

St. Lawrence County Planning Office
STAFF WORK REPORT
April 2024



ADVISORY BOARD SUPPORT

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board. The AFPB met on April 4, and Sam gave a report on the eight-year review for Ag District 1 and the annual review of Ag District 2. The Board voted to approve modifications. The Ag and Farmland Protection Board is proposing to consolidate the two Ag Districts into one, reducing the number of eight year review to only once a cycle. Sam organized and mailed out proposed changes to affected property owners. Sam participated in CCE’s quarterly Ag Advisory Board meeting on April 17. Sam attended a co-use brainstorm event held at the Best Western in Canton on April 22, regarding the Rich Road Solar Development, and shared suggestions on agri-voltaics.

County Planning Board (CPB). The CPB met on April 11th in the Conference room on the second floor of the HSC Building. Two full review projects were discussed; zoning amendments to solar energy regulations in the Town of Waddington (conditionally approved) and a local law to regulate battery energy storage systems (conditionally approved).

Environmental Management Council (EMC). The EMC met on April 17, 2024 in classroom A of the Human Services Center. Dr. Baldwin reviewed new funding to research the spread of the invasive species water chestnut along the Oswegatchie River adjacent to Black Lake. There is concern that it will spread into Black Lake. Dr. Baldwin will monitor for instances of spread. The Council discussed hosting a workshop on iMap Invasives, a citizen science project to map locations of invasives. The Council also discussed National Grid infrastructure and solar development throughout the county with particular concern for battery storage. The EMC collaborated with the Youth Bureau on a Trash Dash for Earth Day and Sam participated at the Potsdam event on April 27, picking up trash along County Route 59. The council continues its project of a directory and communication plan.

Fair Housing Task Force. On the 16th, Matilda and Preston traveled with two newly appointed Fair Housing Task Force members PJ Herne and James Galasinski to Jefferson County’s Fair Housing Roundtable event in Watertown. Roundtable presentations were delivered by newly hired Jefferson County Housing Director Jillian Redder, and CNY Fair Housing Executive Director Sally Santangelo. On the 19th, Matilda and Preston held a work session to draft goals and actions to include in the County Fair Housing Assessment that is currently being prepared.

BOARD OF LEGISLATORS

Countywide Broadband Assessment. Staff delivered an update to the BOL on 4/22/24: it is believed there are now less than 500 unserved households in the County (approximately 1.1% of occupied housing units; an application to NYS ConnectALL County Partnerships Program that may fund up to 48 additional previously unserved households is anticipated. Staff have coordinated with DANC on “challenges” to the FCC Broadband Map and NYS ConnectALL/PSC maps. SLIC Network Solutions

anticipates construction on ARPA-funded projects to begin in earnest in May; some construction has already been initiated (97 previously unserved households already have service). In April, staff facilitated one committee meeting, two working group meetings and participated in two 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 the 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 saw eclipse totality. As the date grew near, frequent meetings with the County Emergency Services and numerous others representing multiple departments, towns, and regional staff were held. The Planning Office helped staff the EOC during the event. The event was a success with no major incidents or injuries.

COMMUNITY / ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG). Countywide Housing Rehabilitation Program # 5 is underway. The Development Authority of North Country, the subrecipient, and the Planning Office have been meeting regularly to discuss progress. Six houses of low to moderate income individuals have had applications submitted and reviewed. The houses were inspected and DANC is developing a scope of work. The next steps will be to have the properties tested for lead, asbestos, and radon. Jason and Sam travelled to Lake George on April 29th to meet with the NYS Office of Community Renewal, to learn about CDBG funding, and potentially other funding programs for housing.

GRANTS

Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) Catalyst Program. The County was invited to submit a full application for \$1,000,000 for the replacement of BIN 3340750 carrying the Tooley Pond Road over the South Branch of the Grasse River in the Town of Clare. Staff are working with County Highway to prepare and submit this application by May 3, 2024.

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 has been participating in Public's Health strategic planning process; the document is now complete.

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. The tool has received feedback from County the Planning Board, Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board, and Environmental Management Council. Sam presented the tool and demonstrated how to use it at a regional GIS conference held at Clarkson University on April 12. Jason, Sam and Preston, are working on new projects for both Soil and Water Conservation District and SLC Department of Public Health regarding county owned property reforestation and an overdose GIS dashboard respectively.

Village of Heuvelton Comprehensive Plan. Staff met with the Village's comprehensive plan committee on April 2nd to overview the process of creating a comprehensive plan. Staff received comments on preliminary work they had done before the meeting including maps and a survey, and brainstormed ideas from the committee about what they liked best and what they believed could be changed about Heuvelton. The next meeting will be the SWOT meeting on Wednesday, May 1st in the Heuvelton Central School cafeteria.

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.

Town of Morristown Comprehensive Plan Review. Staff are working with a committee from the Town of Morristown to review and refresh the implementation matrix from their 2019 Comprehensive Plan.

St. Lawrence Leadership Institute. Staff attended the April meeting of the group at the Wanakena Ranger School. Jason was asked to present on the environment along with two other panelists. The presentation revolved around the role of the County's Environmental Management Council and solar development in the County.

Adirondack Planning Forum. Staff attended this 2nd annual forum in Saranac Lake on April 25, 2024. Sessions attended by staff included: APA Jurisdiction; Comprehensive Planning; Floodplain Regulations for Local Boards; SEQR; Visitor Use Management; Flood Risk Reduction and Resiliency; Maximizing Use of Developable Lands in Hamlets; and Telecommunications and Digital Infrastructure.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

County Transit System. During the first week of the month, Matilda prepared and submitted the County's first quarter STOA report to the Department of Transportation. On the 10th, Matilda delivered in person training to newly hired dispatch staff at The Arc. On the 11th and 15th, Matilda and Sonja held a work session to draft revised contract budgets for SUNY Potsdam and Clarkson University shuttle service. Those revised budgets were reviewed with The Arc staff on the 18th. On the 19th, Matilda and Sonja presented a new contract budget with SUNY Canton representatives. Also on the 19th, Matilda and Lisa reviewed the projected bus ad revenue for 2024. During the week of the 22nd, Matilda traveled to Spokane to attend National RTAP's Capital Planning workshop.