

St. Lawrence County Planning Office
STAFF WORK REPORT
March 2019



ADVISORY BOARD SUPPORT

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board (AFPB). During the month of March, the County received requests from two property owners to add land to Agricultural Districts 1 and 2. These requests will be reviewed by the Farmland Protection Board at its April 4th meeting. Matilda worked with Cooperative Extension Executive Patrick Ames on the preparation and submission of a Farm Credit East Ag Enhancement funding application to sponsor the third “Cultivating Careers in Agriculture.” If funded, the tour will be an overnight tour of farm operations and agribusinesses in St. Lawrence County for 9th and 10th grade students.

County Planning Board (CPB). The Planning Board met on the 14th in Canton and heard two full reviews, and one informal review project: parking lot expansion and renovations for Northern Federal Credit Union in Gouverneur; an interpretation for an auto repair business in Gouverneur; and an informal review for renovations to an existing McDonald’s Restaurant in Gouverneur. All three projects were returned for local action with non-binding comments.

Environmental Management Council (EMC). The EMC met in March. The speaker was Lee Harper, Ph.D., President of Riveredge Environmental Inc. Dr. Harper spoke about several recent projects, including at Mud Lake, Higley Flow and Norwood Lake, where he treated waterbodies for Eurasian Watermilfoil.

On March 26th, the EMC presented the movie “Plastic Paradise: The Great Pacific Garbage Patch” at the Canton Unitarian-Universalist Church. Fifteen people attended, then stayed for a discussion about issues regarding single-use and non-recyclable plastics. The EMC intends to hold additional “Watch Parties” in locations around the County.

The EMC is planning to work with the Ogdensburg Tree Commission to hold joint Earth Day/Arbor Day events in Ogdensburg. These events will take place on Friday, April 26th.

The ***Emerald Ash Borer Task Force (EABTF)*** met in March. Discussion included a report on drive-by surveys of ash trees along roads in communities along the St. Lawrence River; a report on cutting and peeling 200 sentinel trees in Akwesasne; upcoming events; etc.

A tree-peeling event was held in Ogdensburg during the month; no EABs were found.

Fair Housing Task Force (FHTF). Staff are working with the Chair and several consultants to develop a ***Housing Advocacy Training Workshop*** that will be held on Wednesday, April 3rd on the campus of St. Lawrence University in Canton. The consultants involved include Cheryl Shenkle-O’Neill, Executive Director of Snowbelt Housing Corp. in Lowville; and Joseph Paparone, Lead Organizer with the Labor-Religion Coalition in Albany. Approx. 30 persons have registered for this half-day workshop.

BOARD OF LEGISLATORS

Census 2020. Staff presented to the Board of Legislators concerning the importance of a Complete Count effort across the County, in order to achieve a full count of population during the 2020 Census.

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 is working with NYSERDA to finalize a contract. County Staff meet with a NYSERDA media team that has chosen to spotlight the energy conservation and efficiency initiatives of St. Lawrence County.

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 March 26th.
- Total funds committed for Phase 2 stands at \$1,715,000.
- Contractor anticipates returning to the site within the week, snowload permitting. DEC anticipates being back on site full time in mid-April; EPA will return for monitoring and tree planting when weather permits. Work on the DEC feasibility study for cleanup options continues.

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

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 2019.

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG). The Planning Office administers one open grant: the Countywide Housing Rehabilitation Program, Round 2 (CHRP 2) for housing rehabilitation.

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 March, staff worked on the administrative activities required to obtain a Release of Funds.

Staff are working on an application for another round of CDBG funding; this would fund the 23rd round of the County's Direct Homeownership Assistance Program. Applications will 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 has restarted on this program with 8 new participants securing engineering work for septic replacement.

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.

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM

County Mapping Upgrades. County staff continue to discuss a re-tooling of GIS software for the County. A working group will continue to meet to discuss software options.

State Ortho Imagery Capture. Staff received notice that the State will not be doing an image capture in 2019. The capture has been rescheduled for 2020.

Route Mapping for County Transit System. Clarkson University Instructor Bill Olsen offered to assist the County Rural Transit System with the creation of route maps by assigning the task as a classroom assignment for his GIS students.

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 met in March to start planning for the October conference.

Shoreline Resilience Study. Consultants hired for this project are drafting the Study Report and preparing for the second Stakeholders Meeting, scheduled for May.

Town of Brasher. Matilda met with the Town of Brasher's Subdivision Committee on the 13th to review and begin drafting subdivision regulations.

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. Matilda and Jason met with the Morristown Comprehensive Planning Committee by phone on the 19th. They discussed and finalized the community questionnaire that will be posted online for residents to complete, and reviewed and discussed the agenda and announcement for the next community outreach meeting that is scheduled for April 23rd.

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 March, Matilda met with the County’s Mobility Manager to finalize the County’s draft Coordinated Transportation Plan. A public hearing to receive comment on the draft plan was held on the 21st and 25th. Twenty-three persons attended the hearing on the 21st, four persons attended the hearing on the 25th. To date, public feedback on the plan includes: adding propane buses to the County’s fleet; providing weekly service from Piercefield to Canton or Potsdam; notifying libraries of route/schedule changes; adding service between Madrid and Massena; and re-examining how bus stops are established. On the 8th, Matilda and Frank Doldo met with IT staff to discuss the preparation of an RFP for the installation of wireless modem routers on each bus so that riders may enjoy free wireless internet. Matilda also met with the directors of Purchasing and the Highway Department to examine the possibility of allowing the County’s bus fleet to refuel at the Highway Department.