STUCK IN SPACE

Two astronauts still await return to Earth. This NASA veteran knows their pain. **OUT OF THIS WORLD, A2**

Olympic Center to host Adirondack Winter Invitational. **COLLEGE HOCKEY, B1**

Watertown Daily Times

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Cloverleaf back on table for border station

With push from Sen. Schumer, Customs and Border Protection says it will do a full review of property near Thousand Islands Bridge

By ALEX GAULT
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U.S. Customs and Border Protection will be considering the community-backed proposal to build a new Border Patrol station near the Thousand Islands Bridge, thanks to advocacy from Sen. Charles E. Schumer, local elected officials and the community.

On Monday, a senior CBP official, writing on behalf of the CBP commissioner, confirmed that the agency would be considering the property — which is just north of the cloverleaf intersection of Interstate 81 and Route 12 owned by the Thousand Islands Bridge Authority — after project officials last month had sent a letter disqualifying the site.

"Due to the continued interest from the community, and CBP's commitment to evaluating all potential sites, the cloverleaf TIBA property or a nearby property in the cloverleaf area will be included in the (supplemental environmental assessment)," wrote Troy A. Miller, a senior official with CBP. "The addition of the cloverleaf-area property will require the completion of biological and cultural resource surveys."

For years, CBP has been working to construct a new Border Patrol station in the Thousand Islands region, to replace the overcrowded station on Wellesley Island.

The primary identified site has been on Blind Bay, in the town of Orleans, and local officials, environmentalists and community residents have banded together to express extreme concern over any plan to develop that area of the St. Lawrence River shoreline.

They argue that Blind Bay is environmentally sensitive, and CBP's plan to build a new 49,000-square-foot facility with docks, parking garages, kennels and more would interrupt and infringe on the rural, undeveloped character of the area.

See CLOVERLEAF A5

Lowville and Beaver River Railroad added to registers of historic places

By ELAINE M. AVALLONE
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CROGHAN — Lowville and Beaver River Railroad including its depots, bridges and turntables is now, as of Sept. 12, on the State Register of Historic Places and was added to the national register Nov. 18.

"The Lowville and Beaver River Railroad Historic District is a historically significant example of a privately-owned short-line railroad and engineering work linked to the economic development of the north country in the 20th century," a spokesperson from the state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation said. "It was capitalized, constructed and operated purely by local and community interest for the development of Lewis County, and it remains one of the few remaining short-line railroads in the state. The built resources within the district represent the transition period between canals and railroads, the evolution from eating rooms to dining cars, and the development of refrigeration."

According to Laurie Halladay, the town of Croghan historian and a member of the Railway Historical Society of Northern New York, the designation has been in the works since 2001. Hamish Davey, Lewis County Historical Society board member, was key, she said.

"Thanks to Hamish Davey for helping us to start this process, the New York State Historic Preservation office, and the many people who helped us along the way," Halladay said. "This will open doors to grants."

The state representative said the state and national register listings are primarily honorary but do open up grant opportunities and historic tax incentives for the owners of properties contributing to the district.

Lowville engine yard circa 1900. Railway Historical Society of Northern New York

Laurie Halladay, the town of Croghan historian and a member of the Railway Historical Society of Northern New York, outside the railway museum in Croghan in 2022. Watertown Daily Times

The historic district encompasses the former Lowville and Beaver Railroad Line from the Lowville Depot and old engine yard in Lowville to the Croghan Depot. The 10.6-mile corridor follows the original configuration and railbed and includes all extant depots along the route, two Armstrong turntables, the original dining house in Lowville, many engine houses, auxiliary buildings, historic bridges and water crossings.

See RAILROAD A5

Morrison's Furniture, 230 Factory St., Watertown, is closing this week after 103 years in business. Jonathon Wheeler/Watertown Daily Times

Morrison's Furniture closing after 103 years

By CRAIG FOX
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WATERTOWN — After more than a century, Morrison's Furniture on Factory Street is closing.

The 103-year-old store's last day to be open for customers will be Wednesday, with furniture deliveries to continue on Friday and Saturday.

Owner Cheryl "Sherry" Morrison Pastor said Monday she has no choice. The six-story building's boiler failed in October and it's too expensive to replace.

Working for the family business for 58 years, Pastor, 78, is retiring.

"With the boiler, it's just time," she said. "There's no heat in here and getting tough to be in here."

In its final days, the store — always known as the largest furniture store in the Northern New York — still employs a skeleton crew of about 12 workers.

"Some of them have been here 20, 30, 40 years. They're family. I hate putting them out of work," she said.

Early on, she looked at possibly replacing the boiler, but it would have taken two months to order it, she said.

"I'm a third-generation owner. My grandfather started the business 103 years ago," she said.

Joseph J. Morrison began selling furniture in 1919 using a horse and wagon until he opened the store in 1921 at its former location on Court Street.

Morrison's relocated to 230 Factory St., its home of 89 years, in 1935.

Her brother, David A. Morrison, who ran the business as president of the company, died at the age of 60 in 2021. She took the reigns then.

See MORRISON'S A5

Tindall-Schlicht reflects on time as Seaway administrator

By BOB BECKSTEAD
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MASSENA — With a new president taking office on Jan. 20, Adam M. Tindall-Schlicht is preparing to wind down his time as administrator of the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corp. (GLS).

He had been appointed by President Joseph R. Biden on Nov. 6, 2022, as the 11th GLS administrator. With Donald J. Trump taking office as the next president in January, Tindall-Schlicht is preparing to move on.

"Many of you know that I've had the pleasure of serving as administrator for two years now on behalf of the president, and my time as administrator draws to an end in the months ahead to allow for the next president to choose his Seaway administrator," he said during a ceremony to mark the transfer of the tugboat Robinson Bay from GLS to the Great Lakes Maritime Academy.

Speaking to reporters following the ceremony, Tindall-Schlicht reflected on his time as GLS administrator.

With a new president taking office on Jan. 20, Adam M. Tindall-Schlicht is preparing to wind down his time as administrator of the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corp. (GLS). Bob Beckstead/Watertown Daily Times

"I am preparing for the transition, and I hope to serve as long as possible in the role," he said.

He said he was "incredibly proud" of what GLS had accomplished during his tenure as administrator.

"It's remarkable how much we've been able to accomplish at the GLS over the last two years, from identifying an incredibly exciting new

See SEAWAY A5

Windy, periods of rain; highs in the mid-40s
DETAILS, A6

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Morrison's

From A1

Pastor asked her brother's children and hers whether they'd be interested in taking over the business, but they live out of state and didn't want to move back to Watertown, she said.

"They kept telling me to retire and enjoy myself for a few years," she said.

The store still has somewhere between $300,000 and $400,000 in inventory in its six floors and much of it still "wrapped up and boxed up" in four nearby warehouses, she said.

Pastor said the company's lawyers are trying to determine the building's future. She may reopen it this spring and sell the furniture as an auction house, but nothing has been finalized.

She then hopes to sell the building.

The final days have been busy and hectic getting ready for the closing, she said. The building's sprinkler system will be drained and then "we'll have to be out of here," she said.

Pastor wants to thank her customers for their loyalty over the decades, stressing she plans to send out a message to them later on after the closing.

"Some of them shopped here for years, their parents and grandparents shopped here," she said. "It was their family's furniture store," she said.

News of the pending closure has circulated around the community for weeks.

The end of Morrison's will create a big void downtown, said Kylee McGrath, the CEO of the Watertown Local Development Corp., also known as the Watertown Trust.

"The closure of Morrison's will mark the end of an era," she said. "The loss of a trusted establishment, like Morrison's, is a reminder of the vital role local businesses play in shaping the heart of a community."

Depot at Lowville circa 1906. Railway Historical Society of Northern New York

Railroad

From A1

Halladay said the designations are significant in denoting the railroad assets as historical fixtures in the community.

"I have a saying as the town of Croghan historian — 'It is important to know what our ancestors did to get us here today,'" she said. "It is one thing to read about it from a book. But to see all four depots, track, turntables, swing bridge, to touch it, to feel the wind going thru your hair as you ride the rails with us on historic rail equipment, tour the Croghan depot, see where the station agent's family lived and to step in the footsteps of railroad workers gives life to the tour guides words and the words in a history book. This puts history to heart. It plants the seeds of history for future generations."

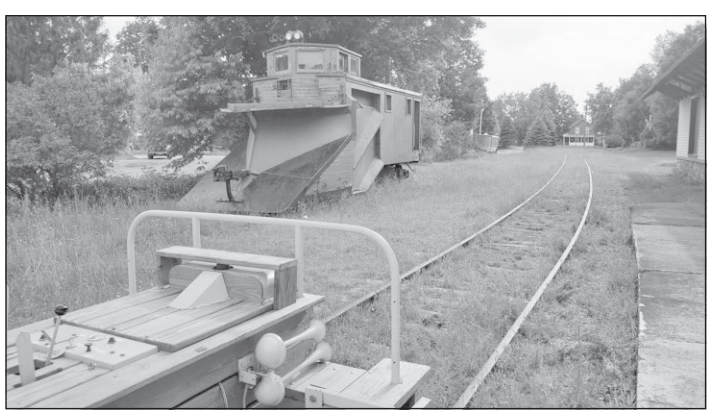
Lowville and Beaver River Railroad train on the 1905 steel truss over the Black River. Railway Historical Society of Northern New York

"With the nomination of the Lowville Beaver River Railroad Historic District to the State Register our community will be able to water its history and make it come more alive by opening the doors for us to access grants for future historical preservation work," she added. "This will help us to reach more hearts by placing the love of history within each smiling face that visits our community."

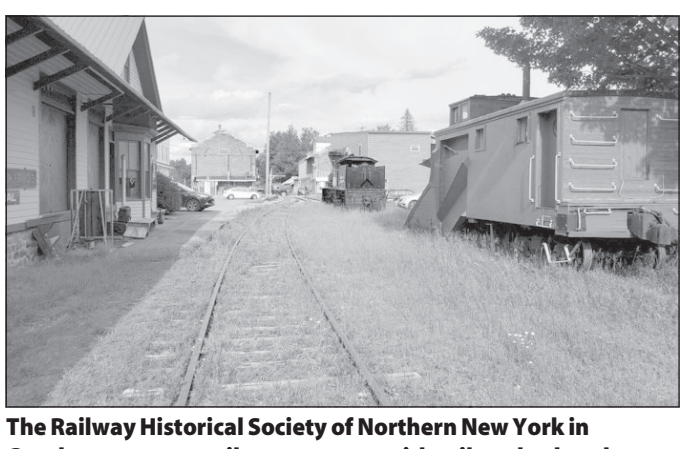
The state spokesperson said the listing itself does not restrict what owners may do with their properties, nor does it inherently require conformance to design guidelines or preservation standards.

"If an owner is using private funds to complete the project, then they are free to remodel, alter, paint, subdivide or even demolish

See RAILROAD A8



The Railway Historical Society of Northern New York in Croghan maintains and uses the tracks of the Lowville and Beaver River Railroad by giving "speeder car" rides to visitors to the museum. Watertown Daily Times



The Railway Historical Society of Northern New York in Croghan curates a railway museum with railroad-related artifacts, maps, stories and nostalgia. Watertown Daily Times

Cloverleaf

From A1

CBP has since identified another property, where the current Dockside Cottages vacation rental cabins are located in the town of Clayton, as a secondary site. That also garnered pushback from local residents, neighbors and elected officials, who argue that it would have a terrible impact on the residential character of that neighborhood.

The community, in a series of in-person meetings with CBP officials in August, rallied behind a plan they put forward to build the property by the Thousand Islands Bridge — an area with nearby highway access, more commercial and industrial development, fewer nearby residences and a less environmentally sensitive ecosystem.

But in September, CBP sent an email to state Assemblyman Scott A. Gray, R-Watertown, rejecting the bridge-adjacent property.

Daniel A. Githens, CBP chief of intergovernmental affairs, said the property would require a split operation because it didn't have nearby water access, and posed security risks because it could be easily seen from the bridge.

"Placement beneath the Thousand Islands Bridge would enable individuals to monitor the property from a high vantage point without a means to counteract it," he wrote.

But CBP officials hadn't undertaken on-site review of the property that was on offer. Local officials said it does have nearby water access underneath the bridge structure, and said the overview available from the bridge could be counteracted and was also a point of concern at any other shoreline property being considered.

Now, CBP will conduct a full site review of the cloverleaf area property, considering the layout, location, ecology and what impact a construction project would have on nearby plants, animals and human developments.

"Following our repeated efforts to make them reconsider their too-narrow focus on potential sites, CBP has wisely heeded the community's calls to add the cloverleaf property as a potential site for a new Border Patrol facility," Schumer said in a statement. "By getting the CBP to do a full public meeting in the north country, I made sure the Thousand Island and St. Lawrence River community had voices heard loud and clear throughout this process. And when it seemed CBP was unwisely not properly considering the cloverleaf property, which local leaders believe is best to ensure the north country's environment and tourism economy as well as CBP's mission; I was proud to lead the charge to get them to reverse course."

The other local elected officials who have worked for years to open a dialogue with the federal agency were thrilled with the news on Monday.

"I want to take a moment to express our gratitude for diligent work and partnership of Senator Chuck Schumer," Gray said. "His unwavering commitment to our community was instrumental in advocating for the establish of a community forum by Customs and Border Protection. This forum provided a vital platform for residents to engage in important discussions about our shared future."

Gray also lauded Schumer's vocal opposition to the Dockside Cottages and Blind Bay development plans, and his efforts to support the cloverleaf project.

Jefferson County Legislators Philip N. Reed, R-Alexandria, and Robert Cantwell, R-Clayton, have also been involved, advocating for their areas of Jefferson County against the Dockside Cottages and Blind Bay plans.

"This is certainly great news," Reed said. "It is much appreciated that CBP has listened to the river community's unified voice and added the additional site for consideration of their facility."

Both men thanked Schumer for his involvement.

Jake R. Tibbles, executive director of the Thousand Islands Land Trust, which bought the Blind Bay property once they heard CBP was considering it and have vowed to fight to keep the land undeveloped, lauded Schumer's work.

"His persistence has ensured that the river community has a voice in this critical issue," he said. "While we still must navigate the completion of the Supplemental Environmental Assessment, it is very encouraging that Customs and Border Protection is considering TIBA as a community-supported alternative."

John M. Peach, executive director of Save the River, an environmental group that has led opposition to the Blind Bay development plan, said he is also pleased.

"We are pleased to learn that the collaborative efforts of Save the River, TILT and the Save Blind Bay Coalition, coupled with the unwavering support of our river community, have led Customs and Border Protection to consider the cloverleaf as an alternative site for their facility," he said. "Thank you to Senator Schumer and everyone involved for their efforts."

Gov. Kathleen C. Hochul added her voice to the chorus of federal, local and state officials calling for CBP to consider local residents' demands and not build on Blind Bay. In a statement Monday, she said this is a positive development in line with what she was hoping to see happen.

"My message to U.S. Customs and Border Protection has been clear since day one: No facility at Blind Bay," she said. "The decision to include the cloverleaf property as part of the review for a new facility is a welcome step and I applaud our partners at the federal level as well as the countless advocates in the north country for this victory. Blind Bay is a natural beauty and important ecosystems must be preserved and protected."

The governor said she will continue to voice opposition to the construction of a facility on Blind Bay and said she urges the federal agency to consider the cloverleaf seriously.

Seaway

From A1

home for the Robinson Bay, to opening the Visitor Center, to maximizing the days of service for the St. Lawrence Seaway, securing the highest budget in GLS history through bipartisan action in Congress, and securing a new collective bargaining agreement with the AFGE (American Federation of Government Employees) for the next four years," Tindall-Schlicht said.

He said the steps they had taken during his tenure "have been important not only for a new foundational history of the GLS and the St. Lawrence Seaway, but has been consequential to the community and the economy of the north country as well."

"When President (Joseph) Biden and Secretary Pete (Buttigieg) asked me to come back to the GLS as administrator, I knew that I may only have two years. So, every day was an opportunity to make a difference for the people that have long lived and worked in the north country, for the GLS, for the men and women that depend on the service of the St. Lawrence Seaway binationally, across the entirety of the Great Lakes region, including Wisconsin, where I'm from," he said. "I'll be forever grateful to Secretary Pete Buttigieg, Vice President (Kamala) Harris and President Biden for the opportunity. It's been a privilege and an honor every day."

One of the things that Tindall-Schlicht said he's proud of is the new Seaway Visitors Center at Eisenhower Lock, which held its grand opening in May and has welcomed more than 35,000 visitors from all 50 states and nearly 20 countries.

"It is exceeding what we had hoped it would do," he said. "It is a credit to the men and women that work at the GLS and our Visitor Center Director Amy Stark, who has positioned herself as a community relations leader here in the north country on an ongoing basis. We have seen such a tremendous enthusiasm for the Visitor Center. School groups, community organizations using the conference room. It's been a gathering place. It's been a storytelling location. It's been a place where the Seaway history can be shared and honored. We look forward to its successful operation for many more decades ahead in such a beautiful state."

Tindall-Schlicht said that came about because of bipartisan support.

"When I think about the Visitor Center, so many people brought her to life for this community. Sen. Chuck Schumer was one of the first to call for her renewal. Then-Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao and Congresswoman Elise Stefanik celebrated the announcement of funding the Visitor Center replacement, and Secretary Pete and Transportation Deputy Secretary Polly Trottenberg were here for the commemorative groundbreaking," he said.

He said both Republicans and Democrats have supported the GLS over its history, most recently during the Biden-Harris administration, "and I would very much hope that the Trump administration does the same, and I think they will."

Time may be short, but Tindall-Schlicht said the work isn't yet done.

"One of our immediate priorities is preparing for the safe and efficient end of the shipping season, which has been announced for Eisenhower and Snell lock on Jan. 5 of 2025. That requires a significant amount of effort," he said. "We also prepare for our annual winter maintenance project season, where we use some of the funds that Congress has entrusted us with to reinvest in our lock infrastructure and in our facilities throughout the north country. That is a tremendous area of impact."

He said he's also looking forward to continuing work with their new trade development Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC) partners.

"Over the last 18 months, we've been able to sign new Memorandums of Cooperation with ports in Italy, Spain and Germany that we think are opening new chapters for trade and handling of freight via the St. Lawrence Seaway to U.S. and Canadian Great Lakes ports," he said.

Tindall-Schlicht said another major project over the past two years has been implementing the "green shipping corridor network", or GSCN. He said that during COP27, the 27th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the St. Lawrence Seaway and Great Lakes was selected by the world's governments as a green shipping corridor.

"Implementing that effort to fully decarbonize the maritime supply chain through the St. Lawrence Seaway has been a hallmark of my approach. I really believe that the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway and the shipping that occurs through these locks is the best in practice globally for how approaching maritime and the handling of freight is both an economic success story, but doing so through the lens of sustainability, decarbonization, and protection of these freshwater assets like the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes themselves," he said.

He said that work has been "a hallmark of what we've been trying to do with our trade partners, with our Canadian partners, with state, local and federal governments, with indigenous communities."

"I really, sincerely hope that the work that we've done in decarbonization and in green shipping will have legs for years to come and will certainly be a hallmark of the history of my work as administrator," Tindall-Schlicht said.