

**St. Lawrence County Planning Office**  
**STAFF WORK REPORT**  
**November 2021**



**ADVISORY BOARD SUPPORT**

***Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board.*** On the 3<sup>rd</sup>, Matilda attended a webinar sponsored by the Tug Hill Commission about PILOT agreements and new Real Property valuation formulas that will apply to wind and solar energy systems. On the 12<sup>th</sup>, the Office was informed Matilda will be serving on the Department of Agriculture and Markets' Farmland Protection Working Group. The group is intended to recommend strategies and facilitate input on the siting of major renewable energy systems on farmland. During the second half of the month, Matilda reviewed the North Side Energy Center's Certificate Conditions and Site Engineering and Environmental Plan Guide on how the project will mitigate its impacts to farmland in the project's footprint.

***County Planning Board (CPB).*** The CPB met via Zoom on November 9<sup>th</sup>. Several projects were returned for local action (RFLA). Three full reviews were presented, discussed, two were approved with conditions, and one was denied: Village of Canton zoning code revision (approved), Town of Oswegatchie site plan review (approved), and Town of Louisville use variance (denied). A training was held before the meeting and Patrick Kelly from the SLC IDA presented on PILOTs for solar projects. Also, Planning Office staff are holding a fall land use training on December 7<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm.

***Environmental Management Council (EMC).*** The EMC met on November 17<sup>th</sup> for its monthly meeting. The speaker was Dr. Adrienne Rygel, Chair of the Civil and Construction Technology Department at SUNY Canton. Dr. Rygel discussed her work with environmental studies students doing water-quality research on rivers and streams near campus.

Staff are continuing to work with the Black Lake Association with regard to milfoil management at Black Lake. In November, staff made presentations to the Town Boards in DePeyster, Hammond, Macomb, Morristown, and Oswegatchie. A second Black Lake Summit meeting was held on November 15<sup>th</sup> for interested stakeholders. A website for this project is here: <https://stlawco.org/node/2777>.

***EAB Task Force.*** The Emerald Ash Borer Task Force met during November. Those present gave reports of recent EAB-related activities. It was reported that EABs have been found just north of the Village of Potsdam.

***Fair Housing Task Force (FHTF).*** The Fair Housing Task Force met on November 18<sup>th</sup>. Matilda Larson presented a "Fair Housing Analysis of the Village of Potsdam's Zoning Districts & Regulations". A report was made of the current status of rental assistance activities.

**BOARD OF LEGISLATORS**

***Census Data / Redistricting.*** Staff are a part of the BOL redistricting committee and successfully

submitted a County-wide map and 15 individual legislative district maps for the BOL to consider for adoption. The primary changes were in the following areas: Ogdensburg, Canton, Potsdam, and Massena. A public hearing is set for December 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Countywide Broadband Assessment.** Staff is working with a BOL committee to develop an implementation plan for the recently completed broadband study. Also, they are working on identifying areas in the County that would be good candidates for funding from the USDA ReConnect Program.

**Jones & Laughlin (J&L) Site.** There was no DEC technical conference call in November; the next call is scheduled for December 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**County Budget.** Jason participated on the County Budget team this year. Multiple meetings were held to finalize the County's 2022 budget.

## **COMMUNITY / ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**Community Development Block Grants (CDBG).** The Planning Office administers two open grants: the 23<sup>rd</sup> round of the Direct Homeownership Assistance Program, and the third round of its Countywide Housing Rehabilitation Program (CHRP 3).

During September, Planning staff worked on an application under the CDBG-CARES program for funding to do additional housing rehabilitation activity, directed at populations most vulnerable to COVID-19. We received word in late October that this application has been approved. During November, staff prepared required paperwork before funds will be released.

**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 reports that 9 units have been completed, and 7 units are in process.

**Canton Housing Task Force.** On the 9<sup>th</sup>, Matilda participated in a virtual meeting coordinated by the Town and the Village of Canton to continue discussions about the limited availability of affordable housing, and limited availability of turn-key market rate housing, and to create a housing strategy.

**Recreation.** Staff are actively following a handful of organizations and attending webinars that address developing recreational assets in rural communities.

## **GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM**

**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. Between July 1<sup>st</sup> and August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021 these maps were published twice a week. The County has since resumed the publication of these maps on a daily basis effective August 23, 2021.

### ***County Enterprise GIS.***

- <https://gis.stlawco.org/portal/home/index.html>
- GIS Web App: Proposed Solar sites in the County:  
<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.

## **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. Outreach has been successful: the update will have 100% participation by municipalities.

***Septic Repair Program.*** The County has been awarded \$340,000 to repair or replace deficient septic tanks along specified waterbodies in the County. The program is currently taking in prospective participants. To date, 13 requests for funding have been received; 10 households have returned signed award letters.

***21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center Grant.*** Staff provided technical assistance to CCE of SLC to prepare a request for \$629,456 to fund before and after school programs in four local school districts.

***Other.*** Staff are continuing to monitor incoming information regarding American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) programs, as well as developments surrounding the Federal infrastructure and other bills.

## **PLANNING MATTERS**

***CLEAR.*** CLEAR stands for Coastal Lakeshore Economy and Resiliency Initiative. Staff participated in a final input session on November 9<sup>th</sup>. Final comments on project profiles are due in December.

### ***Large Scale Solar.***

- **Rich Road Solar:** Staff is collecting publically available informational resources for this project to better understand its impacts.
  - <https://www.edf-re.com/project/rich-road-solar/>

***Town of Rossie.*** Staff continues to assist the Town's planning board chair with guidance on updating their land use regulations. A land use regulation meeting is scheduled for December 15<sup>th</sup>.

***Village of Waddington.*** Staff await a response from the Village Board regarding a revision to the Village Zoning Code.

***Presentation to St. Lawrence University Students.*** Jason made a presentation to students in an introductory planning class on October 29<sup>th</sup>. The topic of discussion was land use challenges and solutions in St. Lawrence County.

***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.

## **PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

***County Transit System.*** On the 1<sup>st</sup>, Matilda met with Transit Manager Rena Ryan and Regional Mobility Manager Frank Doldo to review and finalize the schedule for Route 22, which is currently suspended until the operator has enough drivers to service all routes. On the 5<sup>th</sup>, Matilda participated in a virtual meeting with the County's DOT representative to review and finalize an RFP for First Mile Last Mile. During the first half of the month, Matilda worked with Purchasing staff to finalize requests for bids to purchase two bus shelters: one to be installed in front of the Social Services building, and one to be installed by the Village of Potsdam off Depot Street. On the 15<sup>th</sup>, Matilda met with Frank Doldo and newly hired County Mobility Manager Sonja Jensen to review the County's Coordinated Transportation Plan, and to discuss Mobility Management priorities for the next year. On the 16<sup>th</sup>, Matilda conducted a monthly visit to The Arc's dispatch office to review a random selection of trip sheets for the month of October. On the 17<sup>th</sup>, Matilda met with Frank and Rena to discuss a proposed use of this year's Accelerated Transit Capital award. On the 18<sup>th</sup>, Matilda participated in an afternoon "Transit 101" webinar by the New York Public Transit Association. On the 19<sup>th</sup>, Matilda met with Rena Ryan to review and discuss a vendor's quote to procure mobile column lifts for the bus mechanics. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>, Matilda participated in a virtual meeting or teleconference with vendors to learn about their GPS software systems that could be purchased for the County's bus fleet. Also on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, Matilda participated in a teleconference with Volunteer Transportation Center to review and discuss the organization's First Mile Last Mile expenses for October. On the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>, Matilda provided CARES Act documentation to the bus operator's fiscal auditor.