

St. Lawrence County Planning Office
STAFF WORK REPORT
February 2019



ADVISORY BOARD SUPPORT

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board (AFPB). On the 6th, Matilda delivered a presentation to members of Dekalb's Town Board and Planning Board about preserving farmland when siting solar arrays. A similar presentation was delivered to an agriculture class at St. Lawrence University on the 21st. The AFPB met on the 7th and discussed the County acquiring equipment and preparing a protocol to respond to ag spills. The Board also heard a proposal to pursue funds from Farm Credit East to sponsor a high school student tour of agricultural operations and businesses. Matilda also announced the County will accept petitions in March from property owners to add land to Agricultural Districts 1 and 2. On the 11th Matilda attended a Local Foods Winter Social sponsored by Cooperative Extension at The TAUNY Center. The Office assisted with the preparation of the event by printing service agency posters that highlighted the recent accomplishments of local food initiatives. On the 27th, Matilda met with Town of Canton representatives to help finalize drafting their solar law.

County Planning Board (CPB). The Planning Board met on the 14th in Canton and heard four full review projects: a special use permit for a topsoil mine in the Residential-Agricultural District; a zoning map and text revision in the Town of Stockholm to expand the Commercial zone; a special use permit and site plan review for a convenience store with gas sales in the Town of Brasher and Town of Stockholm; and zoning revision to allow motor sports in the Rural Zone in the Town of Stockholm. The zoning revisions were returned for local action with non-binding comments; the site plan and special use permit for the convenience store with gas sales was approved with conditions; and the special use permit for a topsoil mine in the Town of Norfolk was returned for local action with non-binding comments.

Environmental Management Council (EMC). The EMC met in February. The speaker was Matthew Biondolillo, a Certified Ecological Restoration Practitioner. He provided a progress report concerning the St. Lawrence River Shoreline Resilience Study.

The ***Emerald Ash Borer Task Force (EABTF)*** met in February. Discussion involved conducting drive-by surveys of ash trees along roads in areas expected to see the first wave of Emerald Ash Borers (i.e., communities along the St. Lawrence River).

Fair Housing Task Force (FHTF). The FH Task Force met on February 28th; they reviewed a draft agenda for the Housing Advocacy Training session scheduled for April.

BOARD OF LEGISLATORS

Clean Energy Communities Initiative. Staff from Planning and Buildings & Grounds collaborated to complete and submit an application for \$250,000 to complete a series of energy-efficiency projects in County buildings, including indoor and outdoor LED upgrades. The County has received a NYS contract, which is under review and awaiting authorization for signature.

Jones & Laughlin (J&L) Site.

- Staff provide project oversight and management for redevelopment activities at J&L.
- Staff continued to facilitate administrative aspects of Phase 2.
- Staff participated in a DEC technical (clean-up) conference call on February 26th.
- Total funds committed for Phase 2 stands at \$1,715,000.
- Contractor has de-mobilized for the season. Structures visible from SH 3 are completely down; debris piles will be re-positioned for crushing in spring 2019. DEC presence reduced for season; wells will be gauged manually through the winter.

Space Study. Staff continue to assist the Space Committee with space allocation. More work in this arena is anticipated in the coming months.

Office Summary Presentation. Staff presented a summary of the work of the office, its major program areas, its success metrics and its organizational structure to the St. Lawrence County Board of Legislators at the February Operations Committee meeting.

COMMUNITY / ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Abbé Picquet Trail Project Management. County Planning Staff is helping with the financial administration for a trail project in the City of Ogdensburg. The majority of the work has been completed, however an extension was requested and received to allow for the completion of all paperwork and a final assessment of the tree plantings in the 2019.

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG). The Planning Office administers two open grants: Direct Homeownership Assistance Program (DHAP 22) and the Countywide Housing Rehabilitation Program, Round 2 (CHRP 2) for housing rehabilitation. Both are countywide awards.

At the end of January, the Planning Office was notified that it had received one award under the NYS CDBG program: \$300,000 to fund a septic tank replacement program for low-income households. During February, staff began to complete the administrative activities required to obtain a Release of Funds.

At the end of the month, the Planning Office was notified that an application period for another round of CDBG funding would begin in March; applications would be due at the end of April.

Lead Hazard Abatement Program. Following the partial shutdown of the Federal government, staff has engaged in an abbreviated, albeit intense, series of events (webinars, communications, work plan development and registrations for accountability in national databases). Staff awaits notification from HUD regarding scheduling of negotiation sessions to finalize this grant. This \$1 million award from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development will provide lead-based paint stabilization or abatement assistance to up to 52 households throughout the county. The grant will help address lead-based paint hazards that are present in homes with children living with elevated lead levels. The grant award also includes funds for the County Public Health Department to raise public awareness about the dangers of lead-based paint hazards through community outreach and education.

State Septic Repair and Replacement Program. Work will continue on this initiative in the spring.

GRANTS MANAGER

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.

Miscellaneous. Heidi consulted with SLC Community Services regarding two opportunities and provided narrative assistance for one: the 2018 State Opioid Response (SOR) Grant. Heidi also consulted with and modestly assisted CCE of SLC on a USDA Rural Business Development Grant application.

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM

County Mapping Upgrades. County staff continue to discuss a re-tooling of GIS software for the County. A working group met to discuss software options with a vendor on February 7th.

State Ortho Imagery Capture. Staff received notice that the State would be updating the ortho, or top down, imagery for the County in 2019. Depending on funding, there may be an opportunity to upgrade the imagery to a higher resolution for the higher population areas in the County.

PLANNING MATTERS

North Country Energy Taskforce. Staff continue to work with the Taskforce on how to fund a Green and Healthy Homes Initiative.

Potsdam Local Government Conference. Staff, along with CPB member Dawn Mullaney, sit on the planning committee for the annual Local Government Conference. The Committee will meet again in March to start planning for the October conference.

Shoreline Resilience Study. The project's first stakeholder meeting was held on February 5th at the Dobisky Center in Ogdensburg. Approximately 30 people participated.

Town of Brasher. The Town of Brasher signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Office for the preparation of subdivision regulations. The Town has formed a committee to review sample regulations of other towns in the county, and is scheduled to meet with Matilda in March.

Town of Fowler. Keith completed the draft of a Development Guide for the Town that would look to properly codify several preferred options, would be defensible if legally challenged, and would support the efforts of the Town to ensure safe, sound and compatible land use development in various geographic areas of the Town. The "first draft" document is now pending with the Town Attorney.

Town of Morristown Comprehensive Plan. Staff grouped SWOT results from the November outreach and presented the information to the Town's Comprehensive Planning Committee. The Office also assigned topic areas for each staff member to begin drafting for the Plan.

Village of Gouverneur. The Planning Office has a signed memorandum of understanding with the Village to do a comprehensive revision of Gouverneur's zoning regulations. Staff extended this MOU through April 2019 to allow the Town to bring a new Board member up to speed on the revisions.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

County Transit System. Throughout February, Matilda assisted the County's Mobility Manager with the drafting on the County's Coordinated Transportation Plan. Matilda also drafted and submitted a memorandum to the Department of Transportation to retire two buses that will be sold for scrap, and assisted with processing payment for four buses that were delivered to the County earlier in the month. Staff is also working on increasing accountability for management aspects of the grant relative to performance reports and maintenance and looks to build off the work already being done by the service provider. Staff is also reviewing a contract proposal for First-Mile/Last-Mile services and Mobility Management Services.