

**St. Lawrence County Planning Office**  
**STAFF WORK REPORT**  
March 2021



**ADVISORY BOARD SUPPORT**

***Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board.*** Throughout the month, Matilda processed requests from 12 property owners to add 15 parcels totaling 1,092.8 acres to Ag District 2. No requests were received to add land to Ag District 1. Of these requests, 14 parcels totaling 1,086.9 acres will be recommended for inclusion at the Ag and Farmland Protection Board meeting on April 1<sup>st</sup>.

***County Planning Board (CPB).*** The Planning Board met via Zoom on the 11<sup>th</sup>. The Board reviewed a manufacturing facility in the Town of Potsdam, and a fast food restaurant in the City of Ogdensburg; both were approved with conditions. A use variance for a repair garage in the Town of Pierrepont was also reviewed and was denied.

***Environmental Management Council (EMC).*** The EMC met on March 17<sup>th</sup>. The speaker for this EMC meeting was Jessica Rogers, Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies at SUNY Potsdam; she discussed “Mapping Invasive Plants Along Roadsides in the North Country”.

***The Emerald Ash Borer Task Force (EABTF)*** The EAB Task Force did not meet in March. 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.

***Fair Housing Task Force (FHTF).*** At the BOL Operations Committee meeting on March 8<sup>th</sup>, Planning staff presented a memo that the FHTF had submitted to the Board of Legislators about 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.

**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.*** Staff assisted at four (4) vaccination PODs (Points of Distribution) during the month of March. In addition, staff have assisted in making second dose appointments; in Workplace Exposure investigations, and at the County’s COVID call center.

***Jones & Laughlin (J&L) Site.*** Staff participated in a technical conference call with DEC on March 25<sup>th</sup>. The draft Interim Site Management Plan (SMP) was shared for stakeholder review; stakeholder

comments have been requested by the DEC prior to the next technical conference call on April 29<sup>th</sup>.

***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 19<sup>th</sup> and will continue through April 30<sup>th</sup>, 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 23<sup>rd</sup> 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. The deadline for submission of applications is Friday April 9<sup>th</sup>. The County anticipates applying for \$600 K to support the 24<sup>th</sup> round of DHAP.

***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 March, the Planning Office is pleased to announce that 5 units have been completed, 9 units are in process; and another 7 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 31, 2020, 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.

## **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 a project meeting on March 11<sup>th</sup> and in jurisdictional kick-off meetings March 17<sup>th</sup> (afternoon) and March 18<sup>th</sup> (evening).

**BridgeNY.** Staff began preparing applications with County Highway; it is anticipated that the County will submit for three bridge projects and one culvert project. 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**

**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.

**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 24<sup>th</sup> to continue to review the draft document.

**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.

**Village 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.

**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.** In consultation with the County Attorney's Office, Matilda finalized a two-year Mobility Management contract to be signed with Volunteer Transportation Center, Inc. On the 9<sup>th</sup>, Matilda, The Arc transit staff, and the County's Mobility Manager Frank Doldo participated in a webinar to prepare for a 5311 virtual program audit that will occur in May. On the 16<sup>th</sup>, Matilda met with DOT representative Laura Hacker to review and finalize the third and final draw request for CARES Act funds to reimburse the County's bus operator for eligible expenses incurred during the COVID19 pandemic. On the 12<sup>th</sup>, Matilda and Heidi met with The Arc staff Howie Ganter, Tim Welp and Rena Ryan; Carrie Tuttle from the Development Authority of the North Country; and with John Demarest from the NYS Department of State to examine the possibility of applying for Northern Border Regional Commission funds in 2022 to assist with the construction of a new bus garage that is large enough to service and repair the County's 28-passenger buses. On the 18<sup>th</sup>, Matilda participated in the Public Transit Task Force meeting and helped provide an update on current transit activities.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, Matilda interviewed three candidates from St. Lawrence University's summer internship program to assist with route analysis and transit route planning. The internship is scheduled to begin in June. On the 24<sup>th</sup>, Matilda and Mobility Manager Frank Doldo participated in a virtual meeting with The Arc transit staff to identify documents and tasks to complete to prepare for the 5311 program audit in May. On the 29<sup>th</sup>, Matilda and Frank held a work session to upload documents, and prepare responses to 5311 program questions.