

**St. Lawrence County Planning Office**  
**STAFF WORK REPORT**  
**March 2023**



**ADVISORY BROAD SUPPORT**

***Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board.*** In preparation for the March 9<sup>th</sup> Planning Board meeting, Matilda assisted with the review for the Town of Canton’s zoning revisions, and updated their regulations for solar energy facilities. The revisions incorporated suggestions from Cornell University’s and Penn State University Extension’s “Planning with Agrivoltaics in Mind” webinar series. On the 20<sup>th</sup>, Matilda reviewed the revisions with two Town Board members. During the week of the 20<sup>th</sup>, Matilda and Lisa prepared and distributed a press release to local media reminding the public that the last day to submit requests to add land to Ag Districts 1 and 2 is March 30<sup>th</sup>.

***County Planning Board (CPB).*** The CPB met on March 9<sup>th</sup> in the County Board of Legislators Chambers. The Board welcomed its newest member, Ed Fuhr from the Town of Colton. Two full review projects were discussed; a land use code revision for the Town of Morristown and a zoning code revision for the Town of Canton. Both initiated lots of discussion, especially the revised solar regulations for the Town of Canton. Both projects were conditionally approved.

***Environmental Management Council (EMC).*** The EMC did not meet during March.

The members of the EMC have begun to prepare to conduct a “visioning” exercise, which should guide the Council in its future work. Such a Visioning exercise was last conducted in 2013, and was found to be very helpful. To see the 2013 Visioning report, see here:

<https://stlawco.org/sites/default/files/Planning/EMC%20Visioning%20Process%202013%20-%20approved%2011.20.13.pdf>

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>

***Fair Housing Task Force.*** During the month of March, Matilda and John worked with CNY Fair Housing staff to reserve a venue, and to reach out to Fair Housing Task Force members, and to area organizations about the scheduling of a Fair Housing for Landlords training session on April 5<sup>th</sup> at the Dobisky Center in Ogdensburg.

**BOARD OF LEGISLATORS**

***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. Staff have issued and collected executed contracts from the municipalities awarded funds and submitted them for the Chair’s signature.

***Countywide Broadband Assessment.*** In March, staff facilitated two broadband committee meetings and reviewed and scored proposals to RFP 2023-04 “Expanding Access to Broadband in St. Lawrence

County.” Award recommendations were presented to the ARPA Committee and brought before the 3/27 Finance meeting. Staff also participated in a regional listening session on digital equity with the NYS ConnectALL Office.

***OCF Repurpose Committee.*** Staff have been assigned to the County’s Ogdensburg Correctional Facility Repurpose Committee. The group met last on February 17<sup>th</sup> and took a tour of the facility. Multiple local, County and State representatives were in attendance.

## **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 March, the NYS Office of Community Renewal conducted a virtual monitoring visit to review grant files, and procedures. Later in the month, the Planning Office was informed by OCR that the project would close on March 14th.
- The fourth round of the Countywide Housing Rehabilitation program (CHRP 4). During March, the NYS Office of Community Renewal conducted a virtual monitoring visit to review grant files, and procedures.

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

## **GRANTS**

***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.

***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, 23 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 March.

***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. The official filing was made on March 31<sup>st</sup>.

## **PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

*County Transit System.* On the 7<sup>th</sup>, Matilda met with The Arc Transit Manager's for Jefferson County to discuss fleet management issues for St. Lawrence County Public Transit. On the 9<sup>th</sup>, Matilda assisted Mobility Manager Sonja Jensen with the facilitation of a virtual stakeholder meeting to update the County's Coordinated Transportation Plan. During the week of the 13<sup>th</sup>, Matilda began preparing the 5311 Annual Report for 2022, which was reviewed with Public Transit partners on the 16<sup>th</sup>, and virtually presented to DOT staff on the 20<sup>th</sup>. The Annual Report was signed by the County Treasurer on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and submitted electronically to the State. On the 16<sup>th</sup>, the County received proposals from a variety of vendors for the installation and operation of: mobile wifi, Automatic Vehicle Location software, security cameras, and Automated Voice Announcement system for the bus fleet. On the 24<sup>th</sup>, Matilda participated in a meeting to discuss the installation of the Judson Street bus shelter that will begin during the week of the 27<sup>th</sup>. Matilda consulted with The Arc staff and Mobility Manager on the rerouting of buses and temporary relocation of the DSS bus stop on Judson Street for the duration of the construction schedule. During the final week in March, Matilda reviewed applications from SLU Public Interest Corps candidates to intern for the office this summer. The selected candidate will collect socio-economic and demographic data, and assist with the update of the County's Coordinated Transportation Plan, and the Assessment of Fair Housing.