

***St. Lawrence County Planning Office***  
***STAFF WORK REPORT***  
***August 2024***



**ADVISORY BOARD SUPPORT**

***Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board.*** The AFPB will meet again in October.

***County Planning Board (CPB).*** The CPB met on August 8<sup>th</sup> in the Conference room on the second floor of the HSC Building. One full review project was discussed, Zoning Revisions for six properties located on SH 56 in the Town of Norfolk (approved). Staff also offered training on spot zoning and presented on proposed recommendations to the NYS Uniform Fire Code regarding Battery Energy Storage Systems.

***Environmental Management Council (EMC).*** The EMC did not meet in August. The Executive Board met on Aug 7<sup>th</sup> and reviewed current status of Deer River. A member who is a retired water chemist is reviewing the water testing results from the DEC, and is arranging to meet with the region 6 water engineer to go over the results. Additionally, the Executive Board met with Clarkson Professor, Dr. Crimi, to get an understanding on the current status of PFAS within the County. Some members reported insurance increases for public drinking water districts. Dr. Crimi pointed us to a database with all reported PFAS water contamination and gave an overview on filtration capability. The Council is currently reviewing a NYS strategy to implement 30x30, an initiative to conserve thirty percent of NYS land by 2030 for feedback.

***Fair Housing Task Force.*** Staff have begun preliminary work on an exclusionary zoning analysis for St. Lawrence County population centers. This analysis attempts to find a correlation between poverty levels in zoning districts and permitted uses in those zones. Staff have conducted a GIS zoning analysis and plan to put together an ArcGIS Story Map to illustrate their findings. Staff presented this preliminary research on August 1<sup>st</sup> at the Zoning for Housing Opportunity webinar hosted by CNY Fair Housing, and also at the Fair Housing Task Force on August 27<sup>th</sup>.

**BOARD OF LEGISLATORS**

***Countywide Broadband Assessment.*** Staff responded to a NYS request for additional information and documentation on the pending ConnectALL County Partnerships Program application; awards timeline is unclear, NYS has re-opened the application period for additional applications. In addition, staff facilitated one committee meeting that included staff from SLIC Network Solutions discussing ARPA project status.

***OCF Repurpose Committee.*** Staff have been assigned to the County's Ogdensburg Correctional Facility Repurpose Committee. An announcement was made in July identifying two prisons that would be closed, one in Washington County and one in Sullivan County. The group last met on August 22<sup>nd</sup> and received an update from Assemblyman Scott Gray on the State prison closure process.

***SLC Water/Waste Water Infrastructure American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funding Initiative.*** The BOL allocated \$3 million for municipal water and waste water projects. Twelve municipalities have been awarded a total of \$2,969,563. To date, disbursements have been made totaling \$1,539,068.47. Five municipalities have expended all their awarded funds: DeKalb, Hermon, Heuvelton, Lisbon, and Louisville. Six other municipalities have drawn down a portion of their awarded funds.

***County Snowmobile Grant.*** St. Lawrence County Planning Office is the local sponsor for the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Places Snowmobile Grant. The County was awarded \$224,568.00 in snowmobile trail maintenance for the 2023-2024 grant year. We are currently in the process of applying for funds for the 2024-2025 program year. Phase 2 of the project was submitted on August 29<sup>th</sup>. Sam was communicating with the trail maintenance entities and the Board of Legislators to gather the necessary documents for submission.

***County Budget Preparation.*** Staff is again assisting with the annual preparation of the County Budget.

## **COMMUNITY / ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

***Community Development Block Grants (CDBG).*** Countywide Housing Rehabilitation Program # 5 (CHRP5) is underway. The Development Authority of North Country (DANC), the subrecipient, and the Planning Office have been meeting regularly to discuss progress. Phase 1 consists of five projects for low to moderate income households. Two projects have been completed, two projects are currently in construction, and one is scheduled. We have begun Phase II, selection process, and are reviewing applications. Once the next 4-6 projects are selected, we will do site visits to assess work needs, and test for lead, asbestos, and radon. Sam has been working on a form that both DANC and the County can use to manage the waiting list for the program and to help guide future housing rehab programing.

## **GRANTS**

***Tooley Pond Road Bridge Replacement Project.*** In May, staff worked with County Highway to prepare and submit an application to the Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) Catalyst Program for \$1,000,000 for the replacement of BIN 3340750 carrying the Tooley Pond Road over the South Branch of the Grasse River in the Town of Clare. The application scored well and was just short of being funded by that program. The NBRC has accessed additional funds from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) to fund this project at \$750,000.

***NYS SWIMS Lifeguard Grant Program.*** Staff prepared and submitted an application for \$50,000 for nine municipalities who responded to the County's inquiry regarding participation in this new program.

***Septic Repair Program.*** Program delivery has transitioned from the North Country Housing Council to SLC Public Health. To align program benchmarks with NYS, all projects completed and funds spent under this program since "Round One" have been combined. To date, 78 systems have been repaired/replaced; \$541,184 has been expended; and \$1,058,816 in program funds remain available.

***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.

## **PLANNING MATTERS**

**GIS.** Public Health reached out regarding mapping of wetlands because of an alarming rise in the number of Eastern Equine Encephalitis within the County. Sam developed a dashboard that mapped the location of the cases, wetlands in close proximity, and state owned land to help manage potential insecticide application. Sam additionally has been working with the SLC Public Health Department on a public facing GIS dashboard displaying Overdose data.

**Village of Heuvelton Comprehensive Plan.** Staff facilitated a public meeting at the Heuvelton Central School cafeteria on Wednesday, July 17<sup>th</sup>. New participants attended to give their thoughts on future goals for the Village and written sections of the Comprehensive Plan. Staff will continue to put sections of the plan together and will present them at the final public meeting scheduled for Wednesday, September 4<sup>th</sup> at Pickens Hall.

**Town of Hammond Comprehensive Plan Update.** Staff is reviewing and updating base components of the 2013 Joint Comprehensive Plan.

**Tropical Storm Debby.** On August 9<sup>th</sup> Tropical Storm Debby caused widespread and significant damage both to public infrastructure and individuals' property. The Planning Office has received an increased number of phone calls from individuals inquiring about State aid. We investigated the program and put information onto the website and have been directing people on how to receive help.

## **PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

**County Transit System.** On the 1<sup>st</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>, Matilda and Heidi held virtual work sessions with VTC staff to prepare a microtransit funding application. On the 6<sup>th</sup>, Matilda held a virtual work session with Transit staff and the Mobility Manager to finalize the 5311 audit questionnaire. The questionnaire was finalized and submitted to the DOT's auditor on the 9<sup>th</sup>. On the 9<sup>th</sup>, Matilda prepared statistics to commemorate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the County's public transit system, and shared them with The Arc's Communications Office to include in social media posts. On the 8<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>, Matilda held virtual work sessions with The Arc's transit supervisors to provide responses to deficiencies identified in a recent drug and alcohol testing audit. On the 12<sup>th</sup>, Jason presented four resolutions to the County Board of Legislators for their consideration: Authorizing the Chair to sign an operating contract awarded by the DOT; authorizing the Chair to sign a capital contract awarded by the DOT; authorizing the Chair to sign a microtransit funding application; and modifying the 2024 budget to account for additional operating revenue. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> The Arc's Transit Manager worked with Passio staff to install GPS systems and Mobile Data Terminals in newly delivered buses which will be assigned to service Routes 67 and 69 after they are wrapped with new vinyl advertisements. Throughout the month, VTC's software systems staff revised and validated the Google Transit Feed Specification (GTFS) data for uploading to Google Maps. On the 28<sup>th</sup>, Matilda and Transit Manager Rena Ryan met with County Highway staff to discuss and cost out the installation of a bus shelter at the Human Services Center.