion, you will have the tools to conduct your own training at your municipality.

Thursday, April 24 (Day 3)

8:00 a.m. 9:00 a.m. Breakfast

Concurrent Block 1

9:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.

Policy Matters: Essential Personnel Policies in the Public Sector

- *Track One: Town Finance (Saratoga 2&3)*

Katie Hodgdon, Association Counsel and Lori Mithen-DeMasi, Chief Counsel, NYAOT

Town finance officers often juggle multiple responsibilities, including human resources management. This course offers a comprehensive overview of the critical role HR plays in local government, with a focus on the unique challenges and nuances of the public sector. Participants will explore essential personnel policies required for town governments, distinguishing between mandatory policies and those that are strongly recommended. The course encourages an interactive environment—bring your questions and real-world scenarios for discussion!

Managing in a Unionized Environment

- *Track Two: Town Personnel (Saratoga 1)*

Bryan Goldberger, Principal, Goldberger and Kremer

This session will focus on the work relationship between employees and their supervisor; the importance of the relevant collective bargaining agreement and/or employee handbook policies; as well as the responsibilities and

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obligations of all parties. The session will also cover the handling of grievances and improper practices as they may arise in a unionized setting."

10:15 a.m. 10:30 a.m. Break

Concurrent Block 2

10:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.

Open Q&A/ Closing Thoughts

- *Track One: Town Finance (Saratoga 2 & 3)*

Dan Acquilano, Manager of Local Official Training, NYS Office of the State Comptroller and Katie Hodgdon, Association Counsel, NYAOT

Here's your chance to ask our presenters any of your remaining questions.

Considerations before Terminating Employment

- *Track Two: Town Personnel (Saratoga 1)*

Sarah Brancatella, Deputy Director, NYAOT

Public sector employment in New York can be subject to specific legal protections due to constitutional, statutory, and contractual provisions. Unlike private employment, which often follows an "at-will" doctrine, public employees generally have due process rights that must be observed before termination. This class will go over what you need to think about before cutting ties with employees or town officials.

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