

St. Lawrence County Planning Office
STAFF WORK REPORT
May 2024



ADVISORY BOARD SUPPORT

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board. The AFPB last met on April 4. Sam performed an analysis for the eight-year and annual review for Agricultural District 1 and 2 respectively. The AFPB is proposing to consolidate the two Ag Districts into one, reducing the number of eight-year reviews from two to one. Sam organized and mailed out proposed changes to affected property owners and local municipalities. Sam and Matilda held a public hearing on May 8th at 6 pm in the Human Service Center to receive feedback on suggested modification. Eight people attended, where they saw a presentation about the Ag District program, and expressed opinions on updates to the districts. A report on proposed changes as well as a resolution was submitted to the Board of Legislators for their review. On May 7th, Sam presented an overview of the *Solar Development Mapping Tool* to the Canton Sustainability Committee.

County Planning Board (CPB). The CPB met on May 9th in the Conference room on the second floor of the HSC Building. Two full review projects were discussed; a Special Use Permit for a Quarry Expansion in the Town of Stockholm (conditionally approved) and an Area Variance for a Wedding Venue in the Town of Louisville (denied).

Environmental Management Council (EMC). A Board of Legislator expressed concern regarding pollution of the Deer River. Sam discussed the issue with representatives from the DEC, who stated they are aware of the pollution reports and are actively working to address it. Sam further connected the Legislator with individuals at the local universities who do water testing. Those individuals gave suggestions on laboratories to submit samples to. The EMC met on May 15, 2024 in classroom A of the Human Services Center. The Council addressed the Deer River Issue with a DEC representative to give further updates. The council wants to host a workshop on iMap Invasives on June 29 1-3pm at the Nicandri Nature Center. iMap Invasives is an online mapping tool, that allows for citizen to input locations of invasives. The program allows for a community wide monitoring system for invasive species. A local user of iMap came to the meeting and gave an overview of how he uses it and resources to learn more.

Fair Housing Task Force. The Task Force held a public hearing at the May 21st Fair Housing Task Force meeting for the Draft Fair Housing Assessment for St. Lawrence County. Staff gave a presentation on contents of the assessment and opened the floor for comments. The public hearing lasted for 23 minutes; staff received comments from those who attended the public hearing. Staff also plan to begin work on an ArcGIS Story Map zoning code analysis of population centers and bedroom communities in the County. In this analysis, staff will attempt to identify areas of exclusionary zoning in communities that may segregate protected classes. Staff hope to have a preliminary deliverable for the Task Force by the August 27th meeting.

BOARD OF LEGISLATORS

Countywide Broadband Assessment. Staff prepared and submitted an application to the NYS ConnectALL County Partnerships Program for \$428,872 that may fund up to 77 additional previously unserved households in Fowler and Parishville. In addition, staff facilitated one committee meeting, and three working group meetings.

OCF Repurpose Committee. Staff have been assigned to the County's Ogdensburg Correctional Facility Repurpose Committee. The group met last on March 20th at the IDA Canton Offices. Several members of the Committee attended a tour of the Riverview Correctional Facility on May 23rd.

Raquette River Advisory Council / West Branch St. Regis River Advisory Council. The RRAC and SRRAC met on Thursday, May 30th to discuss initiatives for each river. The RRAC discussed reports on funded projects such as the Stone Valley Maintenance Project by the ADK Mountain club to repair parts of the trail and install new interpretive signs. The board voted to approve funding for this project. The SRRAC discussed a report on a park nature trail in the Town of Parishville for which the council provided funding. The next meetings for these councils will be in the Fall.

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 \$1,443,728.50. Five municipalities have expended all their awarded funds: DeKalb, Hermon, Heuvelton, Lisbon, and Louisville.

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 \$224,568.00 in snowmobile trail maintenance for the 2023-2024 grant year. Sam submitted phase 3, which involves reviewing expenses, labor logs, and receipts by the Trail Maintenance Entities (TME). The TMEs submitted GPS of their trails to the planning office. Sam made maps of the trail and filed the applications for submission of phase 1 to start the 2024-2025 grant.

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 is underway. The Development Authority of North Country, the subrecipient, and the Planning Office have been meeting regularly to discuss progress. Phase 1 consists of five houses of low to moderate income individuals that were inspected and had proposed scopes of work. The properties were tested for lead, asbestos, and radon and results will be incorporated in the project scopes. The projects are anticipated to be put out for bid the week of June 4th with a pre bid meeting scheduled for June 13th. The bid opening is scheduled for June 25th and contracts to be signed July 1.

GRANTS

NYS ConnectALL Deployment Program-County Partnerships. Staff prepared and submitted an application for \$428,872 that may fund up to 77 previously unserved households in Fowler and Parishville. Award

announcements are anticipated by the end of June 2024.

Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) Catalyst Program. Staff worked with County Highway to prepare and submit a full application for \$1,000,000 for the replacement of BIN 3340750 carrying the Tooley Pond Road over the South Branch of the Grasse River in the Town of Clare. Award notices are anticipated June 28, 2024.

Septic Repair Program. The County has had funds from the NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC) to repair or replace deficient septic tanks within 250 feet of the St. Lawrence River in communities west of Ogdensburg, and along the lower portion of the Raquette River (from Norfolk through Massena) and the Little River (Towns of Clifton and Fine). To date, 38 projects have been completed. In May, the County received a new contract from New York State, with an additional \$400,000 and a significantly expanded list of eligible waterbodies. Approval and signature on this contract is pending the County system.

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

SLC Public Health Strategic Planning Committee. Staff has been participating in Public's Health strategic planning process; the document is now complete.

GIS. Sam and Preston have created *The Solar Development Mapping Tool* to help protect agriculture in the county. It is accessible from the County Planning Office webpage. The tool has received feedback from County the Planning Board, Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board, and Environmental Management Council. Jason, Sam and Preston, are working on new projects for both the Soil and Water Conservation District and the SLC Department of Public Health regarding county owned property reforestation and an overdose GIS dashboard respectively.

Village of Heuvelton Comprehensive Plan. Staff helped to organize the May 1st SWOT meeting held at the Heuvelton Central School cafeteria. Attendees helped staff identify the best parts of the Village and what needs improvement in their community. Staff will be working to put together the results of the SWOT meeting into the Comprehensive Plan document. The next meeting will be the week of July 15th.

Town of Hammond Comprehensive Plan Update. Staff attended a Hammond Town Board meeting to discuss an update to the Town and Village's 2013 Joint Comprehensive Plan.

Town of Morristown Comprehensive Plan Review. On the 16th Matilda and Heidi meet with community residents and discussed updates to the goals and actions matrix from the Town's 2019 Comprehensive Plan.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

County Transit System. During the first week of the month, Matilda, Lisa and Jason reviewed expense and revenue accounts for Public Transit. On the 2nd, Matilda and County Mobility Manager Sonja Jensen participated in a virtual meeting with SUNY Potsdam and Clarkson University representatives to discuss the next set of contracts to provide bus service to each of their campuses. Beginning on the 7th and every two weeks thereafter, Matilda is conducting virtual meetings with staff from VTC and The Arc to upload documentation in preparation for the 2021-2023 5311 program audit scheduled for September. On the 7th, Matilda and Sonja participated in a virtual training session by Passio staff on the preparation of reports from their website. On the 14th, Matilda met with The Arc staff and Sonja to discuss the use of bus fleet technology and to transition away from paper records by Public Transit drivers. On the 15th, Matilda participated in a virtual meeting with VTC staff to discuss route analysis and revisions that will be implemented through the remainder of the year. On the 16th, the Public Transit Task Force began its meeting by recognizing Public Transit drivers Jim Smith and Roy Graves for their heroic actions on June 9th when they stopped bus operations to assist an unattended two-year old child who wandering on West Hatfield Road in the Village of Massena. Both drivers stopped morning commuters and waited until Village Police arrived. During the week of the 20th, Matilda attended the Transit Retreat in Erie, Pennsylvania and attended sessions on low to no emissions bus fleet transition planning, preparing capital improvement plans, and workforce development. On the 30th, Matilda provided in person training to The Arc's dispatch staff on preparing a quarterly summary of First Mile Last Mile trips provided by Public Transit drivers.