

St. Lawrence County Planning Office
STAFF WORK REPORT
November 2020



ADVISORY BOARD SUPPORT

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board. Matilda updated GIS files for 2020 additions to Ag District 2 which were forwarded to the Development Authority of the North County to update the Internet Mapping Application. Matilda, Dakota and Jason reviewed and prepared comments and suggested revisions to the draft regulations for the Accelerated Renewable Energy Growth and Community Benefit Act. Matilda also updated the spreadsheet and map of known lease locations for solar energy facilities in the county. On the 10th Matilda participated in the Local Foods Advisory Group meeting, and has agreed to serve on Cooperative Extension’s search committee to hire an Agricultural Development and Marketing Specialist.

County Planning Board (CPB). The Planning Board met via Zoom on the 12th. Staff member Dakota Casserly gave an introductory presentation on solar power development queue and interconnection processes. Project reviews consisted of: ten-lot subdivision in Macomb, 5 MW solar arrays in the Towns of Oswegatchie and Canton, and a convenience store with gas pumps next to the Holiday Inn Express in the Village of Canton. The solar project in Canton discussion led to the Board’s first denial for a project of this type. The primary reasons were: prime farmland and wetland impacts, access road design on private property without consultation with property owner, and lack of easement to access project parcel clarification.

Environmental Management Council (EMC). The EMC met in November; Dakota Casserly gave a presentation on small scale solar projects, 2-5 MWs, summary of recent County Planning Board reviews, and the power grid interconnection and queue.

The EMC is continuing to keep its “Earth Day 50” program open. 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”.

The Emerald Ash Borer Task Force (EABTF) The EAB Task Force met in November. Various members reported on activities. Of special note is the fact that EABs have been found as far as four miles south of Heuvelton near SH 812. There will be several tree-peeling opportunities this winter, as sentinel trees are felled.

Fair Housing Task Force (FHTF). Throughout the month Matilda contacted prospective candidates who are willing to fill vacancies on the Fair Housing Task Force. The Task Force will meet on December 10th.

BOARD OF LEGISLATORS

Census 2020. The Census ended its data-gathering operation on October 15th, on orders from the U.S. Supreme Court. Pursuant to its grant agreement with NYS, the Planning Office is working to close out the grant.

Jones & Laughlin (J&L) Site. Staff participated in a technical conference call with DEC on November 19th. Discussion focused on placing the draft feasibility study on hold and developing an Interim Site Management Plan (ISMP). Stakeholders to submit formal comments to DEC; CPO staff worked with G. Bowitch to draft and circulate comments based on discussion.

Title VI Coordinator. The County Planning Director has been selected by the Board of Legislators to be the County's Title VI Coordinator. The County recently passed a Title VI Plan, which safeguards against discrimination in the distribution of federally funded programs.

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 November, 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.

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM

COVID19 Mapping. Since March 31st, 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. Dakota continues to work on a countywide public transit map which displays all routes.

County Mapping Upgrades. County GIS users continue to discuss best practices to utilize shared GIS resources and assess department needs.

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 December.

DANC GIS Assessment Meeting. Jason and Dakota participated in this virtual meeting which DANC is spearheading to gauge the region's GIS needs. One of the goals is to better support and coordinate local governments' GIS needs.

Staff GIS Production

- Maps produced for Patrick Kelly (SLC IDA) showing potential solar sites for SLC owned lands and private vacant lands greater than 20 acres.
- Data produced and shared with DEC to prepare for septic funding project for specific shoreline property owners.

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.

PLANNING MATTERS

Land Use Training. Staff are preparing for a December 9th virtual training session.

Town of Canton Zoning Revisions. On the 30th, Matilda met with Town Board members Bob Washo and Jim Smith via Zoom to discuss public notices for project reviews and the process used for land use projects.

Raquette River Advisory Council. On November 20th, John attended the semi-annual meeting of this Advisory Committee, established through the hydro relicensing process to administer a small grant fund for environmental and recreational purposes.

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 by the end of 2020. For further information, see <http://fcsxcd.org/partnerships/st-lawrence-river-watershed-partnership-slwrp/>

Town of Hammond Land Use Reg. Revisions. Staff is making progress on a 6-8 month process of reviewing and then drafting updated land use regulations. Staff met with members of the Town and Village committee on November 18th via Zoom. Staff presented three outlines for updated land use regulations: a continuation of existing conditions, zoning as a single district, and zoning as a dual district (shoreline and rural residential). The Planning Office will draft regulations for the two zoning options and share with the Committee for review. The next meeting is scheduled for January 21, at 6pm, via Zoom.

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. Currently staff is reviewing an updated revision with a focus on the telecommunications and board of appeals sections.

Website. Lisa and Dakota, with staff input, continue to work on updating/editing the Planning Office

page on the County's new website.

West Branch of the St. Regis River Advisory Council. On November 20th, John attended the semi-annual meeting of this Advisory Committee, established through the hydro relicensing process to administer a small grant fund for environmental and recreational purposes.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

County Transit System. On the 2nd, Matilda and County Mobility Manager Frank Doldo held a virtual meeting with DOT representatives to review and finalize the 2nd draw request for CARES Act monies for The Arc and VTC. On the 5th and 30th, Matilda and Frank reviewed and finalized the 2021 budget for bus operations. On the 9th and 16th Matilda met with Frank and The Arc Transit Manager Rena Ryan to discuss driver staffing and route operations. Due to staffing shortages caused by COVID19, Route 22 that provides service from Star Lake to Harrisville was suspended until the beginning of 2021 due to low ridership, Route 70 was abruptly closed for the remainder of the 12th, and the schedule for Route 68 was temporarily reduced until full staffing resumed. During the week of the 9th, Matilda drafted a resolution that would authorize the County Chair to accept a \$1.5 million award to purchase up to 10, 28-passenger buses. On the 19th Matilda participated in the Public Transit Task Force meeting. Both Frank and Matilda provided Task Force members with an overview of current transit operations. On the 23rd, Matilda and Frank met with college representatives for Routes 67, 68 and 69 who agreed to a reduction in bus service during the extended holiday winter break. Beginning on the 19th and at the end of every business week, Matilda, Jason and Frank participate in a teleconference with the Board Office to discuss public transportation services operating under COVID19. On the 25th, Matilda emailed a draft 2021-2022 bus operations contract to the County Attorney's Office for review.