

***St. Lawrence County Planning Office***  
***STAFF WORK REPORT***  
***September 2020***



**ADVISORY BOARD SUPPORT**

***County Planning Board (CPB).*** The Planning Board met via Zoom on the 10<sup>th</sup> and heard four full review projects: A special use permit for a solar array in the Town of Edwards; two site plan reviews for solar arrays in the Town of Lawrence; and a special use permit for a solar array in the Town of Gouverneur. All projects were approved with conditions. Jason also delivered a thirty-minute training presentation on checklists for site plan review.

***Environmental Management Council (EMC).*** For its meeting in September, the Chair of the EMC requested that Council members attend the presentation made by consultants about the St. Lawrence River Watershed Revitalization Project. This was the second of three scheduled public presentations before the Project is completed. For further information on the SLRWRP, please see: <http://fcswcd.org/partnerships/st-lawrence-river-watershed-partnership-slrwp/>

On Saturday, Sept. 19, volunteers from the EMC worked with the County Solid Waste Coordinator to staff the Household Hazardous Waste collection event, in Canton. Over 300 cars came through, bringing an assortment of hazardous waste materials, and also unwanted or expired prescription drugs.

In addition, the EMC is continuing to keep its “Earth Day 50” program open. As noted in July’s Work Report,

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](mailto:jtenbusch@stlawco.org) When you email, please have the subject line read “Earth Day 50”.

**The Emerald Ash Borer Task Force (EABTF)** The EAB Task Force did not meet in September. John Tenbusch and Aaron Barrigar each made presentations about EABs to the BOL Operations Committee on Sept. 21<sup>st</sup>.

***Fair Housing Task Force (FHTF).*** On the 24<sup>th</sup>, the FHTF co-hosted a webinar with CNY Fair Housing to deliver updates tenants and service providers about recent changes to Federal Fair Housing rules and tenant protections from evictions due to COVID19. Guest presenters were Sally Santangelo, Executive Director of CNY Fair Housing, and Joe Maslak, Staff Attorney for Legal Services of CNY. Thirty-three persons logged in to view the hour-long session.

***Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board (AFPB).*** On the 1<sup>st</sup> Matilda resumed her participation with Cooperative Extension’s Local Food Advisory Group. On the 23<sup>rd</sup>, Matilda attended America

Farmland Trust's first session of a series of webinars on Smart Solar Siting in New England. At the end of the month, Matilda updated a spreadsheet of solar array projects reviewed by the County Planning Board, which was included in the AFPB's October meeting packet and shared with staff at the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, and with directors for Real Property and the Industrial Development Agency.

## **BOARD OF LEGISLATORS**

**Census 2020.** Staff are working with the County's Complete Count Committee. The Committee met once during September.

In September, Planning staff:

- Wrapped three busses and one van. These will be rolling billboards for the Census.
- Placed full-page color advertisements in North Country This Week newspaper (7 weeks).
- Distributed of Census tote bags, facemasks, "We Count" activity books for children at schools, food distribution sites, etc.
- Placed local radio promotional spots; direct-mail (large print) and telephone calls to visually-impaired persons.
- Direct mailed a last-minute postcard about the Census to over 51,000 households across the County.

The deadline for completing the Census is currently set as September 30<sup>th</sup>. News stories have discussed lawsuits, possible deadline extension, etc. We await further word.

**Emergency Response to COVID 19.** Since the onset of COVID-19, the Planning Office assisted with the County's response in several ways. Staff, on a rotating basis, shared in the daily EOC duties from their respective offices in Public Safety Complex. EOC operations consisted of answering phones; logging and distributing COVID-19 resource requests; completing daily operations records; and mapping (see below). The County's EOC closed on September 17<sup>th</sup>.

## **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).

Planning staff (thanks, Dakota, for your hard work on this!) submitted the required documentation for the Grant Administration Plan to NYS Office of Community Renewal (OCR) on September 21<sup>st</sup>. The Plan covers such things as: program summary, program requirements & policies (eligible activities, national objectives, required program policies), and the grant administrative cycle (contract execution & start-up, environmental review, project implementation, compliance files & reporting).

**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 September, the Planning Office, in consultation with its partners,

the North Country Housing Council and the SLC Public Health Dept, continued its Lead Hazard Abatement program.

***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. One virtual meeting was held in September. The project website is: <https://potsdamdri.com/>.

## **GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM**

***COVID19 Mapping.*** Since March 31<sup>st</sup>, Dakota and Matilda have prepared daily maps for the County's Public Health Department to track positive, active, and regional cases of COVID-19.

***Public Transportation Bus Routes.*** On the 15<sup>th</sup>, Matilda and Dakota met with Transit Manager Rena Ryan, Mobility Manager Frank Doldo, and the Greater Watertown Mobility Manager to identify shorter replacement routes that can be developed. Throughout the month, Dakota has been working on a countywide public transit map which displays all routes.

***County Mapping Upgrades.*** Installation of ESRI's Enterprise GIS software began at the end of July and is up and operational. The initial focus is to have Emergency Services Enterprise GIS needs established first and then Real Property and Planning will come next.

***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 in October.

***St. Lawrence Power and Equipment Museum.*** At the end of the month, Matilda responded to a request to prepare a variety of large scale maps with aerial imagery and elevation contours for the Power and Equipment Museum's board of directors.

## **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.

***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.

## **PLANNING MATTERS**

***Smart Solar Siting in New England Webinars.*** On the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>, Matilda attended AFT's webinars regarding the siting of large scale solar arrays in New England.

**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. For further information, see <http://fcswcd.org/partnerships/st-lawrence-river-watershed-partnership-slrwp/>

**Town of Hammond Land Use Reg. Revisions.** Staff is beginning a 6-8 month process of reviewing and then drafting an updated land use regulations document. The Town, with support from the Village of Hammond, has signed a MOU with the Planning Office to conduct the revision. Notable suggestions from the Town are new regulations for solar and an industrial zone. The first meeting with the Town and Village committee is scheduled for October 14<sup>th</sup>, 6-8pm.

**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.** The College Connector (routes 67, 68 and 69) resumed its regular service, and all public transit routes are no longer providing tandem bus service as they are no longer subject to a maximum seating capacity. As of the 24<sup>th</sup>, passenger counts for the entire system as at 69% of pre-COVID numbers. These changes were made in consultation in with the Board Office through bi-weekly teleconferences held on August 28<sup>th</sup>, and on September 11<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>. Dr. Williams, the President for the County Board of Health secured translations to include on a letter sized poster encourage the regular use of masks on every route by Amish passengers. On the 3<sup>rd</sup>, Matilda, Lisa and Jason made final revisions to the County's 2021 public transit budget. On the 11<sup>th</sup>, Matilda met with SUNY Potsdam representatives via Zoom to discuss revising the order of stops along their route to help shorten travel times to and from Walmart. Matilda finalized the Request for Statements of Interest for Bus Operations, and forwarded the documents to the County Purchasing Office for publication. During the middle of the month, the County's Purchasing Office issued a Request for Proposals for Mobility Management service, with a deadline of the 25<sup>th</sup>. The County received one proposal which is currently being evaluated. On the 17<sup>th</sup>, Matilda participated in the Public Transit Task Force meeting by phone to deliver an update with Frank Doldo on current bus operations. On the 25<sup>th</sup>, Matilda drafted a resolution for the County Legislature's consideration to apply for Accelerated Transit Capital funds for eligible public transit capital expenses. On the 29<sup>th</sup>, Matilda and Frank Doldo participated in a teleconference with the DOT's program auditors to provide information about the County's 2018 mileage and trip records.