## LEGISLATURE STUFF

## **Broadband Fields of Dreams**

By Michael Ryan

CATSKILL - If they build it they won't need to come because they are already there, waiting on the broadband backroads of dreams.

Greene County Legislature members, at a recent meeting, got an update on upgrading broadband coverage in underserved areas from county Economic Development, Tourism & Planning director Warren Hart.

Hart said a survey is expected to start being circulated throughout all towns and villages, in early June, gathering precise information on the status of broadband accessibility and efficiency, or lack thereof.

A special company, ECC, has been hired to conduct the survey, compile the data and assist in formulating a plan to secure funding, enabling the county to eventually beam up every home and

long been aware of the shortcomings, and working to do something about them, bringing on the consultant will open opportunities not previ- ing the encouraging news ping as street-level map-

opened to the public in

1967. The act of preser-

vation that established

Olana also set aside land

for the creation of Co-

lumbia-Greene Commu-

nity College (C-GCC), a

campus of the State Uni-

versity of New York, es-

York State institutions.

is thrilled to partner with

neighboring C-GCC to

provide workforce devel-

opment opportunities for

students enrolled in C-

GCC's business, art, and

environmental science

classes and those inter-

ested in gaining work experience related to their

course of study at a vital

cultural and historic in-

stitution. "Olana State Historic Site is excited

to partner with Colum-

bia-Greene Community

Partnership to establish

this collaborative intern-

ship and work develop-

ment program", said Amy

Hausmann, Director,

Olana State Historic Site.

"As a New York State His-

toric Site, Olana is dedi-

cated to strengthening

partnerships and expand-

ing accessibility for mem-

bers of our local com-

ously on the broadband that the county and ECC ping. It is a much more me to beat the bushes horizon.

"ECC has worked with dozens of counties," Hart said, providing a level of expertise and bureaucratic networking not grown in any Iowa cornfield.

The survey will be launched primarily via online digital marketing, through the "Positively Greene" and Economic Development websites.

Standard paper flyers will be circulated at area public libraries and town halls, etc., and "we are also looking into a card mailing," Hart said.

"One of the questions on the survey will be asking residents, 'Do you want this?' which we are anticipating they will answer affirmatively," Hart said in a followup telephone interview.

"We will be doing all the prep work to then make an application to go after State taxpayer's funds out there for this purpose," Hart said, noting the county is investing \$60,000 in this Phase One effort.

"It is a very technical and competitive grant process," Hart said, shar-

C-GCC, Olana Announce

are not going it alone.

"We're doing this in willing partnership with four local providers," Hart said, getting cooperation from Mid-Hudson Cable, Margaretville Telephone, Charter Spectrum and State Telephone.

One hand will wash the other, with the providers performing the buildouts, so the idea has nothing to do with baseball ghosts emerging from the cornrows or having a catch with your long lost dad.

We want to build out in areas of the county not well-served because they are remote and the population density is not high enough for these broadband companies to go in there," Hart said.

"It requires the incentive of public funds to make that happen," Hart said, noting Phase One further involves better mapping of the county.

"There is a ubiquitous problem with broadband mapping that has been based on U.S. Census data which is not at all proper scale," Hart said.

"We refer to our map-

representative of what is actually on the ground," Hart said.

The response-period for the survey is designed to be 90 days, keeping a close eye on the initial month. "After the first 30 days, we'll see what has come in and adjust from there," Hart said.

"We want to make sure the response is representative of the whole county. In the survey world, five percent is a healthy response," Hart said.

Letters are being prepared for every town supervisor, advising them of the survey, hoping to generate more than a healthy response, all of which is cause for cautious rejoicing around the mountaintop.

"Anyway we can get broadband coverage into every nook and cranny of the county and our town, I'm all for it," Prattsville town supervisor Greg Cross said in a telephone interview.

Cross said he has already been pursuing every known solution to serious gaps in coverage along county routes 10 and 2, infamous dead zones.

"Mid-Hudson says they are getting the licensing for Route 10 but obviously, Route 2 is a nightmare with its low numbers [in population]," Cross said, leaving them digitally stranded in the outlying hills of Prattsville.

"My understanding is it costs \$40,000 per rural mile of broadband. I spoke to Warren Hart, letting him know I didn't want to do anything counter-productive to what the county is doing," Cross said.

"He said it was fine for

for everything we can get. I'll be waiting with baited breath to see how this works out," Cross said.

Cross said he is repeatedly grabbing the ear of county legislator James Thorington (District 6, Ashland, Jewett, Prattsville, Windham), eagerly hoping to also tap into federal stimulus money if it fits the crite-

Windham town supervisor Thomas Hoyt says, "we're looking forward to picking up the last mile," meaning very, very dead spots spread in the hamlets of Maplecrest and Hensonville and elsewhere.

The majority of the town is cabled now but we still have isolated areas that need cable and others that need upgrades to high speed fiber. This survey is a great idea on how to really move for-

ward," Hoyt said.

"We're making significant progress on our broadband project," Hart said, an ongoing movement that has received additional, unexpected motivation.

"One issue that has made this more timely was the pandemic, revealing a serious need for students at home doing remote learning," Hart said.

"There is a greater need for people to telecommute with the second home population becoming full time residents, especially on the mountaintop. That's where people want to build or renovate

"There is a greater necessity for telemedicine, as well. This will give us a clearer understanding of the broadband situation," Hart said, noting residents can call the county if they encounter online difficulties.





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## **Black Rocket Virtual Camps for Kids**

Blast off into the future of Creative Tech with Columbia-Greene Community College and Black Rocket! Kids ages 6 to 14 can enroll now in live, online STEAM classes taught by top teachers, with sessions in June and July.

To view a full list of camps and to register, visit blackrocket.com/online/gre/.

## Summer 2021 will include:

New! Young Authors Virtual Reality: The Future is Now New! ROBLOX® Coders and Entrepreneurs New! Minecraft® Animators

YouTube Content Creators

Esports Apprentice - Streamers and Gamers New! App. IO: Make Your First Multiplayer App! New! Inventor's League - Prototyping for the Future! Rocket Kart Racers: Design a Mario Kart Style Game

> YouTube FX Masters ...and many more!

Registration for each class closes at 7 pm ET three days before class starts.







business. While the county has

**Partnership** Saved in 1966 by a vi-ticularly gratified to partsionary coalition of priner with our closest vate individuals and New neighbor to provide this rich educational oppor-York State government, tunity.' Olana State Historic Site

A new collaborative three-semester program beginning in Fall 2021 will provide an opportunity for Olana State Historic Site to connect and collaborate with C-GCC faculty and students throughout the academic tablishing a historic tie year. As part of this prothat binds the two New gram, Olana State Historic Site and its non-As a public site, Olana profit affiliate, The Olana Partnership (TOP), will work collaboratively with C-GCC faculty to provide an opportunity for yearlong engagement that culminates in a series of workforce and internship opportunities to serve Olana's local audience of adults attending college and those seeking career development opportunities. "As neighbors with shared origins and educational goals, Olana and Columbia-Greene Community Col-College and The Olana lege are natural partners," said Dr. Sean Sawyer, Washburn & Susan Oberwager President of The Olana Partnership, "and The Olana Partnership is thrilled to partner in this initiative that will enable students of all ages and backgrounds to use Olana as a launchpad to connect their academic work with work

experience and career growth." Dr. Carlee Drummer,

President of Columbia-Greene Community College, stated, "The College extends deep gratitude to the Olana State Historic Site and The Olana Partnership for their role in making this multifaceted collaboration possible. This partnership is the first of its kind in the State – and possibly the nation! – to offer students an array of learning and career opportunities intersecting the arts, business, environmental studies, marketing, and management of a non-profit arts-based organization."

Students enrolled in C-GCC's business, art, and environmental sciences classes will be invited to engage with Olana yearround through class visits with Olana staff during the fall semester, a corresponding honors project during the spring, and paid internship and/or employment experience in the summer. Through this tiered internship and work development program, students will be given the opportunity to engage with Olana over the course of a full academic year and sustain engagement with the site through their specific course of study.

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