

St. Lawrence County Environmental Management Council
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Draft

MEETING MINUTES

September 18, 2019

**2nd - Floor Conference Room, Public Safety Complex
49½ Court Street, Canton, New York**

Action items in bold italics / Motions underlined.

Blue boxes indicate internal links to sections of these Minutes.

1. **Call to Order:** In the absence of the Chair, Vice-Chair Don O’Shea called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM.

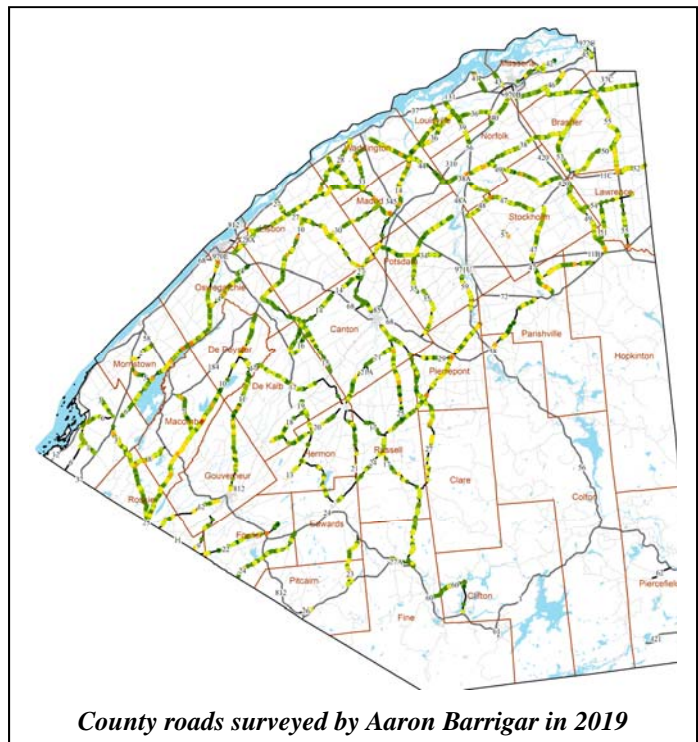
2. **Roll Call, Determination of Quorum:** A quorum was achieved during the presentation.
Members present: Dave Barnes; Aaron Barrigar; Catherine Bennett; Jennifer Berbrich; Ryan Burkum; Don O’Shea, *Vice Chair*; Tiernan Smith; Rod Tozzi; Brian Washburn.
Members absent: ; Joseph Brant, *Chair*; Erica Leonard; Richard Marshall; Sue Rau; Lance Rudiger; Nicole Terminelli, *BOL Liaison*; Pat Whalen, *Secretary*.
Guest(s): John Pinkerton, SLC Industrial Development Agency; Emily Sheridan, DEC.
Staff: John Tenbusch; Keith Zimmerman.

3. **Acceptance of Order of Business:** The Order of Business was accepted by consensus.

4. **Hearings, Comments from the Public.**

Aaron Barrigar, District Forester with the St. Lawrence County Soil & Water Conservation District, and Chair of the County Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) Task Force, presented the initial results from the “Right-of-Way Ash and Hazard Trees Assessment Project”.

Barrigar reported that over the course of the summer 2019, he inventoried trees along 571 miles of County-owned roads.



He indicated that this comprised a 100% sample of County roads, and 18.9% of all roads in the County, a statistically significant sample. Therefore, the results he found might be extrapolated to other roads (State-owned or Town-owned) in communities affected by ash and other hazard trees. He noted that this survey effort took 229 hours for him to complete.

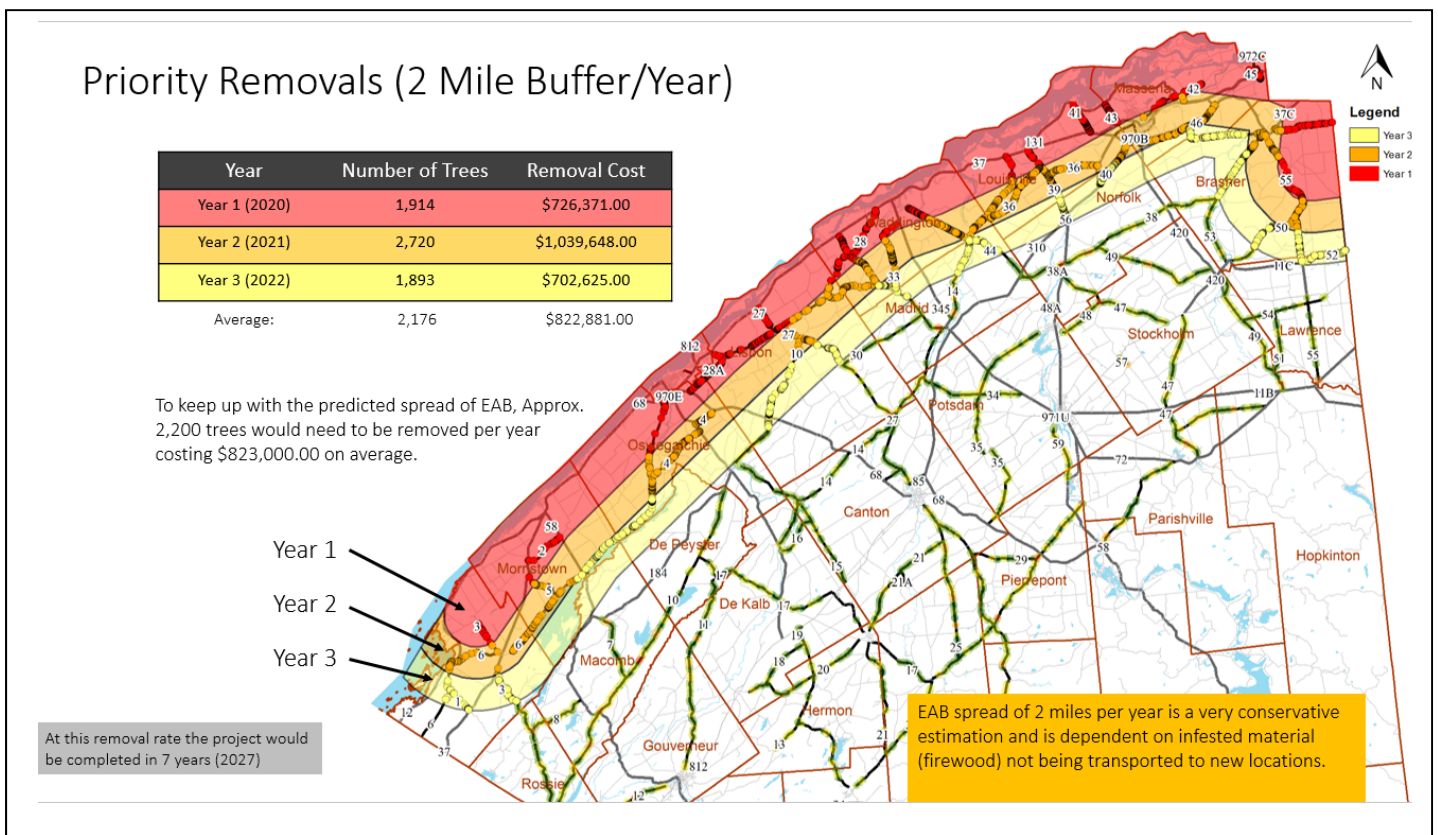
Barrigar counted 2,772 hazard trees (exclusive of ash trees). These included dead or deteriorated trees; infested, uprooted or struck by lightning. He also counted 11,856 ash trees. All of the ash trees are considered hazard trees, since they will almost inevitably become infested with EAB and die, thus becoming hazardous. The majority of trees surveyed (hazardous and ash) were in the 8-inch to 12-inch Diameter-at-Breast-Height (DBH). Therefore, a total of over 14,000 hazardous trees are found along County-owned roads.

Using pro-forma estimates for tree removal (one from an arborist company; one from a non-profit organization), Barrigar estimated that total cost to remove all hazardous and ash trees along County roads will be \$5.3 million. Overall, Barrigar reported that there are 25.6 hazardous or ash trees per mile of County-owned road; removal is estimated at \$9,374 per road mile.

He noted that the County might save almost \$500,000 by partnering with utility companies to have them remove all trees located near powerlines and equipment.

Barrigar proposed that the County undertake a multi-year program to remove these hazardous trees. He noted that EABs are already found in communities along the St. Lawrence River; these trees might be addressed during Year 1 and 2 of a Tree Removal program. See chart, below.

According to Barrigar’s timetable, all hazard trees, including ash, would be removed within 7 years. An average of 2,176 trees per year would be removed, at an annual cost of \$823,000.



There was considerable discussion about Aaron's findings. Keith Zimmerman, Planning Director, was attending the meeting to hear about the cost/impacts on County budgets. John Pinkerton, of SLC IDA, was attending because the EAB Task Force and the EMC are looking for ways to recoup some value from the effort needed to remove 14,000 trees. The downed trees will become a waste product unless they can be made into the raw material for some process.

Chai Pro-Tem O'Shea called a recess at approx. 7:15 PM; the meeting resumed at 7:20 PM.

5. **Approval of the Minutes of the July 2019 EMC meeting:** On a motion by Ryan Burkum (Tiernan Smith), the Minutes were approved.
6. **Report by Representative of the Board of Legislators.** No report.
7. **Reports by EMC Members on Conversations with County Legislators:** Catherine Bennett reported sending an email to Henry Leader.
8. **Report of the Committees:**
 - a. **Executive Committee:** No meeting; no report.
 - b. **Conservation of Resources Committee (CRC):** Jennifer Berbrich reported. See attached.
 - 1) Keith Zimmerman reported that he has spoken with Luke Martin, who had spoken at the June meeting of the EMC; Martin had reported that work crews were spraying herbicide along County roads adjacent to organic and near-organic produce farms. Martin claimed that some herbicide was being carried by wind onto these produce fields. Some organic producers have had problems with inspectors from organic certification programs as a result.
 - 2) Zimmerman stated that he is working on a program whereby the County would take requests from farmers and others who do NOT want herbicides applied to roadways near their property. These requests will be mapped, so that highway crews can avoid those properties. To the extent possible, the County will maintain these parts of roads with mechanical cutters.
 - c. **Environment + Economy Committee (E+E):** Rod Tozzi reported. See attached.
 - d. **Invasive Species Committee (ISC).** Donald O'Shea reported. See attached.
 - i. **Watershed Management Committee (WMC).** Brian Washburn reported. See attached.
9. **Report of the Staff:** Tenbusch and Zimmerman reported:
 - a. There have been staffing changes at the Planning Office.
 - 1) Keith has officially retired as Planning Director, but continues to work for the County as a contract employee.
 - 2) Another employee has missed considerable time from the office as they deal with medical issues.
 - 3) The result is that, at least temporarily, the Planning Office has significantly reduced capacity.
 - b. The recent **Household Hazardous Waste collection effort**, held September 14th at the Human Services Center in Canton, saw 240 cars bring hazardous materials to be disposed. A deputy Sheriff was present to accept old/unused pharmaceuticals; he reported receiving approx. 200 lbs. of same.

- c. There will be a meeting of the SLC Fish Advisory Board on Tuesday Sept. 24; the topic will be the consumption of contaminated fish. Tenbusch reported that he cannot attend this meeting. Tiernan Smith and Rod Tozzi volunteered to attend.
- d. Keith reported on the projects that have been recommended by the Resiliency & Economic Development Initiative (REDI) Regional Planning Team. See attached article from WDT.

10. Unfinished Business: None.

11. New Business: None.

12. Announcements:

- Emily Sheridan of NYS DEC announced that there will be a two-day meeting of the Great Lakes Initiative in November. Tentative dates are 11/4-5 or 11/13-14.

13. Message to the Board of Legislators: EMC members were asked to tell their assigned BOL members about the St. Lawrence County Right-of-Way Ash and Hazard Tree Assessment Project, conducted by Aaron Barrigar.

- Barrigar found over 14,000 hazard trees along County roads, including almost 12,000 ash trees that will be killed by Emerald Ash Borers.
- Barrigar estimated that total cost for removal of hazard trees along County roads would reach \$5.7 million;
- He recommended that the County adopt a seven-year program of tree removal; annual costs would be approx. \$822,000.

14. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned by consensus at 7:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted:

Patrick Whalen

Secretary

Minutes written by J. Tenbusch