

***St. Lawrence County Planning Office***  
***STAFF WORK REPORT***  
***APRIL 2025***



**Birth Announcement:** Sam and his wife Laurel welcomed a son, Maxwell, into the world on Monday April 28<sup>th</sup>. We are all very excited for Sam and his growing family!

**ADVISORY BOARD SUPPORT**

***Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board (AFPB).*** The AFPB met on April 3<sup>rd</sup> at 6 p.m. second floor conference room in the Human Services Center (HSC). At the meeting Staff presented the Annual Request for Additions to the Agricultural Districts report. The AFPB recommends the BOL accept the requested additions. A public hearing occurred April 17<sup>th</sup> at 6 p.m. at the HSC, no one submitted comments. Additionally, the Board reviewed the Crop data layer 2024 and National Agriculture Imagery Program 2024 for St. Lawrence County, and current status of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza. A BOL agriculture tour highlighting different farms and food businesses in the County is in the planning phase and is scheduled for August 15<sup>th</sup> with visits to Greenwood Dairy, Canton Apples, and Bourdeau Brothers, with lunch at CCE. The AFPB is continuing to monitor solar development of the County and its impacts on farmland. The next meeting is scheduled for October 2<sup>nd</sup> 6 p.m.

***County Planning Board (CPB).*** The CPB met jointly with the EMC on April 10<sup>th</sup> in the Conference room on the second floor of the HSC Building. Two full review projects were discussed; a site plan review for a retail store in the Town of Oswegatchie (conditionally approved); and a use variance for a sign in the Town of Stockholm (denied). Board members also received a training on the new NYS DEC freshwater wetlands regulations.

***Environmental Management Council (EMC).*** The EMC met jointly with the County Planning Board on April 10<sup>th</sup> in the Conference room on the second floor of the HSC Building. The group received training on the new NYS DEC freshwater wetlands regulations, and participated with the Planning Board's project review discussions. Randy Young, DEC Region 6 Director, also gave an update to the group.

***Fair Housing Task Force.*** On the 15<sup>th</sup>, Matilda and Preston attended a Fair Housing Forum in Watertown with two other members of the task force. Speakers included Ryan Piche, the Jefferson County Administrator and Jillian Redder, the Jefferson County Director of Housing and Special Initiatives who spoke about local housing successes and challenges; Deanna Nelson, the Assistant Attorney General in Charge spoke about state protections in fair housing; and Sally Santangelo, the Executive Director of CNY Fair Housing spoke about HUD restructuring and its impact on fair housing.

**BOARD OF LEGISLATORS**

***Countywide Broadband Assessment.*** Staff conducted one broadband committee meeting in April, provided a project update to the BOL, attended one ConnectALL webinar, 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 March.

***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 \$2,703,996.22. 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 and expect completion by the end of 2025.

***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 started construction. Staff and DANC reviewed the waiting list and identified three Phase III projects. The candidates were income qualified with inspections completed, and had environmental review. The bids were opened 4/16 and contracts signed 4/24. Staff identified more candidates for the last projects. We estimate two more projects will be completed.

***Updated FEMA Flood Zone Maps.*** Throughout the month of April, Sam, Preston, Jason and Matilda reviewed the State Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services' (DHSES) dataset of Tropical Storm Debby damage as reported by property owners, and cross referenced it to FEMA's draft 100-year and 500-year flood zone boundaries. The deadline to submit comments to FEMA was extended to April 30<sup>th</sup>.

## **GRANTS**

***NYS Empire State Development County Infrastructure Grant Program.*** Staff prepared and submitted an application for \$500,000 for a joint stormwater project with the Village of Canton. This project includes rehabilitating/reconstructing deficient stormwater infrastructure facilities in the Village, and hardening of the County Courthouse complex, which has been subject to repeated inundation in recent years.

***St. Lawrence River Valley Redevelopment Agency (RVRDA) Community Development and Environmental Improvement Program (CDEIP).*** Staff worked with the County Attorney's Office and the Treasurer's Office to prepare and submit this request for \$20,000 to assist in the demolition of

the structure located at 18 South Main Street in the Village of Hammond. This tax-delinquent parcel was acquired by the County in 2023; an agreement was reached between the County and the New York Environmental Protection and Spill Compensation Fund (the "Fund"), wherein the State will perform all necessary environmental remediation at the Site upon removal of the structure. Once remediation is complete, the property will be sold at tax auction, allowing for redevelopment and productive re-use.

***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, 90 systems have been repaired/replaced; \$640,790.87 has been expended; and \$959,209.13 in program funds remain available. Staff 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. Planning and Public Health staff met with a local code official, a NYS Public Health engineer and a representative from an engineering firm to learn more about residential septic systems on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

***NY SWIMS Lifeguard Grant Program.*** Staff received a draft NYS contract for this program; revisions are pending with NYS. Subrecipient agreements were sent to the nine participating municipalities and several have been returned; 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.

***Land Use Webinar.*** On the 2<sup>nd</sup>, Matilda and Preston attended the Northern Forest Center’s webinar on “Municipal Strategies for Managing Short Term Rentals.”

## **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.*** A Public Hearing was held April 9, 2025; the Comprehensive Plan was adopted by the Town; it is anticipated the Village will adopt the Plan at its next regular meeting. Final deliverables have been provided to the Town and Village.

***Town of Colton Comprehensive Plan.*** The Planning Office signed an MOU with the Town of Colton to participate on the Plan's Oversight Committee. Staff attended a kick-off meeting on April 10th.

***New York Planning Federation Conference.*** From the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup>, Matilda, Preston and Jason attended the Planning Federation's Conference in Cooperstown, New York and heard presentations from planning consultants, university faculty, and staff from the Department of State and the Department of Environmental Conservation on: Land use regulations; case law updates; and funding programs available through the State's annual consolidated funding application.

## **PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

***County Transit System.*** During the week of the 1<sup>st</sup>, Matilda and Ellen participated in monthly meetings with the Mobility Manager, and with Public Transit supervisory staff at The Arc. On the 2<sup>nd</sup>, Matilda and Mobility Manager Sonja Jensen attended the SUNY Canton Student Government Association's meeting to receive student feedback on Route 69's schedule, route and stops. On the 3<sup>rd</sup>, Matilda presented an overview of the County's 5311 Annual Report to DOT staff, which was signed by the Deputy Treasurer on the 10<sup>th</sup>. On the 9<sup>th</sup> Matilda and Sonja held a virtual meeting with university points of contacts to discuss any changes to routes and schedules for fall 2025. Throughout the month, Matilda held virtual meetings with the Mobility Manager and dispatch staff for updates on bus driver transition to record passenger trips on mobile data terminals. On the 11<sup>th</sup>, Matilda virtually met with Sonja to review trip data for Routes 70A and 70B. On the 16<sup>th</sup>, Matilda submitted the 1st quarter STOA report for 2025 to the DOT. On the 18<sup>th</sup>, Matilda virtually met with DOT staff to review performance metrics for SLC Public Transit, and to discuss the status of existing projects. Also on the 18<sup>th</sup>, Matilda and Sonja met with Department of Social Services staff to discuss public transportation needs from Massena and Gouverneur to Canton. During the week of the 28<sup>th</sup>, the County Highway crew commenced with the installation of a sidewalk, pad and raised walkway for a new bus shelter along the north elevation of the Human Services Center. On the 30<sup>th</sup>, Matilda and Sonja met with Public Transit drivers to review the 2025 operating budget for bus service, and to review why trip and miles record keeping is important for STOA reports.