

St. Lawrence County Planning Office
STAFF WORK REPORT
January 2024



ADVISORY BOARD SUPPORT

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board. Sam working on the eight-year review of Ag District 1 and the intent to consolidate both Ag Districts 1 and 2 into a single district. Prep work includes organizing names and address for all parcels within the ag districts, preparing maps, and gathering information for the municipalities for public input regarding the process. Staff is preparing a report for the upcoming board meeting on Feb 1st regarding the Rich Road Solar Project impacts on agricultural soil and proposed agri-voltaic.

County Planning Board (CPB). The CPB met on January 11th in the Conference room on the second floor of the HSC Building. One full review project was discussed; zoning revisions for four properties located on CR 39 & SH 56 (approved). There was also a staff training session on Complete Streets.

Environmental Management Council (EMC). The EMC met January 17, 2024 at 6:00 PM in the Human Services Center. The council passed updated vision statement, and it is currently developing SMART goal projects. Met with the DEC regarding updates to wetland regulations and the impacts on the County.

Fair Housing Task Force. Preston has received data from advisory board members and reviewed relevant Census data. He has been mapping this data to add it to the draft fair housing assessment.

BOARD OF LEGISLATORS

Countywide Broadband Assessment. SLIC Network Solutions is reviewing make ready (permit) applications returned by National Grid for ARPA-funded buildouts. One committee meeting was held in January.

OCF Repurpose Committee. Staff have been assigned to the County's Ogdensburg Correctional Facility Repurpose Committee. The group met last on January 31st and took a tour of the facility. Multiple local, County and State representatives were in attendance.

Raquette River Advisory Council / West Branch St. Regis River Advisory Council. The next meetings for these boards will be held in the spring.

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 \$1,257,384.10.

County Snowmobile Grant. The Planning Office has been tasked with preparation and management of the County Snowmobile Trail grant. The NYSOPRHP awarded the county \$224,568. Sam has been processing monthly work reports in preparation for Phase 3 of the grant.

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

Solar Eclipse Preparation. The County Board of Legislators authorized the creation of an ad hoc committee to help prepare for potential mass gatherings in the County on April 8, 2024 for the solar eclipse. The County will see eclipse totality. Planning Staff will be part of the committee which will meet Feb 1st. Sam developed a GIS web map to help with the planning.

COMMUNITY / ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG). The Planning Office received notification of success for the latest CDBG application for the Countywide Housing Rehabilitation Program (CHRP 5). Sam has been proceeding with grant start up material including arranging contracts, grant administration plan, and paperwork. Sam attended to webinars regarding CDBG start up.

Lead Hazard Abatement Program. Program closeout materials were prepared and submitted to HUD for this \$1 million award from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The program was a partnership of the St. Lawrence County Planning Office, the St. Lawrence County Department of Public Health, and the North Country Housing Council. It completed lead hazard control work on 23 housing units. These units cumulatively housed four pregnant women, 35 children under six years old, another 25 children ages 6-17, and welcomed three visiting children under six years old. Two visiting children under six and 17 resident children under six had elevated blood lead levels.

GRANTS

Bridge NY. Staff assisted County Highway in preparing and submitting six applications to Bridge NY 2023. Total funds requested were \$14,496,849; Highway reports that \$8-9 million is available for projects located in St. Lawrence County. Specific applications were:

- BIN 3341940 - CR 49 over East Branch St. Regis River, Town of Stockholm - \$5,795,779 requested.
- BIN 3340660 - Eddy Pyrites Road over Harrison Creek, Town of Canton - \$3,126,925 requested.
- BIN 3341460 - County Route 15 over Lisbon Creek, Town of Oswegatchie - \$1,353,370 requested.
- BIN 3342040 - CR 36 over Grasse River, Louisville/Waddington/Madrid - \$1,791,225 requested.
- County Route 58 Culvert 58-2-1.31, Town of Parishville - \$1,157,550 requested.
- County Route 17 Culvert 17-02-1.89, Town of Russell - \$1,272,000 requested.

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, 37 projects have been completed.

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

SLC Public Health Strategic Planning Committee. Staff is participating in Public's Health strategic planning process.

GIS. Sam and Preston have been working on creating a web map identifying areas that are suitable for solar development while protecting agricultural lands, forests, and wetlands. The hope is that town planning boards and developers will utilize that map to conserve prime agricultural land. The Solar Development Mapping Tool is accessible from the County Planning Office webpage. Sam developed a solar eclipse mapping app for emergency management services planning.

Village of Heuvelton Comprehensive Plan. Staff have had preliminary discussions with the Village of Heuvelton about the preparation of a Village Comprehensive Plan. Staff will be attending a Village Board Meeting in February to further discuss the initiative.

Land Use Training. On the 18th, both Preston and Matilda participated in a Department of Environmental Conservation's webinar about underrated and underutilized tree species that are suitable for urban planting projects.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

County Transit System. During the first half of the month, Matilda met with The Arc's Dispatch staff to review and finalize December's monthly STOA report, which was used to prepare and file the 4th quarter 2023 STOA report to the Department of Transportation. In 2023, SLC Public Transit provide more than 137,000 one way trips to passengers, an increase of 37% from 2022's trip count, and a new record for the system. Matilda also prepared and distributed an annual summary of monthly trip and mile counts to local agencies with bus advertising contracts. Both Lisa and Matilda worked with staff from The Arc and Volunteer Transportation Center to calculate year-end expenses in order to make final payments for bus operations, First Mile Last Mile, and Mobility Management. On the 18th, Matilda participated in a virtual Public Transit Task Force meeting where she reviewed charts and graphs featuring 2023's trip and mileage data. During the week of the 15th and 22nd, Matilda met with VTC and The Arc representatives to discuss the transition of First Mile Last Mile scheduling from The Arc to VTC. On the 24th, Matilda and County Mobility Manager Sonja Jensen met with Public Health staff to assist with the completion of a questionnaire about the extent of public transportation infrastructure in the county. On the 26th, Matilda, Sonja and The Arc's Transit Manager Rena Ryan met with Passio staff to review the finalization of General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS) data that will be used in the Passio Go! app. During the week of the 22nd and 29th, Matilda and Sonja began finalizing sections of the draft 2024 Coordinated Transportation Plan.