

St. Lawrence County Planning Office
STAFF WORK REPORT
April 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 Pfothauer with any questions.

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

ADVISORY BOARD SUPPORT

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board (AFPB). Following the Ag and Farmland Protection Board's meeting on April 2nd, Matilda drafted a memorandum and draft resolution for the County Board of Legislator's consideration that identified recommendations for property owners and local governments to consider when siting large scale solar arrays on farmland. Both the memo and resolution were heard at committee by the County Legislature on April 20th, and is scheduled for adoption at the County Legislature's full board meeting on May 4th. On the 17th, the Ag and Farmland Protection Board forwarded an electronic copy of a memo to US Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Purdue endorsing the North Country Chamber of Commerce's recommendations to help address the difficult economic conditions faced by the region's dairy industry since the emergence of COVID19. A legally noticed public hearing to receive input on the Ag and Farmland Protection Board's recommended additions to Ag District 2 was held online on April 21st. No members of the public were in attendance. Matilda prepared and submitted a draft resolution to the Board Office to add six parcels totaling 583 acres to Ag District 2.

County Planning Board (CPB). The Planning Board met online via Zoom on the 9th and heard two full review projects: The Town of Potsdam's comprehensive zoning revisions, and the Town of Norfolk's

local law to regulate solar energy systems. Both projects were approved with conditions. Members of the board also completed online training provided by the National Fire Prevention Association on emergency responses to Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS), and will use this information to revise NYSEERDA's model law to regulate BESS.

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

In conjunction with Earth Day, the EMC put out the following message:

This month marks the 50th anniversary of the first Earth Day.

According to <https://www.earthday.org/history/> "On April 22, 1970, 20 million Americans — at the time, 10% of the total population of the United States — took to the streets, parks and auditoriums to demonstrate for a healthy, sustainable environment in massive coast-to-coast rallies. Thousands of colleges and universities organized protests against the deterioration of the environment."

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".

We intend to develop a Web page as part of the St. Lawrence County Web site to house these submissions about Earth Day. We see it as a first-level history project, collecting stories about the local environmental movement over the past 50 years.

I invite you all to share with us some aspects about your / your group's experiences in working to improve our environment during the past fifty years. I will leave the format to you (written; pictorial; audio; video). If you want assistance to produce / develop your ideas, I/we may be able to help.

I hope you will share this invitation widely, and I hope that you will send in something about Earth Day / about the environment over the past 50 years / about how your thoughts and opinions have changed over time concerning our environment. We may be separated right now by COVID19, but we are all joined together as a community.

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

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.

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 April 10th. Staff did a radio interview with B99.3 Hits radio; another interview was done with North Country Matters (see <https://youtu.be/yf4NnGkuv8w>)

Jones & Laughlin (J&L) Site.

➤ The DEC technical (clean-up) conference call for April 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 April, the Planning Office, in consultation with its subrecipient, the North Country Housing Council, shut down its CDBG programs, due to the COVID19 pandemic.

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

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 April, the Planning Office, in consultation with its subrecipient, the North Country Housing Council, shut down its Lead Hazard Abatement program, due to the COVID19 pandemic. Quarterly report for period ending 3/31/20 was submitted, as was a reimbursement request for funds expended through 4/6/20.

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, located in the BOL Chambers. EOC operation consists of answering phones and logging and distributing COVID-19 medical resources requests.

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.

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' Mental Health Clinic in preparing an application to the COVID-19 Telehealth Program through the FCC. Staff is working with Community Services' Substance Abuse Clinic on 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.

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.

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.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

County Transit System. After the 8th, the operator installed plexiglass safety shields between the driver's seat and bus doors to help minimize the spread of COVID19 between passengers and driver. The operator also limited seating between seat rows on all routes and reassigned buses to travel in tandem on the heaviest traveled routes in the system. On the 15th, bus drivers began wearing protective masks during their shifts, and passengers began doing the same thereafter. On the 10th, Matilda prepared the County's first quarter STOA report that was signed and submitted to the DOT. Part C of the 4th quarter for 2019 was also revised, and eligible operating expenses were paid under an Alternate Distribution Plan for surplus STOA funds. Matilda and Lisa also processed VTC's payment request for First Mile Last Mile services for March. Matilda and County Mobility Manager Frank Doldo finalized the 2020 bus operations budget that would have been in effect pre-COVID19. Matilda also prepared and submitted a resolution to the Board Office for the County Legislators to accept \$359,000 in annual 5311 operating assistance for 2019 and 2020, and prepared and submitted a resolution for a 2020 budget modification to distribute 2018 5311 operating assistance to The Arc. During the weeks of the 20th and 27th, Matilda, Frank and Transit Manager Rena Ryan reviewed and provided feedback on deadhead mileage calculated for the 2018 STOA program audit.