

St. Lawrence County Planning Office
STAFF WORK REPORT
March 2024



ADVISORY BOARD SUPPORT

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board. The AFPB did not meet in March and the next meeting will be April 4. Staff performed an eight year review for Ag District 2, in addition to the annual review of Ag district 1. During the month of March, staff analyzed property tax assessment, property classes, aerial imagery, zoning, soil data, and processed requests in creating a report for the eight year review. Staff proposed making both districts into one agricultural district so an eight year review only needs to occur once a cycle. Staff attend an American Farm Trust presentation in Lowville regarding solar and agriculture. Many expressed interest in the *Solar Development Mapping Tool*.

County Planning Board (CPB). The CPB met on March 14th in the Conference room on the second floor of the HSC Building. Two full review projects were discussed; a Special Use Permit for an expansion of the Potsdam Housing Authority in the Village of Potsdam (conditionally approved) and a Special Use Permit for a campground and wedding venue in the Town and Village of Gouverneur (conditionally approved).

Environmental Management Council (EMC). The EMC met on March 20, 2024 in classroom A of the Human Services Center. The Council discussed upcoming solar eclipse concerns to be shared with the eclipse taskforce. DEC reported about Air Products Hydrogen Facility proposed in Massena. An assessment on potential pollution and water consumption revealed no major concerns. The EMC is going to collaborate with the Youth Bureau on a Trash Dash for Earth Day. Staff reviewed and received feedback on the *Solar Development Mapping Tool*. The council continues its project of a directory and communication plan.

Fair Housing Task Force. The Fair Housing Task Force sponsored two fair housing workshops put on by CNY Fair Housing on Monday, March 25. These workshops focused on best practices for landlords as well as tenants rights. Work on the final draft of the Fair Housing Assessment is still ongoing.

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. Staff facilitated one committee meeting, two working group meetings and participated in four webinars.

OCF Repurpose Committee. Staff have been assigned to the County's Ogdensburg Correctional Facility Repurpose Committee. The group met last on March 20th 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 \$1,350,610.64.

County Snowmobile Grant. The grant has entered into phase 3, and beginning of preparation for phase 1, both due on May 31st. Phase 3 involves processing trail maintenance records, receipts, and financial records to distribute the remaining 30% payment of funds. Phase 1 requires geographic information systems (GIS) analysis to map routes of trails for the next funding cycle.

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 the mass gatherings in the County on April 8, 2024 for the solar eclipse. The County will see eclipse totality. As the date approaches, meeting frequency increased to weekly meetings with the County Emergency Services and numerous others representing multiple departments, towns, and regional staff. County has put major efforts into ensuring health and safety of our residences and anticipated visitors. The Planning Office will help staff the EOC during the event.

COMMUNITY / ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG). Countywide Housing Rehabilitation Program # 5 is underway. Staff submitted and was approved for a request for release of funds with NYS Office of Community Renewal. The Development Authority of North Country, the subrecipient, and Planning Office has been meeting regularly to identify applicants and review scheduling. The target for phase one is six projects, with four applications assessed and approved and two more in process. Home inspections, draft scope plans, and lead based paint/ asbestos surveys are expected to be completed in April.

GRANTS

Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) Catalyst Program. Staff worked with County Highway to develop and submit a pre-application for \$1,000,000 for the replacement of BIN 340750 carrying the Tooley Pond Road over the South Branch of the Grasse River in the Town of Clare.

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 created *The Solar Development Mapping Tool* to help protect agriculture in the county. It is accessible from the County Planning Office webpage. Sam and Preston attended a presentation from the American Farm Trust in Lowville, and multiple organizations expressed a desire to replicate the mapping tool in their county. The tool has received feedback from County the Planning Board, Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board, and Environmental Management Council. Received requests to demonstrate mapping tool from towns in the County. Staff will present the development of the tool and demonstrate how to use it at a regional GIS conference held at Clarkson University on April 12.

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 2nd.

Town of Hammond Comprehensive Plan Update. Staff attended a Hammond Town Board meeting to discuss an update to the Town and Village's 2013 Joint Comprehensive Plan.

Home Consortium Meeting. Staff attended the annual Home Consortium meeting in Watertown on March 20th. The group discussed the allocation of approximately \$900,000 in housing repair funds. The funds will be distributed to 4 local housing agencies in the St. Lawrence, Lewis and Jefferson Counties.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

County Transit System. During the month Matilda prepared and presented the 5311 Annual Report for 2023. The report was signed by the County Treasurer and submitted to DOT. A public hearing was held on the County's 2024 Coordinated Transportation Plan. The mobile app Passio Go! went live during the month and training was provided on how to use it. Matilda reviewed Volunteer Transportation Center's First Mile Last Mile trip data and processed an invoice for payment. Discussion on College Connector routes occurred.