

St. Lawrence County Planning Office
STAFF WORK REPORT
January 2023



ADVISORY BROAD SUPPORT

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board. On the 5th and 19th, Matilda listened to webinars sponsored by Cornell University and Penn State University on “Planning for Agrivoltaics in Mind: Preserving Agriculture in the Face of Growing Solar Development.”

County Planning Board (CPB). The CPB met in person on January 12th and heard a presentation from Town of Colton, and Town of Pierrepont Code Enforcement Officer Darren Richards about administering and enforcing municipal land use regulations. The Board also reviewed a proposal for a 47-lot waterfront subdivision at the former Twin Brooks Golf Course in the Village of Waddington. The subdivision was approved with conditions.

Environmental Management Council (EMC). The EMC met on January 18th. The speaker was Lucas Hanss, EMC member and staff at the Nicandri Nature Center in Massena. Lucas gave a very interesting presentation on the North Country as it existed during the Ice Ages. Evidently, our nook of the world was home to saber-toothed cats, woolly mammoths, and giant beavers, among other now-extinct creatures.

There are several vacancies on the EMC. If you, or someone you may know, is interested in working on environmental issues as a member of an advisory board to the Board of Legislators, please contact the Planning Office at 315-379-2292.

Staff have created a Facebook page for the EMC. Please check it out at <https://www.facebook.com/St-Lawrence-County-Environmental-Management-Council-105829918672342>

EAB Task Force. The Emerald Ash Borer Task Force met on January 20th. The TF’s focus in 2023 will transition toward more public outreach and education about the problems posed by ash trees on private property.

BOARD OF LEGISLATORS

SLC Water/Waste Water Infrastructure American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funding Initiative. In December, funding recommendations were made to the ARPA Committee and County Administrator by the review team. 15 applications from 14 municipalities were received for this program. \$3 million in funding has been allocated by the BOL; requests totaled \$6.9 million. Funding recommendations were presented, discussed and approved at the January Finance Committee meeting. Staff are now working on contracts for the awarded municipalities.

Countywide Broadband Assessment. Staff continue to work with a BOL committee to develop an implementation plan for the completed broadband study. In January, staff coordinated and participated in two committee meetings and multiple working group sessions. RFP 2023-04 “Expanding Access to Broadband in St. Lawrence County” was finalized and issued on 1/24/23, with a proposal due date of

3/7/2023. CPO Staff worked closely with staff at the Development Authority of the North Country to prepare and submit a “Bulk Challenge” to the FCC National Broadband Map. The bulk challenge addressed 207 unique parcels that the FCC has indicated are served that local data indicates are unserved.

OCF Repurpose Committee. Staff have been assigned to the County’s Ogdensburg Correctional Facility Repurpose Committee. The group met last on January 10th and discussed plans to ensure that the State follows through on their commitment to help with the reuse of the shuttered prisons across the State.

Jones & Laughlin (J&L) Site. No DEC technical conference calls have been held since March 24th 2022.

COMMUNITY / ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG).

The Planning Office currently operates two awards that address housing rehabilitation needs:

- SLC-CARES award to conduct housing rehabilitation for populations vulnerable to COVID-19. During October, the Planning Office requested, and was granted, a six-month extension until mid-March 2023 in order to complete the grant.
- The fourth round of the Countywide Housing Rehabilitation program (CHRP 4).
- In January, staff submitted Annual Performance Reports (APRs) for these open grants.

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. By the end of January, the Planning Office reports that 19 units have been completed, 1 unit is under construction, and 14 clients are in an application phase.

GRANTS

NYS DOT BridgeNY. Staff worked with County Highway to prepare and submit four applications:

BIN 3341700 - CR 35 over Trout Brook, Town of Potsdam (Replacement, \$3,320,179)

BIN 3341630 - CR 34 over Trout Brook, Town of Potsdam (Replacement, \$2,241,143)

BIN 3340950 - CR 22 over Sawyer Creek, Town of Fowler (Replacement, \$2,031,430)

BIN 3342040 - CR 36 over Grasse River, Louisville/Waddington/Madrid (Rehab, \$1,089,650)

NYS OASAS RFA #SUPP103-Statewide SUD System Support. Staff assisted Community Services in preparing an application for \$105,667 in October 2022 and in January was notified of an award in the amount of \$98,742.

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 (HMP). A County resolution adopting the HMP was passed in December 2022. The next and final step is to have each participating

jurisdiction also adopt the HMP by resolution.

Septic Repair Program. The County has funds from the NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC) to repair or replace deficient septic tanks within 250 feet of the St. Lawrence River in communities west of Ogdensburg, and along the lower portion of the Raquette River (from Norfolk through Massena) and the Little River (Towns of Clifton and Fine). To date, 22 projects have been completed.

PLANNING MATTERS

Homeless Housing Working Group. There is an ad-hoc group working to address issues of homelessness in St. Lawrence County. No updates in January.

Large Scale Solar. EDF Renewables announced to local media about their intent to file its 94C application for the Rich Road Solar Energy Center in the Town of Canton. The filing date triggers a 30-day window for area stakeholders to request intervenor funds to officially offer comments on the project to Administrative Law Judges who will review the application.

Waddington - Downtown revitalization grants. On January 23rd, the Planning Office was informed that the Village of Waddington had been awarded \$2.25 million under the NY Forward program. Planning staff had assisted a local committee to assemble and submit an application back in October.

Additionally, Planning staff assisted the Village in preparation and submittal of an application under the RESTORE NY Communities Initiative program to continue the restoration of Clark House, on Main Street.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

County Transit System. Throughout the first half of the month, Matilda worked with the Treasurer's Office to calculate 2022 year-end capital expenses, and worked with the Purchasing Office to issue purchase orders for four Lot K buses. During the week of the 16th, Matilda reviewed 4Q Mobility Management expenses from Volunteer Transportation Center, Inc. On the 18th, Matilda and Lisa reviewed and finalized bus ad revenue projections for 2023. On the 20th, Matilda virtually met with VTC Executive Director Sam Purington to prepare a revised Mobility Management budget as a result of recent staffing changes. During the week of the 23rd, Matilda finalized calculations for year-end operating expenses and revenues for Public Transit.

During the week of January 16th, the Office received notification from Volunteer Transportation Center, Inc. about staffing changes that affect the delivery of its Mobility Management services to the County. VTC informed the Office that its Regional Mobility Manager and Secretary positions would be eliminated, and the Executive Director will assume direct supervision over the organization's Mobility Managers, and be involved in the delivery of Mobility Management services. Staff at the Planning Office would like to express their sincere appreciation for Frank Doldo's service as the County's Mobility Manager, and as the Regional Mobility Manager for the last five years. Frank's knowledge, work ethic, and dedication to address transportation barriers contributed to a significant increase in ridership of the County's public transit system. His diligence, insight and sense of humor will be greatly missed; the Planning Office wishes him the very best in his future endeavours.