

St. Lawrence County Planning Office
STAFF WORK REPORT
June 2024



ADVISORY BOARD SUPPORT

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board. The AFPB last met on April 4. Sam performed an analysis for the eight-year and annual review for Agricultural District 1 and 2 respectively. The AFPB is proposing to consolidate the two Ag Districts into one, reducing the number of eight-year reviews from two to one. The Board of Legislators approved the consolidated District on July 1st.

County Planning Board (CPB). The CPB met on June 13th in the Conference room on the second floor of the HSC Building. Three full review projects were discussed; a Site Plan Review for a retail store in the Town of Pierrepont (conditionally approved), A cryptocurrency local law in the Town of Massena (conditionally approved), and a Use Variance for a wedding venue in the Town of Louisville (denied).

Environmental Management Council (EMC). A County Legislator expressed concern regarding pollution of the Deer River. Sam connected the legislator with individuals at the local universities who do water testing. Jason and a university scientist took water samples on June 10th and sent them to a lab in Syracuse for analysis. The results from that testing were shared with the Board of Legislators and are being reviewed by the university scientists and will be shared with the DEC. Additionally, Sam has continued to communicate with the DEC regarding status of the Deer River and the EMC is actively monitoring the situation. The EMC met on June 19, 2024. The Council addressed the Deer River Issue with the DEC regional director to get further updates. The council collaborated with Nicandri Nature Center and SLELO PRISM to host a community educational workshop on iMap Invasives on June 29 1-3pm. An online mapping tool, iMap Invasives, allows for citizens to input locations of invasive species. The program allows for a community wide monitoring system for invasive species especially new emerging species that need to be addressed quickly before wide spread establishment.

Fair Housing Task Force. Staff have submitted the Fair Housing Assessment to the Board of Legislators, which was approved at Operations Committee and awaits formal approval at the next full board meeting. Staff have begun preliminary work on an exclusionary zoning analysis for Ogdensburg and Massena. The next Fair Housing Task Force meeting will be Tuesday, August 27th.

BOARD OF LEGISLATORS

Countywide Broadband Assessment. Staff responded to NYS's request for additional information on its pending ConnectALL County Partnerships Program application. In addition, staff facilitated one committee meeting, and participated in three webinars.

OCF Repurpose Committee. Staff have been assigned to the County's Ogdensburg Correctional Facility Repurpose Committee. The group met last on June 19th at the IDA Canton Offices. Discussion centered on the Governor's proposal to close 5 additional prisons in the near future.

Raquette River Advisory Council / West Branch St. Regis River Advisory Council. The RRAC and SRRAC met on Thursday, May 30th to discuss initiatives for each river. The RRAC discussed reports on funded projects such as the Stone Valley Maintenance Project by the ADK Mountain club to repair parts of the trail and install new interpretive signs. The board voted to approve funding for this project. The SRRAC discussed a report on a park nature trail in the Town of Parishville for which the council provided funding. The next meetings for these councils will be in the Fall.

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 \$1,443,728.50. Five municipalities have expended all their awarded funds: DeKalb, Hermon, Heuvelton, Lisbon, and Louisville. Five other municipalities have drawn down a portion of their awarded funds.

County Snowmobile Grant. St. Lawrence County Planning Office is the local sponsor for the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Places Snowmobile Grant. The County was awarded \$224,568.00 in snowmobile trail maintenance for the 2023-2024 grant year. Sam submitted phase 3, which involves reviewing expenses, labor logs, and receipts by the Trail Maintenance Entities (TME). The TMEs submitted GPS of their trails to the planning office. Sam made maps of the trail and filed the applications for submission of phase 1 to start the 2024-2025 grant.

County Budget Preparation. Staff is again assisting with the annual preparation of the County Budget.

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. Phase 1 consists of five houses of low to moderate income individuals that were inspected and had proposed scopes of work. The properties were tested for lead, asbestos, and radon and results will be incorporated in the project scopes. The projects were put out for bid the week of June 4th with a pre bid meeting on June 13th. The bid opening occurred June 25th. The contracts are scheduled to be signed July 5th. The planning office met with representatives from DANC on June 25th to explore housing strategy for the county.

GRANTS

Community Services. Staff is working with Community Services on two grant applications due in July: one to NYS OASAS RFA #SUPP1018 for Electronic Records (EMR) Statewide Implementation, and one to the U.S. DOJ Bureau of Justice Assistance FY24 Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Use Site-Based Program (COSSUP).

BJA FY24 State Criminal Alien Assistance Program. Staff prepared and submitted the required Standard Federal application form (SF-424) via Grants.gov on behalf of the Sheriff's Office.

Septic Repair Program. The County has had 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. The most recent contract from New York State has significantly expanded the list of eligible waterbodies.

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. Jason, Sam and Preston, are working on new projects for both the Soil and Water Conservation District and the SLC Department of Public Health regarding county owned property reforestation and an overdose GIS dashboard respectively.

Village of Heuvelton Comprehensive Plan. Staff have prepared written sections for the plan that they will present at the next public Comprehensive Plan meeting on Wednesday, July 17th at 6:30 pm in the Heuvelton Central School cafeteria. Staff also completed a village wide building and housing assessment.

Town of Hammond Comprehensive Plan Update. Staff facilitated a public meeting in Hammond to review goals and recommendations from 2013 Joint Comprehensive Plan and solicit public input on new/revised goals and recommendations.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

County Transit System. In preparation for a 5311 audit in September, Matilda is conducting virtual work sessions each week with staff from The Arc and VTC on the uploading of exhibits and answering questions to a questionnaire that focuses on procurement, financial management, preventative maintenance and repairs, and administrative oversight. On the 4th, Matilda, Jason and Lisa finalized Public Transit's 2025 operating budget for the County budget. On the 5th, Matilda conducted a monthly review of The Arc's STOA daily trips and farebox deposits spreadsheets. Throughout the month, Matilda communicated with bus manufacturer Matthew Bus Alliance and bus tech vendors Passio and Kajeet to confirm bus delivery dates, and dates for equipment installation in July. For the first two weeks in July, Matilda participated in virtual meetings to review bus schedule revisions for Route 67. During the week of the 10th, Matilda and staff from The Arc and VTC prepared a Powerpoint presentation that highlights the partnership between the County, The Arc and VTC in the delivery of public transportation services. Throughout the month, Matilda worked with VTC and The Arc staff, and consulted with the County Attorney on the preparation of the County's proposal to provide bus service to SUNY Potsdam. The proposal was submitted to SUNY Potsdam on the 14th. On the 17th, Matilda participated in a webinar on workforce development requirements when conducting fleet

transitioning planning for zero emissions vehicles. On the 20th, Matilda, Mobility Manager Sonja Jensen, and Public Transit Manager Rena Ryan delivered a presentation at “Tools of the Trade 2024,” a daylong summit coordinated by the Capital District Transit Authority. On the 21st, Matilda met with the County Administrator to review specifications for the installation of a bus shelter at the County Human Services Complex.