

St. Lawrence County Planning Office
STAFF WORK REPORT
February 2021



ADVISORY BOARD SUPPORT

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board. On the 3rd, Matilda participated in a virtual meeting of agency representatives to hear and receive updates regarding current services and activities. The Farmland Protection Board met on the 4th and heard a summary about the Planning Office's comments to the North Side Energy Center's proposed stipulations for its 180MW solar array in the Towns of Brasher, Massena and Norfolk. The Board also heard a summary of a National Grid Ombudsman's presentation to the County Planning Board about the interconnection process for large scale solar arrays. On the 12th, Matilda and Jason attended a webinar about the implications of leasing farmland for large solar installations. Throughout the month, Matilda participated in a series of interviews with Cooperative Extension staff to fill a newly created Local Foods Marketing and Development Specialist position.

County Planning Board (CPB). The Planning Board met via Zoom on the 11th. Seven projects (sign permit, site plans, special use permit, subdivisions, and area variance) were returned for local action. A future project for full review was discussed, a site plan for a Taco Bell that is proposed on a wetland between Wal-Mart and Jreck Subs along Ford Street Extension. The consensus of the Board is to avoid the wetland and consider siting in the Wal-Mart parking lot. There was one full review: a 5 MW solar array in the Town of Oswegatchie along County Route 15, which was approved with conditions. The Board was concerned with prime farmland siting, fence construction in a federal wetland, and electric interconnection speculation. Considerable discussion focused on these types of projects and how the County's residents could benefit from them, e.g., in the form of low cost power.

Environmental Management Council (EMC). The EMC met in February. The speaker was Jana Lantry, NYS DEC Region 6 Fisheries Manager. Jana gave an overview of fisheries management in the Region, and then spoke about considerations involved if a fish bypass were to be placed on the Grasse River in Madrid, or on the Oswegatchie River in Ogdensburg. She emphasized that, if bypasses of some sort were proposed, DEC would strongly recommend that native fish species be accommodated. In attendance at this meeting were EMC members, residents and local officials from Madrid, and two members of the BOL. The EMC Environment & Economy Committee, which has been looking into this topic for over one year, intends to draft a report on its findings about the feasibility of fish bypasses.

The Emerald Ash Borer Task Force (EABTF) The EAB Task Force met in February. Reports indicate that EABs may have spread in the County further than previously known. In several places, EABs may have moved from the St. Lawrence River south almost to USH 11. This remains to be confirmed when various sentinel trees get dropped and peeled.

The Environment and Economy Subcommittee This group met to discuss the fish ladder/bypass project and that they were looking forward to the upcoming fisheries presentation by Jana Lantry.

They also discussed other potential environmental and economic projects to consider in the future.

Fair Housing Task Force (FHTF). The FHTF met on the 25th via Zoom to discuss the implications of deferred rent payments by tenants, including a landlord's inability to afford apartment repairs; the increasing number of tenant evictions filed by landlords; an anticipated delay in timely real property tax payments; and bankruptcy filings by landlords. Members of the Task Force and other interested persons agreed to draft a memo to the County Board of Legislators that outlines the current status of pending evictions in the County, and to include the impending evictions crisis as a legislative issue agenda item. The Task Force also reviewed current maximum income limits for seniors to be eligible to receive an exemption on real property taxes, and reviewed a State requirement to select and advance Fair Housing activities over the next year.

BOARD OF LEGISLATORS

Census 2020. We await release of preliminary data from the 2020 Census. These data will be used to re-apportion Congressional districts across the country, and to redistrict NY Assembly and Senate boundaries, and locally to adjust BOL district lines.

COVID Response. Heidi is being trained to assist Public Health in workplace exposures. Staff continue to assist in the County's COVID call center, fielding calls from individuals regarding insulation, quarantine and any other question that is COVID-related. Staff have also volunteered to assist in County vaccination PODs (Points of Distribution); to date, staff have assisted at five PODs.

Jones & Laughlin (J&L) Site. Staff participated in a technical conference call with DEC on February 25th. Draft ISMP is expected in March.

Title VI Coordinator. The County Planning Director has been selected by the Board of Legislators to be the County's Title VI Coordinator. The County recently passed a Title VI Plan, which safeguards against discrimination in the distribution of federally funded programs. Staff attended a Title VI training workshop on February 23rd.

Countywide Broadband Assessment. Staff are working with DANC and a consultant to assess the deficiencies throughout the County. The assessment involves an on-line and paper survey that went live on February 19th and a physical inspection of broadband infrastructure.

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).

During February, NYS OCR announced the next round of grant applications for funding for housing programs. Deadline for submission of applications is Friday April 9th. The County anticipates applying for \$500 K - \$600 K to support the 24th round of DHAP.

Late last year, the County put out a Request for Statements of Interest to determine the availability/capacity of local organizations to serve as the County's Subrecipient to perform Program Delivery and Administration activities for future CDBG work. Two Statements of Interest were received; the Planning Office is working with an ad hoc Evaluation Committee and the County Administrator to decide on the eventual Subrecipient.

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. In February, the Planning Office is pleased to announce that 5 units have been completed, 10 units are in process; and another 6 units are in the application/qualification pipeline.

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM

County Enterprise GIS. Dakota, when time permits, is testing publishing and sharing data via Enterprise.

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

Parks & Trails New York (PTNY). Staff, Dakota, is working on submitting GIS data to PTNY that highlight recreation trail infrastructure in the County. Data for this project was recently received from the County trails web application and will be submitted during the winter 2021.

Public Transportation Bus Routes. During the first week in February, Matilda continued to update public transit route maps to depict COVID-19 vaccination sites. Revised colored maps were printed and laminated for mounting in each bus. Throughout the month, Matilda consulted with Garden Share staff Carlene Doane and County Mobility Manager Frank Doldo to create a map depicting bus routes that serve seasonal Farmer's Markets throughout the county. This map will be published in Garden Share's annual local food guide.

Staff GIS Production

- Emergency Services mapping assistance with search and recovery on Black Lake snowmobile incident. Staff created a search grid and shared via Google Maps for easy consumption in the field.

GRANTS

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. County stakeholders participated in an organizational Zoom meeting on February 11th. Municipal outreach meetings are scheduled for mid-March.

BridgeNY. Staff participated in a February 16th webinar by the NYSDOT. For this round of BridgeNY, funding is available for up to three bridges and five culverts. Pre-applications for culverts are due April 14 and May 5 for bridges. Final applications are due May 19 for culverts and June 9 for bridges. The County secured over \$9.4 million in the last round (2018).

PLANNING MATTERS

Town of Hammond Land Use Regulations Revisions. Staff is making progress on a 6-8 month process of reviewing and drafting updated land use regulations. There are two working options: zoning as a single district (rural residential) and zoning as a dual district (shoreline and rural residential). Staff met with Committee members on the 24th to complete the first review of the draft document. Staff will continue to edit and prepare for the next meeting. The next meeting is scheduled for March 24, at 6pm, via Zoom.

Town of Rossie Land Use Regulations Assistance. Staff continues to assist the Town's Planning Board chairman with updating the Town's land use regulations. Rossie has submitted their updated land use regulations' project referral and Staff is planning a review for the April CPB meeting.

Town of Waddington. Staff reached out to the Village of Waddington to discuss the possibility of Staff assisting the Village with a revision to its land use regulations. The Village had asked about Planning Staff assisting with the project previously.

North Side Energy Solar Project. Staff is working with the County Administrator's Office and several legislators to determine what role the County may have in the review of the application for the 180 MW solar installation in the Towns of Brasher, Massena and Norfolk.

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. On the 4th, Matilda and Jason presented a cost analysis of VTC's Mobility Management proposal for a two-year contract to the DOT and recommended it for funding. On the 16th, Matilda and County Mobility Manager Frank Doldo met with college representatives to discuss the resumption of the full operating schedule for routes 67, 68 and 69. On the 17th, Matilda and Frank Doldo drafted and finalized a response to the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe's draft Long Range Transportation Plan. Throughout the month, the County Attorney finalized a contract for services with VTC to provide trips to vaccination sites for persons who have no other way of traveling to a vaccination site, but are uncomfortable or are unwilling to use public transit due to a comorbidity or due to age. Throughout the month, Matilda and Frank Doldo collected and calculated the estimated mileage of shared routes for a 2018 STOA audit. On the 24th, Matilda and Heidi participated in a virtual meeting with Frank Doldo and The Arc senior staff to examine The Arc's interest in applying for North Border Regional Commission funds for a capital transit project. At the end of each week in February, Matilda, Jason and Frank Doldo participated in teleconferences with the County Board Office to deliver updates and transit operations under COVID-19.