

St. Lawrence County Planning Office
STAFF WORK REPORT
April 2022



ADVISORY BOARD SUPPORT

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board. The Ag and Farmland Protection Board met on the 4th and heard Matilda deliver a presentation about the Eight-Year Review for Ag District 2. The Board passed a motion recommending the Board of Legislators to add 419 parcels totaling 32,055 acres, and removing 132 acres totaling 1,203 acres from the district, subject to opposition from affected landowners. The Board also heard a presentation from Jason about a proposed solar facility at 50 Cogswell Corners in Madrid, and unanimously voted in opposition to the siting of the project at this location. As a result, Matilda drafted a letter on behalf of the Board to the NYS Department of Ag and Markets expressing their concerns about the siting of renewable energy facilities on prime soils. The Board received a response from the Department, which indicated the Department felt the siting of the facility minimized the displacement of prime soils to the greatest extent possible. On the 14th, Matilda attended a virtual Local Foods Advisory Board meeting to hear about an upcoming Local Foods exhibit at TAUNY. On the 20th, Matilda facilitated a strategic planning session with staff from the Soil and Water Conservation District to identify their office's resources and constraints, and to prioritize the delivery of programs and services.

County Planning Board (CPB). The CPB met via Zoom on April 14th. Several projects were returned for local action (RFLA). There was further discussion on a couple projects: a subdivision in the Town of Morristown on Booth Island and a hemp store in the Village of Massena. Staff administered a training on [regulating short-term rentals that was sourced from the Tug Hill Commission](#). Staff are working on full reviews for two proposed solar projects in the Town of Canton for the May meeting. 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 April 20th. The speaker was John Tenbusch, Planner II with the SLC Planning Office, and co-staff (with Dakota Casserly) to the EMC. John spoke about the River Advisory Councils (Raquette River AC; West Branch St. Regis River AC), with which he has participated for the past 10 years. According to Tenbusch, the primary function of these Advisory Councils is to administer the small funds that were required under the Settlement Agreements with the owners of relicensed hydro facilities. These funds are earmarked for environmental research and/or remediation; recreation enhancements; improvements to public access; etc.

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>

EMC Monthly Meetings and Speaker Series:

- 2022
 - May (5/18): Chris Navitsky, Lake George Association, Road Salt

- June (6/15): Scott Schlueter, USFWS, FEMRF (Fish Enhancement, Mitigation and Research Fund)
- July (7/20): No meeting
- August (8/17): EMC Picnic
- September (9/21): Kate Cleary, SUNY Potsdam, Environmental Studies, Bats and food systems.
- October (10/19): Open.
- November (11/16): Deb Christie, St. Lawrence County Trails, Economic impact of snowmobiles and ATV/UTVs.
- December (12/21): No Meeting
- 2023
 - Whitman Constantineau, Low Impact Hydropower Institute, Hydro in SLC

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 EMC members participated in Earth Day activities at St. Lawrence University.

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>.

EAB Task Force. The Emerald Ash Borer Task Force met on April 20th. Those in attendance made reports on the progress of their various EAB-related activities.

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)
 - Fish ladder project at the dams in Ogdensburg and Madrid and PSA responses from stakeholders.
 - DEC Deer Management Program and venison donation.
 - Rights of Nature discussion.
 - 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)
 - A member recently attended the FEMRF (Fish Enhancement, Mitigation and Research Fund) Advisory Committee meeting.
- All Committees
 - Preparing comments to the [NYS Climate Action Council Draft Scoping Plan](#).
 - Support letter for St. Lawrence County Trails in the St. Lawrence Rock Ridge UMP.
 - Board of Legislators' inquiry on nuclear power and solar panel recycling.

Fair Housing Task Force (FHTF). The Fair Housing Task Force co-sponsored a Fair Housing webinar with CNY Fair Housing on the 28th. Approximately 28 persons attended the session and heard

presentations from CNY Fair Housing Executive Director Sally Santangelo; PJ Hearn, Staff Attorney with Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York; Ed Sach, Mobile Crisis Counselor with Reach Out; and Courtnie Toms with Maximizing Independent Living Choices about current housing issues at the national and local level, and resources that are available to assist homeowners and renters.

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 April, staff coordinated and participated in two Committee meetings and two working sessions. Funding opportunities are being examined and work continues to validate and refine the list of unserved addresses in the County.

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 administers four open grants: the 23rd round of the Direct Homeownership Assistance Program; the third round of its Countywide Housing Rehabilitation Program (CHRP 3); the recently-funded SLC-CARES award to conduct housing rehabilitation for populations vulnerable to COVID-19; and the even more-recently awarded fourth round of the Countywide Housing Rehabilitation program (CHRP 4).

Staff are working on the Environmental Review for CHRP 4 and the COVID CARES Grant Admin Plan.

The Office of Community Renewal (OCR) sent a report to the Chair of the BOL about their monitoring of the almost-completed DHAP 23 and CHRP 3 programs. According to the report, for each grant, OCR found that “The review of your program administration and project files indicates compliance with the statutory and regulatory requirements of the program. In addition, the Monitoring Visit did not identify any areas where improvements could be made. I would like to take this opportunity to commend you for your excellent work in administering the NYS CDBG grant. (Signed by Charles Philion, Program Director)”

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 April, the Planning Office reports that 16 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 recently attended webinars on community trails and risk management hosted by American Trails.

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM

County Enterprise GIS.

- <https://gis.stlawco.org/portal/home/index.html>
- GIS Web App: Proposed Solar sites in the County: Updated with recent Madrid solar project (Acer Solar).
<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.

SLC IDA. Staff were successful in working with the IDA's consultant to transfer a GIS dataset for Arconic to County servers.

Massena Zoning Map. Matilda assisted with a request from the Village of Massena to revise its zoning map.

Clarkson University GIS. Staff assisted with sharing the County's multi-use trails' data.

GRANTS

Congressionally Directed Spending Request FY23. Staff assisted County Highway in preparing and submitting this \$3.3 million request for construction funds for BIN 3341700 - CR 35 over Trout Brook in the Town of Potsdam.

DR-4480 COVID-19 Pandemic Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP). Staff are examining opportunities for County projects under this unique funding opportunity resulting from the Federal Disaster Declaration due to COVID-19.

NYS OASAS Comprehensive Integrated Outpatient Treatment Programs. Staff assisted Community Services in preparing the narrative for this \$250,000 request.

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.

Misc. Staff was notified of successful funding of an application to the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Grant. Staff had assisted Cornell Cooperative Extension in the preparation of this proposal to implement after school programs in four school districts. \$3,147,280 was awarded for a five-year period.

PLANNING MATTERS

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

Town of Gouverneur. Staff assisted the CEO with special use permit approval process and documentation.

Town of Potsdam. Staff shared resources with the CEO in regards to additional regulation of large-scale solar projects.

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 attended a meeting on 4/27 to establish the land use revisions committee, discuss their existing land use law(s), and confirm the timeline for project completion.

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.

OFFICE STAFFING

Congratulations to Matilda Larson who was promoted to a Planner III position, effective April 4th. Matilda plays an integral role in the Office, with her work focusing on public transportation, agriculture and land use planning initiatives.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

County Transit System. On the 4th, Matilda submitted the monthly COVID19 recovery report to the DOT. On the 8th, Matilda prepared the 1st Quarter STOA report for 2022 for signature, and drafted new bus advertising contracts for signature. On the 13th, Matilda reviewed projected 2022 bus advertising revenue with staff from The Arc, and to discuss the disbursement of ad revenue to the operator on a quarterly basis. On the 19th, Matilda conducted a monthly STOA review of records at The Arc. On the 21st, Matilda participated in a virtual Public Transit Task Force meeting and reviewed ridership and miles traveled by the public bus system for the 1st quarter of 2022, and delivered an update on the drafting of an RFP to equip the County's bus fleet. This draft was emailed to County IT for review and discussion. On the 26th, Matilda held a virtual meeting with the County's Mobility Managers and The Arc senior staff to discuss 2023 and 2024 budgets for the College Connector routes. Matilda also virtually met with VTC staff on the 26th to review March and April First Mile Last Mile expenses.