

St. Lawrence County Planning Office
STAFF WORK REPORT
March 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 extensons. 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). For this year's annual Ag District review, the County received requests from six property owners to add 583 acres to Ag District 2. No requests were received for Ag District 1. On the 7th, Matilda traveled with County Planning Board member Andy Gilbert traveled to Herkimer and delivered a presentation about prime farmland preservation when siting large scale solar arrays. 118 persons attended the event, 75% of whom were area landowners. Based on discussions from the AFPB's meeting on February 27th, Matilda drafted a resolution and memo for the Board of Legislators' consideration that encourages land owners to use their least productive lands when signing leases to host large scale solar arrays. Both items will be discussed by the AFPB at their April 2nd meeting.

County Planning Board (CPB). The Planning Board met on the 12th in Canton and heard five full review projects: Stockholm's local law to regulate solar energy systems; a use variance in Stockholm to allow a billboard; two large-scale solar arrays in Madrid's Residential-Agricultural district; a large-scale solar array in Waddington's Natural Resource Conservation district; and comprehensive revisions to

Brasher's zoning regulations. All projects excluding the use variance for a billboard were approved with conditions. The use variance was denied.

Environmental Management Council (EMC). There was no EMC meeting in March, due to the County's declaration of a State of Emergency.

The Emerald Ash Borer Task Force (EABTF) There was no EAB Task Force meeting in March, due to the County's declaration of a State of Emergency.

Fair Housing Task Force (FHTF). No meeting in March. 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.

BOARD OF LEGISLATORS

Emergency Response to COVID 19.

Census 2020. Staff are working with the County's Complete Count Committee.

There is no word on the County's application to the NYS Census 2020 Complete Count Outreach Grants Program for funds to support outreach, promotion and public education activities regarding the Census.

Jones & Laughlin (J&L) Site.

- Staff participated in a DEC technical (clean-up) conference call on March 31st. It was discussed that site redevelopment/funding could be removed from the regular agenda.

Space Study. Staff are assisting with an assessment of County space needs in the City of Ogdensburg.

COMMUNITY / ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Abbé Picquet Trail Project Management. Final close out of this project is anticipated in the next several months.

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG). The Planning Office administers two open grants: the Septic Tank Replacement Assistance Program (STRAP); and the 23rd round of the Direct Homeownership Assistance Program.

In March, the County was notified that it was awarded \$440,000 to fund the third round of its Countywide Housing Rehabilitation Program (CHRP 3). The County anticipates rehabbing 10 houses.

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. During March, the Planning Office worked with partner agencies at SLC Public Health and the North Country Housing Council to ramp up production.

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. The group reviewed projects during a conference call on March 17th. The project website is: <https://potsdamdri.com/>.

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM

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

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 is working with Community Services to assess a U.S. Department of Justice funding opportunity, the Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Abuse Site-based Program (COSSAP); applications are due May 21, 2020. Also, Community Services was awarded \$15,000 through NYS OASAS for Telepractice Capacity Expansion to Increase Access to Treatment for Opioid Use Disorder.

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 March, five responses to the RFP were received; staff has initiated review.

Brownfields Remediation. On the 12th, Matilda and Heidi delivered a presentation to a class of SLU students on brownfield remediation projects in the county.

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.

Town of Brasher Zoning Revisions. Matilda incorporated the County Planning Board's conditioned approvals into the Town of Brasher's zoning regulations and forwarded final copies of the revised text to Town officials on the 17th.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

County Transit System. During the first half of March, Matilda and County Mobility Manager drafted the County's 5311 Annual Report for 2019, which was reviewed and approved by the DOT for the County Treasurer's signature. Matilda drafted a County Board resolution to pass thru just over

\$115,000 in State Transportation Operating Assistance (STOA) spillover funds for 2019 to the County's bus operator, The Arc Jefferson St. Lawrence. In response to the arrival of COVID19 to St. Lawrence County, the bus operator instituted daily cleaning and disinfecting procedures at the end of each shift beginning on March 9th. Posters from the NYS Department of Health about COVID19 symptoms and precautionary measures were also posted on each bus. The Public Transit Task Force meeting on the 19th was held online, and the agenda was revised so that stakeholder organizations could discuss any transportation challenges their clientele may be experiencing. Beginning on the 20th, bus operations went cashless in an effort to minimize the transmission of COVID19 between passengers and bus drivers. On the 22nd, the College Connector routes were suspended, and an on-demand service for public transportation to essential destinations was instituted on the 23rd. Flyers announcing changes to transit service were posted online, and in each bus. Screening procedures for COVID19 symptoms were also instituted when scheduling trips for riders to access employment, medical appointments, pharmacy or grocery store. Disinfecting and screening procedures were also adopted by Volunteer Transportation Center's volunteer drivers who participate in the County's First Mile Last Mile Program. During the week of the 22nd and 29th, Frank visited bus stops in Potsdam and Gouverneur to inform Amish passengers that the bus system would not accept requests for transportation to social gatherings.

Welcome to the "New Guy". Dakota Casserly began working as a Planner II with our office on March 24th. Armed with a Master's degree in Land Use Planning, Dakota also has strong skills in GIS. He will be a welcome addition to our office. Please, when you meet him, don't tell him any of the old Planning Office war stories. We don't want him to run away.