

St. Lawrence County Planning Office
STAFF WORK REPORT
May 2020



NOTICE:

St. Lawrence County shut down normal operations on Wednesday March 18th, in order to deal with the State of Emergency caused by the COVID 19 pandemic. The Planning Office is basically unstaffed; we are working from our homes, or staffing the County's Emergency Operations Center.

We are all able to get our email, and we can retrieve phone messages sent to the Planning Office, or to our individual extensions. To the extent possible, we will continue operations of all our programs and advisory boards. Please contact Jason Pfothenauer with any questions.

Thank you for your patience. Let's all try to stay safe.

ADVISORY BOARD SUPPORT

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board (AFPB). On May 4th the County Board of Legislators adopted Resolution 132-2020 encouraging property owners to lease marginal lands for solar arrays; encouraging solar developers and local planning boards to design these facilities to accommodate compatible agricultural uses in the leased area; and to require Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTs) for solar arrays that are established to sell energy to the electrical grid. Copies of the resolution and a memo endorsed by the County's Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board was distributed to municipal boards, NYSEDA, and the Department of Agriculture and Markets. On May 5th, the Board of Legislators' Operations Committee reviewed a resolution to add six parcels totaling 583 acres to Ag District 2. The resolution is scheduled for adoption at the Board's June 1st meeting.

County Planning Board (CPB). The Planning Board met online via Zoom on the 14th and heard five full review projects: A special use permit for a convenience store with gas pumps in the Town of Canton; a special use permit for a topsoil and gravel pit in the Town of Stockholm; a special use permit for a 5 MW solar array in the Town of Waddington; a local law to regulate solar energy systems in the Town of Lawrence; and a use variance to establish a veterinary clinic in a residential district in the Town of Potsdam. The special use permits and local law were approved with conditions and non-binding comments; the use variance was denied. Members of the board also reviewed and accepted

the Planning Office's recommended revisions to NYSERDA's model law to regulate Battery Energy Storage Systems. The revised model law was finalized and distributed to local governments for their consideration.

Environmental Management Council (EMC). The EMC met in May via conference call. The phone number had been published so that the public could access the meeting. Among the items of business was the annual election of officers. The EMC is pleased to announce that Catherine Bennett, from DePeyster, was voted as incoming Chair; her name will be forwarded to the BOL for their appointment. The other officers kept their positions for the next year: Donald O'Shea, Ogdensburg, as Vice Chair; Patrick Whalen, Louisville, as Secretary.

In addition, the EMC is continuing to keep its "Earth Day 50" program open. As noted in last month's Work Report,

As part of our Earth Day 2020 planning, we would like to invite individuals and environmental groups from around the County / around the region to submit something in writing, photo(s), or audio or video format, about their impressions about Earth Day, or about how they, or their group have developed during this 50-year period since the first Earth Day (accomplishments; goals for the future; challenges that lay ahead; etc.).

Please email your submission to jtenbusch@stlawco.org When you email, please have the subject line read "Earth Day 50".

The Emerald Ash Borer Task Force (EABTF) The EAB Task Force met in May. Task Force members reported on their activities since the last meeting, held in February. Various sentinel trees were felled and peeled; EABs have now been found inland from the St. Lawrence River as far as Heuvelton (previous findings had been found along the shoreline of the St. Lawrence River) DEC staff reported that EABs have now been found in Oneida County. The City of Watertown is now forming its own EAB Task Force. It was reported that there may be funds available in this year's Great Lakes Restoration Initiative program to do EAB-related work.

Fair Housing Task Force (FHTF). The FHTF has suspended planning for its annual training sessions, which are typically held in April, in conjunction with Fair Housing Month. The focus of training in 2020 will be the recently-enacted laws regulating landlords and tenants. There was not meeting during May.

BOARD OF LEGISLATORS

Emergency Response to COVID 19. The Planning Office has been assisting with the County's COVID-19 response in several ways. Efforts include helping to staff the Emergency Operations Center (see separate section below) and mapping and locational analysis of COVID cases.

Census 2020. Staff are working with the County's Complete Count Committee. The Committee met on May 1st. During May, staff worked with local colleges; got Census-themed displays on County busses; worked with the League of Women Voters to send out Census info for distribution in students' lunches; worked with 2 TV stations on Census messaging; got an article into the Watertown Daily Times; began to publish a weekly series of graphics that can be further distributed by other members of the Complete Count Committee; etc.

Jones & Laughlin (J&L) Site.

- The DEC technical (clean-up) conference call for May was cancelled by the DEC.

Space Study. Staff are assisting with an assessment of County space needs in the City of Ogdensburg. This project is on hold at the present time.

COMMUNITY / ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG). The Planning Office administers three open grants: the Septic Tank Replacement Assistance Program (STRAP); the 23rd round of the Direct Homeownership Assistance Program, and the third round of its Countywide Housing Rehabilitation Program (CHRP 3). The County anticipates rehabbing 10 houses under CHRP 3.

In May, the Planning Office, in consultation with its subrecipient, the North Country Housing Council, kept its CDBG programs shut down, due to the COVID19 pandemic.

Staff continued working on the administrative paperwork, and the Environmental Review Record (ERR), that must be completed before NYS OCR will issue a Release of Funds for CHRP 3.

Lead Hazard Abatement Program. This \$1 million award from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is providing lead-based paint stabilization, or abatement assistance, to up to 52 households throughout the county. In May, the Planning Office, in consultation with its subrecipient, the North Country Housing Council, kept its Lead Hazard Abatement program shut down, due to the COVID19 pandemic.

Village of Potsdam Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI). The Planning Office is participating as a project partner on the Local Planning Committee (LPC) for the Potsdam DRI. This project is currently on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The project website is: <https://potsdamdri.com/>.

EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER (EOC)

Daily Activity. Staff, on a rotating, basis, occupy a workstation in the County's EOC, which was relocated in mid-month from the BOL Chambers to the Public Safety Complex. EOC operation consists of answering phones and logging and distributing COVID-19 medical resources requests and completing daily operations records.

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM

COVID19 Mapping. Since March 31st, Matilda and Dakota have prepared daily maps for the County's Public Health Department to track confirmed cases of COVID-19.

Public Transportation Bus Routes. Dakota has drafted maps as time allows for the existing bus routes that are in service.

County Mapping Upgrades. County staff continue to discuss a re-tooling of GIS software for the County.

GRANTS MANAGER

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.

Community Services. Staff assisted Community Services' Substance Abuse Clinic on an application to a U.S. Department of Justice's Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Abuse Site-based Program (COSSAP); This application requested \$900,000 to implement evidenced-based treatment and recovery services for individuals with Opioid Use Disorder (OUD).

Other Grant Assistance. Staff assisted Cornell Cooperative Extension of St. Lawrence County with the development of an application to the USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program requesting \$248,892 to further advance local foods initiatives.

Hazard Mitigation Plan, 5-Year Update. Staff is assisting Emergency Services with the required five-year update of the SLC Multi-Jurisdictional All-Hazard Mitigation Plan. In May, staff participated in a DHSES webinar and reviewed proposals from potential consultants.

PLANNING MATTERS

St. Lawrence River Watershed Revitalization Plan. This planning project encompasses the entire St. Lawrence River watershed in New York, including some or all of eight counties. The St. Lawrence River Watershed Revitalization Plan (WRP), is scheduled for completion in 2020.

Article 23 Webinar. On the 21st, Matilda and Jason attended NYSERDA's 90-minute webinar about the Accelerated Renewable Energy Growth and Community Benefit Act, also known as Article 23.

Parks & Trails New York (PTNY). Throughout the month of May, PTNY hosted three webinars with a focus on the New York State Greenways Plan, the Empire State Trail, and an open discussion on the status of recreational trails in the state. Dakota participated in all three and is planning to submit comments on adding the NYS portion of the U.S. Route 11 corridor to the Empire State Plan.

Website. Lisa and Dakota, with staff input, continue to work on updating/editing the Planning Office page on the County's new website.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

County Transit System. During the first week of May, Matilda prepared and submitted a draft resolution to the Treasurer's Office to modify the County budget for an amended bus operations contract with The Arc. Matilda also reviewed and approved VTC's 2020 first quarter draw request for Mobility Management services. During the second week of May, Matilda prepared and submitted to the DOT the first quarter STOA report for 2020. During the week of the 18th, Matilda finalized contract budgets for the College Connector routes in consultation with Mobility Manager Frank Doldo and the Executive Director of The Arc. On the 21st Matilda participated in a Public Transit Task Force teleconference to hear about current public transportation needs among service agencies. Matilda and Mobility Manager Frank Doldo also participated in a one-hour webinar by the CDC on social

distancing practices that can be used to minimize the risk of transmitting COVID19 on public transportation systems. On the 22nd the NYS DOT awarded the County \$934,705 in Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) Act funds to offset public transportation expenses that were incurred to adjust or reduce public transportation services as a result of COVID19. Throughout the remainder of the month, Matilda updated the draft text of the two-year college contracts that will be executed with Clarkson University and SUNY Canton. Matilda also reviewed daily 2018 mileage data by route as requested by the DOT's program auditors.