

ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY FAIR HOUSING TASK FORCE

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stlawco.org/Departments/Planning/AdvisoryBoards/FairHousingTaskForce



Meeting Minutes

February 24, 2026

- 1. Call to Order and Determination of a Quorum.** With the absence of PJ Herne, Bob Santamoor acted as interim chair. Santamoor called the meeting to order at 10:06 AM.

	BOARD MEMBERSHIP	ABSENT	PRESENT		STAFF	ABSENT	PRESENT
1.	Bob Santamoor		X		Preston Santimaw		X
2.	Katie Geidel		X		GUESTS	ORGANIZATION	
3.	James Galasinski		X		Cameron Kennedy	St. Lawrence University	
4.	Mike Pearson	X			Zeyno Ustun	St. Lawrence University	
5.	PJ Herne	X			Bob Beckstead	Watertown Daily Times	
6.	Amy Plumadore	X			Candy Merritt	LASNNY	
7.	Mike McQuade		X		Tyler Navoichick	LASNNY	
8.	Andrea Montgomery	X			Deanna Nelson	NYS Attorney General's office	
9.	Vacant						
10.	Valerie Dana		X				
11.	Mike Zagrobelny		X				
12.	Matilda Larson (County Planning Director designee)		X				
13.	Courtnie Toms		X				
	TOTAL		8/11				

- 2. Adoption of the Agenda.** Santamoor asked if there were any modifications to the agenda. Larson identified two items to the updates and announcements section: a resolution submitted to the BOL to declare April as Fair Housing month, and an article announcing that St. Lawrence County is raising limits for property tax exemptions.

The agenda was unanimously adopted (McQuade/Zagrobelny).

- 3. Approval of November 18th Meeting Minutes.**

The November 18th minutes were unanimously approved (Zagrobelny/McQuade).

4. New Business.

- a. Presentation on proposals for local municipalities to opt into the Good Cause Eviction Law – Cameron Kennedy, St. Lawrence University.
 1. Deanna Nelson provided a brief overview of the Good Cause Eviction Law
 2. Kennedy delivered his presentation which outlined the following:
 - All five population centers in St. Lawrence County are above the County average for very cost-burdened rates;
 - Good cause eviction provides renters meaningful, baseline protections against arbitrary displacement and steep increases in rent;
 - Examples of “good cause” such as non-payment of rent, lease violations, nuisance or illegal activity, owner personal use, and substantial renovation;
 - What the law does not do, including freeze rents, protect bad behavior, burden small landlords, and seek to eliminate profitability;
 - The law does not substantially change the eviction process;
 - Existing research to prove the effectiveness of local opt ins;
 - Information on closing the LLC loophole;
 - Next steps will be to address this at the local level – proposals for the County’s population centers.
- b. Recap of 12/22/25 Town of Potsdam meeting to discuss Congdon Hall renovation. Santimaw provided an overview of this meeting. This included:
 1. Vecino Group will maintain ownership of the property for at least 15 years;
 2. Each site (the Quarry and Congdon Hall) will have 2 separate property managers;
 3. Building designs depict a dedicated office space for St. Lawrence County Office for the Aging. While there is no formal agreement between the two parties, Vecino Group is confident it will happen;
 4. Vecino Group is working on incorporating more greenspace and pedestrian connection between Elm Street and Main Street;
 5. Closing with the State is anticipated in the first quarter of 2027 with an approximately 24-month construction period;
 6. This complex will include single-bed units at \$421/month, which includes utilities;
 7. Units will be available to individuals who fall between 30-80% of the area median income.

5. Old Business.

- a. Scheduling Exclusionary Zoning Story Map presentations.
 1. Santimaw stated that staff reached out to the Village of Gouverneur and Village of Canton Planning Board chairs to set up a meeting time with local Planning and Zoning board membership for an hour-long training/discussion of the Story Map which will include an overview of the Village analyses and recommended

zoning changes. Staff anticipate meetings to be scheduled in the next couple of months.

6. Updates and Announcements.

a. Agency Updates

- Santamoor stated that he anticipates a June closing date for renovations and new construction at Evergreen Park in Potsdam. Also the Canton and Potsdam Housing Authority merger is progressing, with two bills – one in the Assembly and one in the Senate.

b. Emergency Housing list on FHTF webpage updated

- Santimaw shared updates that staff made to the emergency shelter directory on the FHTF webpage.

c. BOL resolution declaring April Fair Housing month.

- Larson stated that staff submitted a resolution to the BOL office to declare April as Fair Housing month. Staff outlined population center Story Map presentations as an action item for this resolution.

d. Article outlining St. Lawrence County Real Property tax exemption limits

- Larson stated that an article in North Country Now outlines St. Lawrence County raising limits for property tax exemptions

7. Adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 11:07 a.m. (McQuade/Zagrobelny). The next meeting date will be Tuesday, May 19th 2026 at 10 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Preston Santimaw

Planner I