

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



**ADVISORY BOARD SUPPORT**

***Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board.*** The AFPB met on February 1, where staff presented a report on the impacts of the Rich Road Solar Project on agricultural soils and proposed agri-voltaic initiatives by the developer. Additionally, Staff received input on potential comments to submit. Legal notices and maps were sent out to all the municipalities that contain Agriculture Districts informing them of the review period and acceptance of petitions to add or remove parcels. Analysis of the Ag districts is underway to identify potential additions and removals in preparation for the next AFPB meeting on April 4. Sam attended the CCE Agriculture Advisory Board meeting on February 20th.

***County Planning Board (CPB).*** The CPB met on February 8<sup>th</sup> in the Conference room on the second floor of the HSC Building. Two full review projects were discussed; a Special Use Permit for a renewable natural gas biodigester in the Town of Madrid (conditionally approved) and a ten-lot subdivision in the Town of Lawrence (denied). Staff and board members also commented on the Rich Rd. solar project application.

***Environmental Management Council (EMC).*** The EMC met on February 21st. The Council discussed with the DEC about the upcoming solar eclipse and potential issues with parking along trail heads, capacity of trails/fire towers, and ensuring safety in the Adirondacks during the event. Members reviewed the Rich Road solar planting selection for the screening to identify species / varieties that will survive the North Country winter. The council established a plan for a directory of environmental based organizations in the area with the goal of establishing communication among the groups, as well as a communication plan in general.

***Fair Housing Task Force.*** The Fair Housing Task Force met on February 27<sup>th</sup>. The Task Force discussed the expansion of the Potsdam Housing Authority, edits that have been made to the draft assessment of fair housing, and important upcoming events. The Task Force is co-sponsoring two Fair Housing workshops with CNY Fair Housing for Monday, March 25th, and collaboration with SLU fellowship student Finn Paulsen on a Fair Housing zoning analysis story map.

**BOARD OF LEGISLATORS**

***Countywide Broadband Assessment.*** SLIC Network Solutions is awaiting make ready packages from National Grid for ARPA-funded buildouts. Construction is anticipated to begin in April 2024.

***OCF Repurpose Committee.*** Staff have been assigned to the County's Ogdensburg Correctional Facility Repurpose Committee. The group met last on January 31<sup>st</sup> at the IDA Canton Offices. Discussion focused on ensuring that no additional prison closures happen in St. Lawrence County.

***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 \$1,303,634.10.

***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 is part of the planning committee which meet Feb 1<sup>st</sup>. 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). The grant agreement and forms have been submitted and accepted by the state. Staff is now working with the Development Authority of the North Country reviewing surveys sent to the waiting list to identify most need. Potential participants will receive an application and possibly a site visit. Interested members of the public are directed to be added to the waiting list with DANC. Staff is reviewing the Grant Administration Manual and following up on the Environmental Review in preparation to receive funds.

***Lead Hazard Abatement Program.*** The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) issued a project closeout letter to the County.

## **GRANTS**

***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, 38 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 attended a Village Board meeting to discuss the logistics of a comprehensive plan for the Village. The Heuvelton Village Mayor has signed the Memorandum of Understanding with the Planning Office, and staff will meet with the Village's comprehensive plan committee on April 2<sup>nd</sup>.

## **PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

***County Transit System.*** During the first half of the month, Matilda delivered on the job training to The Arc's newly hired Dispatch staff on how to enter daily trip and mileage data for every Public Transit route. Also throughout the month, Matilda and County Mobility Manager Sonja Jensen met to finish draft sections of the County's 2024 Coordinated Transportation Plan. On the 6<sup>th</sup>, Matilda participated in a virtual meeting with The Arc's CEO and Communications Manager to finalize a scope of work for Public Transit's marketing and outreach efforts for 2024. Throughout the month, Matilda met with a prospective trainer and The Arc's Transportation Managers to discuss topics and dates to schedule in-person supervisor training. During the week of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>, Matilda reviewed 2023 Public Transit revenue and expense accounts to calculate 2024 rollover amounts for the County budget. During the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the month, Matilda participated in virtual work sessions with Passio to finalize Public Transit's General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS) for a mobile app Passio Go! During the last two weeks in February, Matilda entered draft figures for the 5311 Annual Report for 2023. During the week of the 26<sup>th</sup>, Matilda reviewed Volunteer Transportation Center's First Mile Last Mile trip data and processed an invoice for payment.