

St. Lawrence County Planning Office
STAFF WORK REPORT
June 2023



NEW STAFF WELCOME!

As was mentioned in last month's report Preston Santimaw (Planner 1) and Samuel Joseph (Planner 2) both began their employment with the County on Tuesday, May 30th. Sam will be working with the EMC and on some community development projects, Preston will be staffing the Planning Board and Fair Housing Taskforce, amongst other tasks. Both have shown a keen interest in Planning Office activities.

ADVISORY BROAD SUPPORT

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board. On the 5th, the Board of Legislators passed a resolution accepting requested additions to Ag Districts 1 and 2. Throughout the month, Matilda updated mapping shapefiles of both districts, and notified affected property owners and their associated assessors. Matilda also prepared and submitted a report to the Commissioner of Agriculture and Markets to certify the additions. On the 8th, Matilda and Jason each participated in a virtual interview with staff from Cornell University about the siting of solar energy facilities on farmland. Throughout the month, Matilda and Sam worked with Cornell Cooperative Extension Executive Director Pat Ames to schedule an agricultural tour that is set for Friday, August 18th. On the 26th, Matilda, Sam and Pat visited with this year's tour hosts: Meg Bowdish with Never Tire Farm; Bob and Linda Zufall with Robert Zufall Farm; and Peter Braun with Woodcrest Dairy, LLC.

County Planning Board (CPB). The CPB met on June 8th in the second floor conference room of the Public Safety Building. Three full review projects were discussed: a special use permit for No Dogs Left Behind in the Town of Canton (denied); a review of a Bio-Digester Local Law in the Town of Canton (conditionally approved); a Site Plan Review of a parking expansion at Hosmer's Marina in the City of Ogdensburg (approved).

Environmental Management Council (EMC). The EMC met on June 21st. The speaker was Peter D'Luhosch, from the NYS DEC Potsdam sub-office. Peter spoke about the draft recreation management plan he is working on for the Conifer-Emporium Tract Conservation Easement, located in the towns of Clifton, Colton, and Piercefield. Comments from the public will be accepted through mid-July. For more information, see

https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/lands_forests_pdf/coniferemporiumdraftmp.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. St. Lawrence Public Interest Corps Intern Sasha Henderson began working at the Planning Office to collect housing, demographic and socio-economic statistical data, and to draft narratives of the data to include in the County's Fair Housing Assessment. During the first half of the month, Matilda and John prepared, finalized and electronically submitted comments to the State's draft Assessment of Fair Housing.

BOARD OF LEGISLATORS

Countywide Broadband Assessment. In June, an application was submitted by the Development Authority to the Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) for a multi-county project that proposes broadband build-out including 100 unserved addresses in DePeyster, Brasher, Colton and Oswegatchie. The Development Authority also received notice of an award of \$14.5 million from the NTIA Middle Mile Program for construction of 335 miles of fiber across 12 counties, including St. Lawrence. CPO Staff continue to provide contract management for ARPA-funded projects.

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

Raquette River Advisory Council / West Branch St. Regis River Advisory Council. These Councils were formed as part of the relicensing process for hydroelectric facilities on the Raquette and West Branch of the St. Regis Rivers, respectively. Both Councils met on May 25th. These Councils will meet again at a time to be determined in October.

Another River Advisory Council was proposed for the Oswegatchie River in 2011. This Council has never been activated. Annual contributions made by Brookfield Power currently total almost \$20,000.

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, three disbursements have been made, for a total of \$684,539.36.

County Snowmobile Grant. The Planning Office has been asked to take over preparation and management of the County Snowmobile Trail grant. The application is broken into three phases, the first of which was submitted on June 30th. The project was formerly housed at the Soil and Water Conservation District. This is a major undertaking and will consume several staffers time throughout the year.

COMMUNITY / ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG). The Planning Office currently operates one CDBG award that addresses housing rehabilitation needs: the fourth round of the Countywide Housing Rehabilitation program (CHRP 4). During June, the County's Subrecipient, the Development Authority of the North Country (DANC), reported that 7 projects have been completed; 6 projects are under construction.

The Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) has been released for the next round of CDBG funding. The deadline for submission is August 7, 2023. The County is eligible to apply for as much as \$1,000,000 for a next round of housing rehabilitation activity. The Planning Office is working with staff from DANC to prepare an application for housing rehabilitation (aka CHRP 5).

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 June, the Planning Office reports

that 19 units have been completed, 1 unit is under construction, and 14 clients are in an application phase.

GRANTS

DR-4480 COVID-19 Pandemic Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP). Staff responded to a request for additional information from NYS DHSES (on behalf of FEMA) on the \$437,400 application requesting funds to install a backup generator at the Human Services Center. Information was also provided to DHSES in September 2022; the original application was submitted in May 2022, along with an application for \$27,000 to complete an engineering study for storm water management in the area of the Courthouse Complex/Judson Street.

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, 28 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

Rich Road Solar Energy Center. On the 29th, Matilda, Jason and Preston participated in the Town of Canton's site visit to EDF's dual-use solar energy facility in Arnprior, Ontario.

SLC Public Health Strategic Planning Committee. Staff is participating in Public's Health strategic planning process; a kickoff meeting was held in June.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

County Transit System. On the 1st, Matilda virtually met with County Mobility Manager Sonja Jensen to discuss the preparation of an application to the DOT to fund a 2nd CDL training round for new bus drivers. On the 6th, SLU Public Interest Corps Intern Sasha Henderson began working in the Planning Office. During the first half of the month, Sasha completed virtual training to update Public Transit's Google Transit Feed Specification (GTFS) for the NY511 website. During the first half of the Month, Matilda, Lisa and Jason drafted and revised a resolution that authorizes the purchase of bus technology from Passio and Kajeet. Matilda also held a virtual meeting with The Arc's Controller to review the capital and operating expenses for the hardware and software systems. Throughout the month, both Matilda and Sasha worked with the Mobility Manager and with The Arc's Transit staff to update and revise schedules and maps for routes 12, 31, 62 and 63. On the 12th, Matilda and Sonja virtually met with staff from The Arc to discuss the submission of an RTAP application, timeline and outcomes in order to hold a five-day CDL training session during the week of August 21st in the front classroom at the One-Stop Career Center at the Human Services Complex. During the first half of the month, Matilda and Sonja worked with representatives from the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe to design a weekend shuttle schedule and route between Massena and Akwesasne. Route 75 is scheduled to provide service

on Sunday, July 2nd; and on Saturdays, July 8th, 15th, 22nd and 29th. Ridership data collected from the pilot program will be used to help inform schedule and map revisions for Routes 70A and 70B at a later date.

During the middle of the month, Matilda prepared and electronically submitted a 2nd draw request for Accelerated Transit Capital (ATC) funds for the installation of the DSS bus shelter. Matilda also collected data and submitted a request to the DOT to retire buses 611, 612, 613 and 614. On the 15th, Matilda and Lisa reviewed and processed VTC's 1st quarter invoice for Mobility Management services, and a May invoice for First Mile Last Mile services. During the 2nd half of the month, Planning Office staff worked with the Treasurer's Office on the preparation of a draft resolution to accept a \$113,000 ATC funding award issued by the DOT.