



Newsletter

## TGCC Awarded 2020 Outstanding Rural Economic Development Award

We are delighted to share that TGCC has been honored with the **2020 Outstanding Rural Economic Development Award** by the Rural Maryland Council. This award, the perfect capstone to our 20th Anniversary celebrations, is given for leadership, dedication, and noteworthy achievement to help improve economic development opportunities in rural communities. Our work is only possible with the generous support of our sponsors and partners – thank you for your vision and commitment to the greater good!

## US 219 Work Group Celebrates Important Wins



Our US 219 Work Group achieved many milestones in 2020 and leveraged nearly \$120,000 in investment. MDOT SHA funded a Cost Benefit Analysis related to a completed US 219 at a cost of \$42,000 and under the direction of Brandon Peters, Transportation Program Manager, and Brandon Carson, Director of Planning & Community Development, Southern Alleghenies Planning & Development Commission secured a \$75,000 ARC grant to fund an Economic Impact Study. The findings of that study confirmed that the completion of US 219 will “increase safety of all vehicles and offer a faster travel route that reduces overall transportation costs, as well as provides significant benefits to the region’s economy.” Following the completion of these two studies, Pennsylvania Secretary of Transportation, Yassmin Gramian, announced that Pennsylvania will fund \$6M for the preliminary engineering studies needed for the remaining 6 miles of US 219 between Meyersdale and the PA state line. This funding commitment is a critical next step in moving this project forward and we are working with MDOT SHA to seek a similar commitment to fund preliminary engineering for Maryland’s remaining 1.5 mile section.

In addition, 1.3 miles of the US 219 Bypass near Grantsville, Maryland will be completed within the coming weeks. This investment of \$63M created a direct impact of 54 new construction jobs as well as indirect impacts of 17 jobs and the procurement of materials and supplies manufactured domestically by US workers and hauled to the project by US truckers.

# 2020 Year of the Woman



These incredible female leaders have been instrumental in driving the North/South Appalachian Highway project forward. Through their years of visionary leadership, these women have demonstrated the significant impacts that can be achieved by building collaborative partnerships, tenacity, resilience, and forward long-term thinking. TGCC applauds their dedicated service and commitment to advancing the greater good of the tri-state region.

## Colleen T. Peterson

**Colleen T. Peterson** has 40 years of experience as an administrator in higher education and not-for-profit management. Her career includes serving as Vice President for University Advancement at Frostburg State University (Maryland) and Executive Director of The Greater Cumberland Committee. Currently, she provides consulting services to businesses and not-for-profit organizations in the areas of strategic planning and capacity development. Her clients include Railey Mountain Lake Vacations, United Way, Frostburg State University, and the YMCA of Cumberland.

Ms. Peterson is an active member of her community and has served or is serving on a number of boards including the Allegany County Visitors Bureau (Chair, Board member), the Maryland State Chamber of Commerce (Board member), the Senator J. Glenn Beall Institute for Public Affairs (Secretary, Board member), Frostburg First Main Street

Program (Board member), Allegany Arts Council (Board member), the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (Communications Committee Chair, Board member), Western Maryland Scenic Railroad (Board member), Canal Place Authority (Board member), and the North/South Appalachian Highway Work Group (Chair).

## Pamela Tokar-Ickes

**Pamela Tokar-Ickes** is the Secretary of the Somerset County Board of Commissioners. Appointed following the 2019 Spring Primary to fill a vacancy created by the death of the late John Vatavuk, she returned to public office after serving as Director of the Somerset County Endowments for the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies. Tokar-Ickes served four consecutive terms as a Somerset County Commissioner from 2000 through 2015.

Throughout her professional career, Tokar-Ickes has served as a member of numerous boards and community organizations with missions ranging from substance abuse prevention, human services, economic development, library services and historic preservation.



She has received awards and recognitions including the Governor's Award for Excellence for her assistive role in creating Pennsylvania's Human Services Block Grant and was named the Outstanding Commissioner of the Year in 2015 by the County Commissioners' Association of Pennsylvania. During her long tenure as a member of CCAP's Board of Directors, Tokar-Ickes was instrumental in creating a statewide leadership program for County Commissioners that will train emerging county leaders during the next decade.

A 1979 graduate of Somerset Area High School, Tokar-Ickes attended the University of Pittsburgh. She is a founding board member and past Chief Volunteer Officer of the nationally affiliated Boys and Girls Club of Somerset County, Inc. and currently serves as the Board Chair of the United Way of the Laurel Highlands and as the President of the Historical and Genealogical Society of Somerset County.

# 2020 Year of the Woman

## Linda R. Thomson

**Linda R. Thomson** has served as President and CEO of Johnstown Area Regional Industries (JARI) since July 2000. She is currently responsible for managing a robust economic development organization in Johnstown, Pennsylvania with services extending into Cambria and Somerset Counties, and small business financing programs throughout the Southern Alleghenies region. Core services include financing, site selection, business retention and recruitment, procurement technical assistance, small business technical assistance, and workforce development.

With 37 years of experience serving small cities and rural counties, Linda has emerged as a leader in economic development in Pennsylvania. She was awarded the "Economic Developer of the Year" from the Pennsylvania Economic Development Association in 1999. Linda serves on the ECAC Committee of the Philadelphia Federal Reserve Bank,

the Southern Alleghenies Workforce Development Board, the North/South Appalachian Highway Coalition, the I-68 Regional Alliance, the Vision Together 2025 Steering and Executive Committees, and the Penn Highlands Community College Board of Trustees.

Linda is active in her profession, serving as the first President of the PA Economic Development Institute; past President and member of the PA Economic Development Association; past Director and member of the Northeastern Economic Development Association; and member of the International Economic Development Council.

## Colleen R. Dawson

Somerset County Commissioner **Colleen R. Dawson** is in her first year of service as Commissioner. Colleen is a paralegal and Notary Public previously employed for 34 years at Barbera Law, specializing in real estate. The law firm also serves as solicitor for the County.

Commissioner Dawson has served in numerous volunteer roles on county and local levels throughout the years. Chairman of the County's Affordable Housing Board, President of Stoystown Borough Council, Vice-President of the Somerset County Association of Boroughs, Chairman of the Republican Committee of Somerset County and Treasurer and Board Member of the Somerset Area Ambulance Association

She now dedicates her energies full time to the office of County Commissioner.



## Upcoming Events

**North/South Core Work Group -**  
December 8th & 22nd, 9:00am, Zoom  
**SHA District 6 Tri-State Meeting -**  
December 9th, 10:30am, Zoom  
**December Zoom Speaker Series -**  
December 8th, Noon, Zoom

**I-68 Regional Alliance** - December 4th, 11:30am, Zoom  
**Executive Committee** - December 10th, 9:30am, Zoom  
**Annual Corporate Council Meeting** - December 17th, Noon, Zoom