

St. Lawrence County Planning Office
STAFF WORK REPORT
May 2021



ADVISORY BOARD SUPPORT

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board. On the 6th and 7th, Matilda met with Nick Hamilton Honey from Cooperative Extension to discuss the idea of siting a large scale solar array at the Learning Farm. This array would serve as a demonstration project on how to accommodate agricultural operations inside the leased area of an array. On the 10th, Jason presented the AFPB's recommendation to the County Board of Legislators to add 13 parcels totaling 1,010.3 acres. The Board of Legislators is anticipated to pass a resolution for these recommended additions at its full board meeting in June.

County Planning Board (CPB). The Planning Board met via Zoom on May 13th. The Board discussed 4 full reviews: A battery storage local law in the Town of Canton, which was conditionally approved; A Wind Energy Law in the Town of Colton, which was conditionally approved; A Code Amendment for the Town of Colton, which was conditionally approved; and a Solar Energy Law for the Town of Pierrepont, which was conditionally approved.

Environmental Management Council (EMC). The EMC met on May 19th. The speaker for this EMC meeting was Brian Washburn, EMC member, Chair of the EMC's Watershed Management Committee, and Professor Emeritus in Chemistry and Environmental Studies at SUNY Canton. He spoke about his long-running series of experiments in energy efficiency that he has conducted at his home over the past 30 years.

The Washburn Residence
Major energy changes and priorities:

- Geothermal because of production efficiency
- Primary energy source remained electricity since it is government regulated
- Continued use of electricity as primary energy source because of the diverse NYS electric energy portfolio
- Solar arrays to become a net zero carbon electric energy producer

The Emerald Ash Borer Task Force (EABTF) The EAB Task Force met on May 20th. Participants reported on their EAB management plans for 2021.

Staff Training. Staff participated in two Webinars on environmental topics during May:

- A Webinar presented by SLELO-PRISM which proposed a program where citizens scientists will be asked to test water from identified sources for the presence of E-DNA. This will enable researchers to determine what species are living in a particular area.
- A presentation by the Black River Watershed group on Hemlock Woolly Adelgid. While the material regarding HWA was familiar, the presenter took some time to explain and emphasize the role of hemlock trees in our environment.

Fair Housing Task Force (FHTF). The FHTF met virtually on the 27th and heard a presentation from

Nick Hamilton Honey about NYSERDA's energy efficiency resources that are available to income qualified households, and heard an update from PJ Herne and Diana Dufresne about rent relief that will be available to tenants and landlords beginning June 1st. Matilda reviewed two proposed Fair Housing activities for 2021, with Sally Santangelo from CNY Fair Housing offering to serve as a presenter on a future Fair Housing training session.

BOARD OF LEGISLATORS

Countywide Broadband Assessment. Staff are working with DANC and a consultant to assess the deficiencies throughout the County. The assessment has been completed and a final report will be delivered sometime in June.

COVID Response. Staff was not available to assist at vaccination PODs (Points of Distribution) during the month of May. However, mapping of COVID cases continues on a daily basis (see below).

Jones & Laughlin (J&L) Site. Staff participated in a technical conference call with DEC on May 27th.

Space Planning. Staff are assisting the Sheriff, District Attorney and Emergency Management Offices with space realignment.

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).

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 May, the Planning Office is pleased to announce that 7 units have been completed, 7 units are in process; and another 14 units are in the application/qualification pipeline.

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM

County Enterprise GIS. Dakota has successfully published data to the Enterprise system and has shared CPB reviewed solar projects as an interactive web mapping application. Also, a prime farmland dataset was published for public consumption and sharing.

- <https://gis.stlawco.org/portal/home/index.html>

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 summer 2021.

GRANTS

BridgeNY. Staff worked with County Highway to prepare applications for three bridge projects. Pre-applications were submitted per the BridgeNY process and DOT comments have been returned. DOT comments were reviewed and will be incorporated into the final applications due June 9th. The County secured over \$9.4 million in the last round (2018).

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 May 13th.

Septic Repair Program. The County has been awarded \$340,000 to repair or replace deficient septic tanks along specified waterbodies in the County. A subrecipient was selected through an RFP process; resolutions authorizing the State contract and the subrecipient agreement were moved through the May Finance Committee.

COPS (Community Oriented Policing) Hiring Program. Staff met with the Sheriff's Department and will be assisting on an application to this U.S. Department of Justice program; applications are due June 22nd.

2021 Consolidated Funding Application (CFA). The 2021 CFA round was announced in May with a deadline of July 30th. Staff will work with County Highway to prepare and submit an application to the NYSDEC's Water Quality Improvement Program (WQIP) and is in discussion about other possible projects.

Other. Staff met with CCE SNAP-Ed project leader Casey Caswell and assisted with narrative for an application to the Mother Cabrini Foundation. Staff is assisting to identify funding for an Automotive Technologies project at Seaway Area Career and Technical Education Center.

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 continues to make progress on an update to the Town and Village's land use regulations. There are two working options: zoning as a single

district (residential agricultural) and zoning as a dual district (shoreline and residential agricultural). Staff will meet with Committee members on the 15th of June for the final review of the draft documents. A new map was created to show the dual district boundaries. Some of the remaining steps are: final edits to draft documents, scheduling public meetings and hearings, and SEQR submission.

Town of Rossie Land Use Regulations Assistance. After CPB review and conditioned approval, staff continue to assist the Town's Planning Board Chair with targeted edits to their land use regulations.

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. Staff will attend the Village's Board meeting on July 5th to discuss next steps.

Website. Lisa and Dakota, with staff input, continue to work on updating/editing the Planning Office page on the County's new website.

- Updates were made to the EMC page and the home page hosted an advertisement for the CDBG public hearing.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

County Transit System. During the week of the 3rd, Matilda submitted a monthly report to the DOT that identifies COVID related impacts on transit staffing levels. On the 4th, Matilda and Mobility Manager Frank Doldo participated in a virtual 5311 program review with auditors and DOT staff. There were no findings for the County or its subrecipients. On the 11th, Matilda, The Arc senior transportation staff, and Frank Doldo and met with Patrick Massaro from SUNY Canton's Center for Renewable Energy and Sustainable Technologies (CREST) to create a CDL training program for bus drivers. On the 13th, Matilda participated in the DOT's third and final civil rights training session. On the 18th, Matilda resumed monthly visits to The Arc's transportation office to review daily STOA trip sheets. On the 20th, Matilda provided an update on administering the County's public transportation programs to the Public Transit Task Force. And finally, the National Association of Counties awarded St. Lawrence County with a National Achievement Award for First Mile Last Mile. The awards honor innovative, effective county government programs that strengthen services for residents.