

St. Lawrence County Planning Office
STAFF WORK REPORT
August 2023



ADVISORY BOARD SUPPORT

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board. On August 18th Matilda and Sam collaborated with Patrick Ames of Cornell Cooperative Extension to arrange a very successful agricultural tour. Forty-nine persons attended the event, including: Seven county legislators; State Senator Daniel Stec, staff from Elise Stefanik’s office; Cornell Cooperative Extension; Farm Bureau; Soil and Water Conservation; Farm Credit East, and many county advisory boards. The tour featured three producers; Never Tire Farm, a wholesale greenhouse operation; Robert Zufall Organic Dairy, which hosts a 17-acre solar array; and Woodcrest Dairy LLC, a large dairy currently installing a large scale anaerobic digester. The Blue House, a restaurant located in Madrid, NY, provided lunch. The early part of the month was dedicated to finalizing plans for the event, and post tour assessing, processing surveys, reviewing technical information, and debriefing. Sam has continued to work on the GIS mapping project to identify suitable locations to site solar arrays.

County Planning Board (CPB). The CPB met on August 10th in the Planning office on the second floor of the Public Safety Building. Four full review projects were discussed: a special use permit for two 5 MW solar arrays in the Town of Canton (denied); a use variance for a 2 MW solar array in the Town of Madrid (denied); a special use permit for a 19.9 MW solar array with 2 MW battery storage in the Town of Massena (conditionally approved); zoning code revisions in the Town of Louisville (conditionally approved).

Environmental Management Council (EMC). The EMC held their annual picnic on August 16th at Waddington Town Beach. The EMC is currently updating their visioning statement and mapping out a plan for moving forward. On August 24th Sam went with Legislator Harry Smithers to the Rodman Landfill Open house run by DANC. The goal was to better understand the waste management of St. Lawrence County and to analyze ways to reduce costs while managing waste appropriately.

Fair Housing Task Force. On the 1st, Matilda attended CNY Fair Housing’s webinar on “Zoning for Housing Opportunity,” which provided an overview of how local jurisdictions can assess where multi-family housing can be providing in zoning districts. The Fair Housing Task Force met on August 22nd in the second floor conference room of the Public Safety Building. Both Preston and St. Lawrence University Public Interest Corps Intern Sasha Henderson presented socio-economic and demographic data for the new Fair Housing Assessment. Other items included a review of Planning Office comments on the State Draft Assessment of Fair Housing, and an announcement that the FHTF is seeking a candidate from a faith-based/religious organization to fill a vacant seat on the board.

BOARD OF LEGISLATORS

Countywide Broadband Assessment. In August, staff was notified that the application submitted to the Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) by DANC was successfully funded. This three-

county project will include buildout to approximately 100 unserved location in St. Lawrence County. One broadband committee meeting was conducted and all contracts ARPA-funded projects have been signed. In total, \$2.937 M of the County's ARPA funds have been obligated for buildout of broadband infrastructure.

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. Sam reviewed and organized necessary paper work for phase 2 from the TMEs. Sam, Jason, and Heidi met and looked through all the material and submitted Phase 2 for the snowmobile grant Aug 25th. Jason, Lisa, and Sam worked through the additional payment for the 2022-2023 year the State paid to the TMEs. Sam and Jason began compiling information for an audit as requested by the State.

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 August, the County's Subrecipient, the Development Authority of the North Country (DANC), reported that 7 projects have been completed; 6 projects are under construction. All projects are on track to be completed by mid-October. A previous bottle neck of asbestos testing laboratories being non responsive was addressed by adding another laboratory that specializes in these smaller residential projects.

The Planning Office, in collaboration with staff from DANC, prepared and submitted an application for housing rehabilitation (aka CHRP 5). The County applied for \$615,000 to rehabilitate 12 housing units across the county.

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 10 clients are in an application phase.

NYS Environmental Bond Act Listening Session. Staff attended a listening session, held in Saranac Lake on August 11, 2023. The purpose of the event was to share and gather information on how future Environmental Bond Act funds will be utilized.

GRANTS

NYS OASAS RFA SETT-23016 - Comprehensive Integrated Outpatient Treatment Programs. Staff worked with Community Services to submit this application for \$373,824 to further support the Outpatient Treatment Program. Actual demand has significantly outpaced projections from the OTP clinic opened in July 2022.

NYS OASAS RFA SETT-23005 - Outreach and Engagement Services, Clinic Model. Community Services was notified of a \$489,614 award (incorrectly reported in July as 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.

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, 31 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 August.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

County Transit System. On the 1st, Matilda, Lisa and Jason finalized the 2024 public transit budget; spoke with SUNY Potsdam staff to finalize a new contract for service; and spoke with staff from The Arc to discuss year to date bus advertising revenue. Throughout the month, the County Attorney and his staff assisted Matilda with securing certificates of insurance, and certificates of exemption for the contract to provide public transit service to SUNY Potsdam. Also throughout the month, Stephanie Kerr in the County Purchasing Office assisted Matilda with the issuance of Purchase Orders to Kajeet and Passio for the installation of technology in the Public Transit bus fleet. On the 10th, Matilda, County Mobility Manager Sonja Jensen, and The Arc Transit Managers Rena Ryan and Shawn Philbrick participated in a kick-off meeting with Passio to schedule the installation of Automatic Vehicle Location system in the bus fleet. On the 15th, a similar meeting was held with Kajeet for the installation of mobile wifi.

On the 17th, Matilda prepared and submitted an Accelerated Transit Capital application to spend \$113,510 on shop equipment; fleet technology, and architectural and engineering services to design and prepare a cost estimate for a new bus garage/bus yard for the bus operator. During the week of the 21st, Jefferson Community College delivered a CDL training course in the front classroom of the One-Stop Career Center for five new prospective Public Transit drivers. On the 23rd, Matilda virtually met with The Arc and with the Mobility Manager to discuss preparations for the installation of mobile wifi during the week of September 18th.