

St. Lawrence County Planning Office
STAFF WORK REPORT
May 2022



ADVISORY BOARD SUPPORT

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board. On the 4th, Matilda presented a summary of a staff strategic planning session to the Soil and Water Conservation District Board. On the 6th, Matilda updated statistics in a resolution proclaiming June as Dairy month. During the first half of May, a legal notice, press release, and maps depicting Ag District 2 property additions and removals were prepared and distributed to affected property owners, town clerks and official newspapers. The notice announced the scheduling of a public hearing on the 24th to give the public to comment on the proposed changes. One person attending the public hearing to learn more about the Ag District program, and inquired about the criteria to qualify for agricultural exemptions. During the 2nd half of the month, Matilda prepared and submitted a memo to the Board of Legislators about the eight-year Ag District review process, and to accept the proposed changes as recommended by the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board.

County Planning Board (CPB). The CPB met via Zoom on May 12th. Several projects were returned for local action (RFLA). Two full reviews were presented and discussed: Village of Heuvelton code amendment and a solar project in the Town of Canton. The code amendment was approved and the solar project was denied because of its prime soils impact. Staff are scheduled to hold a land use training, via Zoom, on June 2nd, with topics covering: variances (area and use) and solar energy projects (review and regulations). The Board will continue to meet via Zoom while we can, however we are planning to transition to in person in the coming months. CPB agendas and minutes can be accessed here: <https://www.stlawco.org/Departments/Planning/AdvisoryBoards/CountyPlanningBoard>.

Environmental Management Council (EMC). The EMC met on May 18th. The speaker was Chris Navitsky, who is the Lake George Association's Waterkeeper. Chris spoke about road salt reduction initiatives in the Lake George Watershed.

Staff have created a Facebook page for the EMC. Please check it out at <https://www.facebook.com/St-Lawrence-County-Environmental-Management-Council-105829918672342>

Staff have been sharing a weekly or bi-weekly environmental news email that contains links to environmental news in the County and beyond. Please contact the Planning Office if you would like to be added to the email.

Staff and volunteers directed traffic at the Household Hazardous Waste collection event in Canton on Saturday May 21st; 239 cars came through the line to drop off hazardous waste materials.

Staff, EMC members, and volunteers planned and implemented their first pollinator garden project in the County at a site in the Town of Canton (Farnes and Boyden Rd intersection). Woodchips, donated by the Town and Village of Canton, were layered, with cardboard, on the site to help with soil health. Mushrooms were planted to help with decomposition and pollinator plants will be planted the following year.

Staff are continuing to work with the Black Lake Association with regard to milfoil management at Black Lake. A website for this project is here: <https://stlawco.org/node/2777>.

Staff continue to work with the four subcommittees on a variety of projects:

- Conservation of Resources Committee (CRC)
 - Pollinator garden planting project in the Town of Canton.
- Environment + Economy Committee (E+E)
 - DEC Deer Management Program and venison donation.
 - Road salt use in the County.
- Invasive Species Committee (ISC)
 - Milfoil at Black Lake and a comprehensive management plan for invasive species in SLC.
- Watershed Management Committee (WMC)
 - Development of a Black Lake Watershed Management Plan.
- All Committees
 - Preparing comments to the [NYS Climate Action Council Draft Scoping Plan](#).
 - Board of Legislators' inquiry on nuclear power and solar panel recycling.

EAB Task Force. The Emerald Ash Borer Task Force did not meet in May. The Task Force has moved to meeting on a quarterly basis; the next meeting will be held on July 21st.

Fair Housing Task Force (FHTF). The Fair Housing Task Force met on May 26th. There was a review of the FH Webinar held in April; 28 persons attended that event. The meeting also included discussion about suitable topics for a Fair Housing event in the fall, possibly a series of moderated discussions among different stakeholder groups. During the week of the 16th, Matilda contacted prospective candidates to serve on the Task Force.

BOARD OF LEGISLATORS

Countywide Broadband Assessment. Staff continues to work with a BOL committee to develop an implementation plan for the completed broadband study. In May, staff coordinated and participated in two Committee meetings, two working sessions, several in-office working sessions, two webinars and a full day of ground-truthing (pole observations). Funding opportunities are being examined and work continues to validate and refine the list of unserved addresses in the County, now pared down to approximately 2500 households.

Jones & Laughlin (J&L) Site. No DEC technical conference calls have been held since March 24th.

COMMUNITY / ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG). The Planning Office recently expended all funds for the 23rd round of the Direct Homeownership Assistance Program, and the third round of its Countywide Housing Rehabilitation Program (CHRP 3); staff from the NYS Office for Community Renewal monitored Program files, and issued clean reports.

The Planning Office has received Releases of Funds for the recently-funded SLC-CARES award to

conduct housing rehabilitation for populations vulnerable to COVID-19, as well as the even more-recently awarded fourth round of the Countywide Housing Rehabilitation program (CHRP 4).

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 low- and moderate-income households throughout the county. By the end of May, the Planning Office reports that 12 units have been completed, 3 units are in the construction process, and 10 clients are in an application phase.

Recreation. Staff are actively following a handful of organizations and attending webinars that address developing recreational assets in rural communities. Staff attended an [Adirondack Futures](#) webinar on May 25th, hosted by the Northern Forest Center.

Housing and Green Spaces. On the 11th, Matilda participated in a webinar to learn about a current public tree and landscaping project in Louisville, KY and its anticipated public health impacts on surrounding residential neighborhoods. On the 17th, Matilda participated in a webinar to learn about existing programs that are used by Northern Forest Communities to help expand “middle-market” housing stock.

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM

Broadband.

Staff assisted with data analysis to produce an updated dataset and shared with colleagues at DANC.

County Enterprise GIS.

- <https://gis.stlawco.org/portal/home/index.html>
- GIS Web App: Proposed Solar sites in the County: Updated with recent Canton solar projects. <https://gis.stlawco.org/portal/apps/View/index.html?appid=6f3d7fb0923448ed90c3385eb0f8a872>
- GIS Web Map: 2021 Septic Repair Program Waterbodies with 250' Buffer: <https://gis.stlawco.org/portal/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=d8a8b0c7e637400a9c269323b7670a19>

Emergency Management Services. Staff continue to provide GIS assistance to this department as their GIS workflows evolve. In partnership with SLC Real Property, Staff is assisting with the publication of an address dataset and other County GIS data that is useful for emergency response for dispatch and officers in the field.

GRANTS

DR-4480 COVID-19 Pandemic Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP). Staff prepared and submitted two applications to this funding opportunity resulting from the Federal Disaster Declaration due to COVID-19. The first requesting \$27,000 to complete an engineering study for storm water management in the area of the Courthouse Complex/Judson Street. The second for \$437,400 to install a natural gas-powered generator for the Human Services Center.

U.S. Department of Justice FY 2022 Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Abuse Site-based Program (COSSAP). Staff has consulted with Community Services in consideration of a proposal to this program. St. Lawrence County received \$900,000 in FY 2020 COSSAP funds to

implement a methadone clinic.

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.

Hazard Mitigation Plan, 5-Year Update. Staff are assisting Emergency Services with the required five-year update of the SLC Multi-Jurisdictional All-Hazard Mitigation Plan. The consulting team is addressing comments on the draft HMP from NYS Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services.

Septic Repair Program. The County has 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). To date, twenty-one applications have been received; 15 agreements have been executed with homeowners.

PLANNING MATTERS

Large Scale Solar. Staff are monitoring two projects in the County: [Rich Road Solar and Storage](#) and [North Side Energy Center](#).

Potsdam NYSERDA E-bike Program.

Staff drafted a letter of support for this program which is applying for funds to bring e-bikes to Potsdam via [NYSERDA's Clean Neighborhoods Challenge](#).

Raquette River Advisory Council / West Branch St. Regis River Advisory Council. John Tenbusch serves as the County's representative to these Councils. Both Councils met on May 18th; no projects were proposed for funding by the Councils.

St. Lawrence Health Initiative.

Staff assisted Karen Bage with right-of-way inquiry for a sidewalk project in the Town of Lisbon that connects the school to the hamlet.

Town of Hammond.

Staff assisted the Town's Planning Board chair with interpreting their land use regulations for a St. Lawrence River waterfront subdivision proposal.

Town of Rossie. Staff is preparing to assist the Town in revising the Town's existing site plan and subdivision regulations to reach full state land use regulation compliance. Staff drafted a resolution that the Town adopted to formalize their land use revision committee.

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

- Updates continue to be made for events, meetings and content on some pages.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

County Transit System. On the 2nd, Matilda met with County IT Director for suggestions on elements to include in an RFP to outfit Public Transit's bus fleet with mobile wifi, security cameras, automatic vehicle location system, and automatic voice announcement system. Similar meetings were held with the County's DOT representative on the 13th to ensure the RFP satisfied state and federal procurement requirements; and with County Procurement staff on the 20th to revise and finalize the document for publication. On the 6th, Matilda submitted the monthly COVID19 recovery report to the DOT. Also on the 6th, Matilda and the County's Mobility Managers virtually met with Clarkson representatives to review new bus schedules and budget for services for a new two-year contract that will go into effect on August 1st. A similar virtual meeting was held with SUNY Canton representatives on the 16th. On the 19th, Matilda conducted a monthly visit to The Arc's Public Transit Office to review random STOA records for April. Also on the 19th, Matilda participated in a virtual Public Transit Task Force meeting to provide updates on current projects. On the 20th, Matilda virtually met with County Mobility Managers and The Arc's Public Transit Manager to discuss the status of a CDL training program for new bus drivers. On the 26th, Matilda and the County's Mobility Managers participated in a virtual meeting with Modeshift marketing representative to learn more about their fare counting technology.