

St. Lawrence County Planning Office
STAFF WORK REPORT
July 2022



ADVISORY BROAD SUPPORT

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board. On the 11th, the County Board of Legislators passed a resolution accepting modifications to Ag District 2. Throughout the remainder of the month, Matilda prepared maps of Ag District 2 for submission to Cornell IRIS, and prepared a report for the Department of Agriculture and Markets Commissioner to certify the District. On the 14th, Office staff attended the Rich Road Solar Project open house at SUNY Canton Roos House. On the 18th, the County Board of Legislators' Operations Committee considered a resolution introduced by Legislator Denesha encouraging solar developers to purchase American-made materials and equipment for solar facilities that are constructed in the state. On the 21st, Matilda spoke with legislative aide Emma Johnston from Congresswoman Elise Stefanik's office about the displacement of prime farmland by large scale solar arrays.

County Planning Board (CPB). The CPB met via Zoom on July 14th. Several projects were returned for local action (RFLA). One full review, a 5 MW solar array in the Town of Canton, was presented, discussed, and approved with conditions. This particular project provided another level of discussion on how NYS DEC wetlands can impact the viability of a project. Furthermore, Staff discussed changes to the access road for the Meade Road solar project in the Town of Canton and the Board, by consensus, decided to take no action because the project was not re-referred. There was further discussion on how the Board can discuss uses, like solar, outside of the monthly meeting. Also, Staff had conversations with representative from NYPA and National Grid to help with understanding the local/regional grid and impacts from wind and solar to existing hydro power. The Board will continue to meet via Zoom while we can, however we are planning to transition to in person in the coming months.

CPB agendas and minutes can be accessed here:

<https://www.stlawco.org/Departments/Planning/AdvisoryBoards/CountyPlanningBoard>.

Environmental Management Council (EMC). The EMC met on July 20th. The speaker was Lauren Eggleston, Assistant Director of Save The River. Lauren presented work that STR is doing to research native species of mussels in the lower Grasse and other rivers, as part of a restoration strategy.

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>

Staff have been sharing a bi-weekly environmental news email that contains links to news in the County and beyond. Please contact the Planning Office if you would like to be added to the email.

Staff have participated to several events during July; these include:

- A presentation made to the St. Lawrence River Shoreline Management workshop;
- A presentation made at the annual meeting of the Black Lake Association.

Staff are continuing to work with the Black Lake Association with regard to milfoil management at

Black Lake. A website for this project is here: <https://stlawco.org/node/2777>

Staff began working with a DEC biologist and a Fort Drum Natural Resources Branch staff member on a project to better understand the DEC's Deer Management Program. This includes the [Venison Donation Coalition](#), a non-profit organization that assists with processing excess deer.

EMC Members and Staff submitted comments to the [State's Climate Action Council Draft Scoping Plan](#) on July 1st.

EMC members and staff completed the development of a Policy/Opinion on nuclear power, at the request of a member of the Board of Legislators. Staff made a presentation of the EMC's policy to the BOL Operations Committee on July 18th.

EAB Task Force. The Emerald Ash Borer Task Force met on July 21st. Discussion centered on how the Task Force might assist the County as it prepares to spend almost \$1 million to reduce liability from EAB-infested trees on County-owned roads.

BOARD OF LEGISLATORS

Countywide Broadband Assessment. Staff continue to work with a BOL committee to develop an implementation plan for the completed [broadband study](#). In July, staff participated in two webinars, coordinated and participated in one Committee meeting, one follow-up discussion with internet service providers (ISPs), and one meeting with the SLC Real Property Office. Additional follow-up discussions will be held in August.

Jones & Laughlin (J&L) Site. No DEC technical conference calls have been held since March 24th.

COMMUNITY / ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG).

The Planning Office currently operates two awards that address housing rehabilitation needs:

- SLC-CARES award to conduct housing rehabilitation for populations vulnerable to COVID-19,
- The fourth round of the Countywide Housing Rehabilitation program (CHRP 4).

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 July, the Planning Office reports that 19 units have been completed, and 14 clients are in an application phase.

Recreation. Staff are actively following a handful of organizations and attending webinars that address developing recreational assets in rural communities.

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM

Broadband.

Staff assisted with exporting a GIS dataset to table format for planning purposes for the County's Broadband Committee.

County Enterprise GIS.

- <https://gis.stlawco.org/portal/home/index.html>
- GIS Web App: Proposed Solar sites in the County: Updated monthly with County Planning Board reviewed projects.
<https://gis.stlawco.org/portal/apps/View/index.html?appid=6f3d7fb0923448ed90c3385eb0f8a872>
- GIS Web Map: 2021 Septic Repair Program Waterbodies with 250' Buffer:
<https://gis.stlawco.org/portal/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=d8a8b0c7e637400a9c269323b7670a19>

Emergency Management Services. Staff continue to provide GIS assistance to this department as their GIS workflows evolve. In partnership with SLC Real Property, Staff is assisting with the publication of an address dataset and other County GIS data that is useful for emergency response for dispatch and officers in the field.

Mapping

- Staff worked with the County Chamber of Commerce, and their mapping consultant, to update and share recreation GIS data to the County trails site (<https://www.stlctrails.com/>).

GRANTS

North Country Arts Recovery Fund. Staff participated on a review panel for the St. Lawrence County Arts Council (SLC Arts). SLC Arts was awarded funding to support organizations and jobs in the arts sector impacted by the Coronavirus pandemic through the National Endowment for the Arts American Rescue Plan (NEA ARP) Subgranting for Local Arts Agencies program.

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.

Hazard Mitigation Plan, 5-Year Update. Staff are assisting Emergency Services with the required five-year update of the SLC Multi-Jurisdictional All-Hazard Mitigation Plan. Staff await pending approval of the draft HMP from NYS Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services.

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). To date, 13 projects have been completed.

PLANNING MATTERS

Large Scale Solar. Staff are monitoring two projects in the County: [Rich Road Solar and Storage](#) and [North Side Energy Center](#). Staff attended a public informational meeting for the Rich Road Solar project on July 14. Community members were present to discuss the project with the developer and there were maps that displayed additional detail, such as, the proposed location of arrays.

Raquette River Advisory Council / West Branch St. Regis River Advisory Council. John Tenbusch serves as the County's representative to these Councils. Both Councils will meet again in October.

Town of Massena.

Staff assisted a Town resident with sharing resources to better understand the Mohawk land claims in the norther part of the County.

Town of Potsdam

Staff assisted a County resident with information gathering and understanding application/review process for a potential solar project.

Town of Rossie.

Staff contracted with the Town to revise the Town's existing site plan and subdivision regulations to reach full state land use regulation compliance. Staff is working on an updated draft in preparation for the project's first public hearing on August 30th.

Website. Lisa and Dakota, with staff input, continue to work on updating/editing the Planning Office page on the County's new website.

- Updates continue to be made for events, meetings and content on some pages.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

County Transit System. During the week of the 5th, Matilda submitted the monthly COVID19 recovery report to the DOT, and reviewed proposals from vendors to outfit the County's Public Transit fleet with technology. During the first half of the month, Matilda prepared the County's 2nd Quarter STOA report for submission to the DOT. Throughout the month, the County's Mobility Managers and staff from The Arc's Dispatch Office assisted with the preparation of a proposal to provide public transportation services for Route 67 to SUNY Potsdam. During the middle of the month, The Arc's Transit Manager announced the restart of Route 22 beginning August 1st. Routes 68 and 69 which provide service to and from Clarkson and SUNY Canton will also resume on the 1st. Throughout the month, Matilda, Lisa and Jason prepared and finalized a Public Transit proposed budget for FY2023. On the 26th, Matilda conducted a monthly visit to The Arc's Transit Office to review randomly selected STOA records for June. At the end of the month, Matilda updated maps for Routes that will resume service on August 1st.