

St. Lawrence County Planning Office
STAFF WORK REPORT
April 2019



ADVISORY BOARD SUPPORT

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board (AFPB). At its meeting on the 4th, the AFPB reviewed three requests to add land to Ag Districts 1 and 2, and recommended parcels to be added to Ag District 2. The Board also heard and supported a request from Dan Huntley and the Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust about pursuing Dairy Transitions Conservation Easement funding for the Huntley farm in Pierrepont. A public hearing to receive comments on the Ag Board's Ag District recommendation was held on the 16th; no one attended the hearing, and staff did not receive any written comments. Cooperative Extension informed Matilda the Potsdam branch of Farm Credit East donated \$1,500 to sponsor a Cultivating Careers in Agriculture tour for 9th and 10th grade students.

County Planning Board (CPB). The Planning Board met on the 11th in Canton and heard nine full review projects: An area variance and special use permit for a mud bogging facility in Stockholm; a use variance for a double-sided billboard in Stockholm; three site plan reviews for solar arrays in DeKalb; and four site plan reviews for solar arrays in the Town of Gouverneur. The mud bogging pit was approved with conditions; the billboard was denied, and all solar arrays were approved with conditions and non-binding comments. On the 30th, Jason and Matilda delivered a two-hour land use training session for municipal planning boards and zoning boards of appeal. Forty-five persons attended the event.

Environmental Management Council (EMC). The EMC met in April. The speaker was David Fisher, local dairy farmer (Mapleview Farm in Madrid), and President of the NYS Farm Bureau. Fisher reported that farms are getting bigger, on average, while smaller farms have been going out of business. In like manner, there are fewer cows, but they each produce more milk than previously. Fisher spoke about how farmers use GPS, develop plans for application of pesticides and fertilizers, etc. Therefore, over-application of these materials is minimized. He emphasized that farmers use and depend on research and advice from land-grant colleges.

Planning staff set up EMC displays at two local events in April: the Sustainability Fair, held April 6th at SUNY Potsdam, and the Green Living Fair, held at SUNY Canton on April 20th.

On April 26th, Planning staff and EMC members were in Ogdensburg to observe "Earth Day/Arbor Day" with the Ogdensburg Tree Commission and the public. Staff made a presentation about Emerald Ash Borers.

On April 29th, the EMC presented the movie "Plastic Paradise: The Great Pacific Garbage Patch" at Pickens Hall in Heuvelton. Approximately 10 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 Emerald Ash Borer Task Force (EABTF) met in April. Discussion included confirmation of EABs in every community along the St. Lawrence River. Staff have committed to making presentations about EABs to every community along the River.

Fair Housing Task Force (FHTF). The Housing Advocacy Training Workshop was held on Wednesday, April 3rd on the campus of St. Lawrence University in Canton. The speakers included Cheryl Shenle-O'Neill, Executive Director of Snowbelt Housing Corp. in Lowville; Fred Hanss, Director of Planning and Development, Village of Potsdam; and Joseph Paparone, Lead Organizer with the Labor-Religion Coalition in Albany. Approx. 25 persons attended this half-day workshop.

BOARD OF LEGISLATORS

Census 2020. The Board of Legislators approved a resolution to establish a Complete Count Committee, in an effort 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. County and NYSERDA staff finalized the contract in April and work should begin in the next few months.

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 site walk-through with the contractor and DANC staff on April 26th and a stakeholders meeting on April 29th.
- Staff participated in a DEC technical (clean-up) conference call on April 30th.
- Total funds committed for Phase 2 stands at \$1,715,000.

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 April, staff submitted an application for another round of CDBG funding; this would fund the 23rd round of the County's Direct Homeownership Assistance Program.

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 was finally able to engage with HUD staff on final review and revisions of the budget and work plan. Budget modifications are pending before the Board of Legislators and the environmental review is underway. Staff will be attending required training in May in Minneapolis. 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 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. The Soil and Water Conservation District has offered an additional \$20,000 to help cover administrative and program delivery costs.

Jefferson Community College Center for Community Studies. Matilda attended the advisory board's quarterly meeting on the 2nd in Watertown and heard updates from Center staff on current projects, and to help identify potential county residents who may be interested in serving on the board.

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. Provided assistance to SLC Community Services for a second application to the 2018 State Opioid Response (SOR) Grant. Participated in a brownfields discussion with NYPA's Revitalization Working Group at the County Chamber office on April 4th.

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM

County Mapping Upgrades. County staff continue to discuss a re-tooling of GIS software for the County. A working group met with representatives from ESRI, the company that provides GIS software to the County.

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. Matilda has been preparing public transit route maps as time allows and is comparing the "bread crumb" reports from bus-mounted GPS units to the 511 draft routes prepared by a DOT consultant.

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. Work continues with planning 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 17th to draft subdivision regulations and is tentatively scheduled to meet on May 29th to finalize the revisions for Town Board review and comment.

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. Throughout the first half of April, Matilda and Denise completed a 2018 land use table of all parcels and their classifications in the Town and Village of Morristown. The office staffed a second community meeting in Morristown on the 23rd for a visioning and "how do we get there" exercise.

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 May 2019 to allow the Town to bring a new Board member up to speed on the revisions.

New York State Zoo at Thompson Park. Staff facilitated a planning and visioning retreat for the Zoo Board of Directors and is in progress with a report on the visioning process.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

County Transit System. Throughout April, Matilda prepared a contract for Mobility Management Services to be approved by the Board of Legislators; prepared and submitted a draft 5311 report for 2018 to the DOT; presented the Coordinated Transportation Plan to the County Legislators on the 8th; corresponded with Franklin County, the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe and the Town of Massena to support the creation of the Massena shuttle; and met with IT and purchasing staff to begin preparing a Request for Proposals for the installation of wireless modems on the County's public transit bus fleet. During the week of the 15th, Denise submitted the County's quarterly STOA report to the DOT.

Emergency Services. Keith has been tasked as the interim Director of Emergency Services and some of the requirements of that Office have redirected his attention and energy temporarily away from the work of the County Planning Office.