

St. Lawrence County Planning Office
STAFF WORK REPORT
MARCH 2025



ADVISORY BOARD SUPPORT

Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board (AFPB). On the 11th, Matilda delivered a brief overview of the Agricultural District program at a brassica growers workshop held at Cooperative Extension's Learning Farm. Approximately 35 persons were in attendance. March 1 – March 30th is the annual open petition period to add property to the Agricultural District. The Office received three requests for five parcels to add to the district. Three of the parcels are already in the district. Staff created a report for the AFPB to review and a public hearing is scheduled for April 17th at 6 p.m. at the HSC. A BOL agriculture tour highlighting different farms and food businesses in the County is in the planning phase and anticipated to occur in August. The office will identify operations to visit. The AFPB is continuing to monitor solar development of the County and its impacts on farmland. The next meeting is scheduled for April 3rd 6 p.m.

County Planning Board (CPB). The CPB met on March 13th in the Conference room on the second floor of the HSC Building. Two full review projects were discussed; a rezone from Business to Residential/Business Mixed Use in the City of Ogdensburg (approved); and a review of a junkyard as a planned unit development in the Town of Madrid (conditionally approved). Board members also received a training on recusals and abstentions.

Environmental Management Council (EMC). The EMC met on March 19th at 6 p.m. in the HSC. The Council held elections for the Executive Board with Brian Washburn as the Chair, Neil Woodworth as the Vice Chair, and Lynda Bage as the Secretary. The council discussed the combined County Planning Board meeting regarding new DEC wetland regulations next month. Andrea Malik, Director of Bti Program for the Town of Colton, reviewed the Town's black fly and mosquito control initiatives. She explained implementation, results, and costs of both programs. Bti is a naturally occurring bacteria that targets the Diptera family (fly family including black flies and mosquitoes), and it is administered into water to kill the larva. Bti is considered environmentally friendly and cost effective. Colton's control for black flies is a great success, but is less effective for mosquitoes. Getting Bti into all the possible mosquito breeding areas is near impossible. SLC Public Health Director, Erin Streiff, gave an overview of the mosquito monitoring program that will be implemented this year as part of their efforts to control Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) which killed five horses last year and is a potential threat to humans. The County is partnering with university professors from SUNY Potsdam, Clarkson, and SUNY ESF. The monitoring program will trap mosquitoes at the Upper and Lower Lakes Management Area, identify the species, and test them for diseases including EEE and West Nile. The professors explained EEE moves into the area by migrating birds. An early season mosquito that favors birds can increase the amount of EEE in the local populations of birds and mammals. Other species that bite humans and mammals, spread the disease to humans in late summer. Early detection of EEE amounts in the area can help determine a potential threat to humans before cases appear in people. The County can then perform preventative measures such as public awareness and aerial spraying. Aerial spraying is expensive and will affect numerous non-target species including bees and pollinators. The council, additionally approved the Annual Report to BOL and reviewed report on Fishing Enhancement Mitigation Research Fund (FEMRF) meeting report. The next EMC meeting will be a

joint meeting with the County Planning Board on April 10, at 6 p.m. at the HSC.

Fair Housing Task Force. On the 18th, Matilda assisted with the setup of Potsdam Municipal Building's community room for two Fair Housing training sessions delivered by CNY Fair Housing Director Sally Santangelo. The first session was held for landlords; the second session was held for tenants and service providers. Approximately seven to 10 persons attended each session.

BOARD OF LEGISLATORS

Countywide Broadband Assessment. Staff conducted one broadband committee meeting in March, provided project updates to the BOL, and continue to manage ARPA-funded infrastructure projects. To date, \$1,273,721.19 of \$2,955,145 has been expended.

OCF Repurpose Committee. Staff have been assigned to the County's Ogdensburg Correctional Facility Repurpose Committee. The group last met in February.

SLC Water/Waste Water Infrastructure American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funding Initiative. The BOL allocated \$3 million for municipal water and waste water projects. Twelve municipalities have been awarded a total of \$2,969,563. To date, disbursements have been made totaling \$2,537,974.71. Nine municipalities have expended all their awarded funds and/or completed their project: Ogdensburg, Colton, Brasher, DeKalb, Hermon, Heuvelton, Lisbon, Louisville, and Parishville. The remaining three municipalities have drawn down a portion of their awarded funds.

County Snowmobile Grant. St. Lawrence County Planning Office is the local sponsor for the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Places Snowmobile Grant. The County was awarded \$293,840.00 in snowmobile trail maintenance for the 2024-2025 grant year. Staff is preparing for Phase 3 by reviewing monthly work reports, and Phase 1 by reviewing trails that need gps updates.

County Budget Preparation. Staff is again assisting with the annual preparation of the County Budget.

COMMUNITY / ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG). Countywide Housing Rehabilitation Program #5 (CHRP 5) is underway. The Development Authority of North Country (DANC), the sub recipient, and the Planning Office have been meeting regularly to discuss progress. Phase 1 consisted of five projects for low to moderate income households, and all five projects have been completed. Phase II consists of four more projects, two have been completed and two have an anticipated start date of first week of April. Staff and DANC reviewed the waiting list and identified four potential Phase III projects. All four candidates were income qualified with inspections completed, but one candidate withdrew. The three remaining projects had environmental review and are currently out to bid with opening of the bids scheduled for 4/16 and contract signing 4/22. Staff identified four more candidates for the last project with the remaining three as first for the next rehab program.

Updated FEMA Flood Zone Maps. On the 19th, Matilda reiterated the Town of Canton's Supervisor's request for a 30-day extension to the comment period on FEMA's draft flood boundaries. The deadline was extended to April 30th. For the second half of the month, Matilda coordinated with State

Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (DHSES) to access a digital map of Tropical Storm Debby damage as reported by property owners. The Planning Office intends to cross reference this information with FEMA's preliminary flood boundaries.

GRANTS

Septic Repair Program. All projects completed and funds spent under this program since "Round One" have been combined to align the County's program benchmarks with NYS. To date, 89 systems have been repaired/replaced; \$630,790.87 has been expended; and \$969,209.13 in program funds remain available. Staff also created a webpage with information on the septic repair program accessible from the St. Lawrence County website homepage. Interested parties can use the interactive mapping tool to determine their eligibility and fill out the online application from the webpage. In addition, a direct-mail postcard was prepared and sent to approximately 1600 property owners on eligible waterbodies. Staff is coordinating with Public Health and preparing a significant push to obligate remaining project funds in 2025.

NY SWIMS Lifeguard Grant Program. In late March, staff received a draft NYS contract for this program; the application was submitted in August 2024. Subrecipient agreements with the nine participating municipalities are being prepared; each will be reimbursed either \$5,555 or \$5,556 for eligible lifeguard recruitment expenses for the 2024 and 2025 summer seasons.

Grants Notice Distribution. The Grants Notice is distributed to County Department Heads, Legislators, Superintendents of Schools, local municipal officials and approximately 350 additional individuals representing organizations throughout the North Country.

PLANNING MATTERS

GIS. New, NY State and County funded, 2024 Orthographic Aerial Photography at 6 inch resolution was received. After transferring files and processing a comparison on resolution to 2020 imagery was created and shared with the BOL. Staff is working to make the data available to the County and general public. The Overdose Dashboard, a collaboration with Public Health, launched to the public in mid-November. Staff update the OD Dashboard as new data comes in. The Office participated in discussions with IT, Real Property, Emergency Services, Highway, and a GIS consultant from GeoCove regarding the County Enterprise upgrade. Staff reviewed and processed recently released 2024 National Agriculture Imagery Program NAIP, 60 cm, 4 band resolution taken of the County during summer of 2024. Staff created a public facing interactive web map, identifying property owners that are eligible to participate in the Septic Repair Program, accessible on our website.

Town of Hammond Comprehensive Plan Update. Draft plan was delivered to the Town in hard copy and PDF format. A Public Hearing for consideration of adoption is scheduled for April 9, 2025.

Town of Colton Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Office signed an MOU with the Town of Colton to participate on the Plan's Oversight Committee. Work will commence in April.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

County Transit System. During the first week of the month, Matilda coordinated with the DOT to finalize 2024 Accelerated Transit Capital award amounts that will be added to the County's existing capital contract. Matilda held virtual meetings with County Mobility Manager Sonja Jensen on the 4th, and with The Arc's Public Transit supervisors on the 6th to review the status of current projects. On the 13th, Matilda, Sonja Jensen and VTC Executive Director Sam Purington met with Social Services' Adult Protective Unit staff to learn more about their clients' transportation needs to and from Canton, which will be used to help inform revisions to routes and schedules. On the 20th, Matilda delivered an overview of 2024 performance metrics at a Public Transit Task Force meeting. On the 21st, Matilda held a virtual meeting with Sonja and The Arc's Public Transit staff to review the transition of using the Electronic Passenger Counting (EPC) system in the bus fleet. On the 25th, Matilda and Ellen held a virtual meeting with Sonja to review 2024 projected versus actual college student trip counts. On the 26th, Matilda and Ellen held a work session to review and confirm the backup documentation for the 2024 5311 Annual Report. On the 27th, Matilda delivered an overview of public transit operations to an Albany-based non-profit representative. Other tasks this month included: Securing signatures for a refueling agreement between the County Highway Department and The Arc; drafting a Request for Statements of Interest, and a contract for services for bus operations for the County Attorney's review; coordinating with the County Clerk on temporary closure of the DMV drive-thru lane for the installation of the HSC bus shelter; and preparing and submitting a draft reimbursement request for HSC bus shelter expenses incurred to date.