

St. Lawrence County Planning Office
STAFF WORK REPORT
July 2023



STAFF RETIREMENT

After a long and dedicated 25 year career, John Tenbusch retired from the County Planning Office on July 28th. John has been a fixture in many facets of the Office’s work during his tenure with the County. He was the primary staffer to the Environmental Management Council, led the Community Development work for the Office and was the go-to person for all things Census related. John will be missed, but we wish him all the best in his retirement.

ADVISORY BROAD SUPPORT

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board. Throughout the month, Lisa, Sam and Matilda drafted and electronically delivered invitations to this year’s Agricultural Tour. Sam communicated with The Blue House to coordinate the preparation of a boxed lunch for tour attendees to enjoy at the Zufall farm. During the week of the 9th, Matilda coordinated the reservation of a Canton Central School District bus to transport Ag Tour attendees. On the 6th, Matilda and Sam met to identify land characteristics to depict in a map that would identify suitable locations in the county for solar energy facilities. During the week of the 24th, the Office received correspondence from the Department of Agriculture and Markets notifying the County that this year’s Ag District additions were certified by the Department’s Commissioner. On the 28th, Sam met with a solar development company representative to discuss pre-arrangements that will need to be made in order to include Zufall’s solar facility as a part of this year’s Ag Tour.

County Planning Board (CPB). The CPB met on July 13th in the second floor conference room of the Public Safety Building. Four full review projects were discussed: a special use permit for the reclamation of a sand and gravel mine in the Town of Stockholm (approved); a special use permit for a 3.58 MW AC Solar array in the Town of Waddington (conditionally approved); a land use code revision in the Town of Norfolk (approved); an eight lot subdivision in the Town of Brasher (conditionally approved).

Environmental Management Council (EMC). The EMC met on July 19th. The speaker was Aileen O’Donoghue, Priest Professor of Physics at St. Lawrence University. Aileen talked about the upcoming eclipses that will occur in St. Lawrence County: in October 2023, we will see a partial eclipse of the sun, while in April 2024 we will be right in the path of a total eclipse of the sun. Aileen projected that we might see as many as 20,000 visitors in the County for the total eclipse in April.

EMC member Shannon Hurlbut was recommended by the EMC, and has been appointed to the Public Advisory Group for an Expedited Review of Plan 2014, which is the mechanism used to manage water flows in the St. Lawrence River. Shannon will keep the EMC, and the County, apprised of developments.

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. Throughout the month, St. Lawrence University Public Interest Corps Intern Sasha Henderson completed her collection of statistical data of county residents; and prepared charts, tables and graphs for a new Fair Housing Assessment. Sasha also prepared a series of countywide maps with assistance from St. Lawrence University's GIS Lab Director Carol Cady. Sasha also drafted an analysis of the socio-economic and demographic data that she collected for the report, and prepared powerpoint presentations of her work that she is scheduled to review at the next Fair Housing Task Force meeting.

BOARD OF LEGISLATORS

Countywide Broadband Assessment. In July, staff collaborated with the Development Authority to recommend a number of roads/areas for potential buildout in an effort between NY ConnectALL and Spectrum; provided local and regional data to the NY ConnectALL Office; conducted a broadband committee meeting and continued 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. The next meetings of these Advisory Council will be held 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, three disbursements have been made, for a total of \$684,539.36.

County Snowmobile Grant. The Planning Office has been tasked with preparation and management of the County Snowmobile Trail grant. Phase 1 mapping of the trails into GIS systems was completed June 30th. Jason, Heidi, and Sam met July 25th to review action for phase 2 which is due September 1. Sam is in communication with the TME's to supply necessary information. Staff have begun compiling the necessary forms and paper work for Phase 2.

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

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 July, the County's Subrecipient, the Development Authority of the North Country (DANC), reported that 7 projects have been completed; 6 projects are under construction. A public hearing regarding CHRP 4 progress was held July 17th. Monitoring assessment was conducted on the sub-recipient last week of July.

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 Planning Office is working with staff from DANC

to prepare an application for housing rehabilitation (aka CHRP 5). The County is planning to apply for \$615,000 to rehabilitate 12 house units across the county to low income homeowners. A public hearing was held July 17th for public feedback regarding proposed application.

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

GRANTS

NYS DOT BridgeNY. County Highway was notified of three bridge replacement awards:

BIN 3341700 - CR 35 over Trout Brook, Town of Potsdam, \$3,320,179.

BIN 3341630 - CR 34 over Trout Brook, Town of Potsdam, \$2,241,143.

BIN 3340950 - CR 22 over Sawyer Creek, Town of Fowler, \$2,031,430.

NYS OASAS RFA #SETT-23005 - Outreach and Engagement Services, Clinic Model. Community Services was notified of a \$306,000 award to add two Care Coordinator positions devoted to individuals with substance use disorders (SUD) in combination with other co-occurring health issues.

DR-4480 COVID-19 Pandemic Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP). The County was notified of a \$27,000 award to complete an engineering study for storm water management in the area of the Courthouse Complex/Judson Street. Staff participated in an administrative call with NYS and prepared initial forms.

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, 30 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

Potsdam Local Government Conference. Staff are working on the restart of the Fall Local Government Conference. The event is being planned for Tuesday, October 10th at SUNY Potsdam.

SLC Public Health Strategic Planning Committee. Staff is participating in Public's Health strategic planning process; one project meeting was held in July.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

County Transit System. During the week of the 3rd, Matilda worked with The Arc's dispatch staff to finalize June's daily trip and mileage counts, and prepared the 2nd quarter STOA report that was signed and submitted to the DOT. Monthly trip and mileage reports for the College Connector routes were also prepared and distributed to each campus. On the 11th, the Board of Legislators passed a resolution authorizing the Chair to sign contracts with Kajeet and Passio to install mobile wifi, surveillance system, and automatic vehicle location system into the Public Transit bus fleet. On the 12th, St. Lawrence University Public Interest Corps Intern Sasha Henderson conducted field work in Ogdensburg with Mobility Manager Sonja Jensen to update information in the Coordinated Transportation Plan. During the weeks of the 11th and the 24th, Matilda consulted with the County Attorney and the Purchasing Office to prepare Passio and Kajeet service agreements for the Chair's signature. On the 24th, Matilda and Sonja virtually met with university partners to discuss the restart of the College Connector routes, and reviewed the technology investments that will occur thru the end of the year. On the 25th, Matilda and Sonja met with The Arc staff to discuss the status of onboarding candidates for a CDL training session scheduled for the week of August 21st.