

St. Lawrence County Planning Office
STAFF WORK REPORT
September 2023



ADVISORY BOARD SUPPORT

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board. On the 28th, Matilda, Jason and Preston attended a webinar held by Cornell Cooperative Extension on the “Impacts of Large-Scale Solar on Rural Communities.” Sam and Preston have been working on a GIS database and mapping project that identifies the most at risk agricultural land to solar development, and map areas where the county will like to see the solar development to occur. This project is an ongoing project modeling solar development in order to protect agricultural land.

County Planning Board (CPB). The CPB met on September 14th in the Conference room on the second floor of the Public Safety Building. One full review project was discussed: a site plan review for a restaurant in the Town of Canton (approved). There was also a staff presentation done on a GIS map of solar projects in the County in relation to where the Board would prefer them to go. Staff continues to make progress on the map.

Environmental Management Council (EMC). The EMC met on September 20th with a thorough discussion about the EMC bylaws. The council is developing a work plan for the 2023-2024 year. Potential issues brought forth include waste and recycling, solar development, battery storage facilities, invasive species, and pollinator habitat. We have had three new members submit their applications and a few more interest parties.

Fair Housing Task Force. On the 7th, Matilda and Preston met with a prospective candidate about filling a vacancy on the Task Force. Throughout the month, both Matilda and Preston collected and prepared charts, graphs and tables of additional statistical data to include in the Assessment of Fair Housing.

BOARD OF LEGISLATORS

Countywide Broadband Assessment. In September, the first of the 16 ARPA-funded broadband infrastructure buildouts was completed. In the Town of Fine, approximately 4.3 miles of buried fiber was laid, with potential for reaching 66 previously unserved locations. The remaining projects involve aerial fiber (utilizing utility poles); the pole permitting process is lengthy.

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, disbursements have been made totaling \$712,000.00.

County Snowmobile Grant. The Planning Office has been tasked with preparation and management of the County Snowmobile Trail grant. The state began an audit with the TMEs in September; has been facilitating that process. Sam developed a GIS map that distinguished the club-managed trails. Been processing monthly work reports in preparation for Phase 3 of the grant.

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 September, the County's Subrecipient, the Development Authority of the North Country (DANC), reported that 11 projects have been completed; 2 projects are under construction. All projects are on track to be completed by mid-October.

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 September, the Planning Office reports that 21 units have been completed, 1 unit is under construction, 1 is under contract, and 1 is in an application phase. The contract end date is 10/13/23, however, any units under contract by that date are able to be completed after.

GRANTS

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.

State GIS Conference. Preston and Sam attended the State GIS Conference in Albany in September. The conference was a great opportunity for networking and developing mapping skills.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

County Transit System. On the 8th, Matilda virtually met with The Arc's Comptroller to review upcoming operating expenses from technology vendor Fleetio to include in the 2023 bus operating budget. On the 12th, Matilda, The Arc's Transit Manager Rena Ryan, and County Mobility Manager Sonja Jensen met with vendor representatives on the positioning and installation of surveillance cameras in the bus fleet. On the 15th, a similar meeting with held with Kajeet to finalize preparations on the installation of the mobile wifi system. On the 21st, SLU PIC summer intern Sasha Hendersen delivered a presentation to the Public Transit Task Force on the socio-economic and demographic data that will be included in an updated Coordinated Transportation Plan. On the 22nd, Matilda held a phone meeting with Clarkson representatives to discuss how to record undergraduate versus graduate student trips. On the 24th, Matilda held a virtual meeting with The Arc staff to review the tentative 2024 budget for bus operations. On the 26th, Matilda met with Purchasing staff to finalize an RFP for automatic trip counting software, and an RFQ to purchase a bus shelter that will be installed at the Human Services Complex. That same day, Matilda met with Buildings and Grounds Superintendent Jim Trathan to identify where the bus will be installed, the preparation of a scope of work and budget, and timeline for installation. On the 26th, Matilda met with Passio staff to schedule a meeting to discuss revisions to digital mapping files. On the 27th, Matilda completed the DOT's Equitable Business Opportunities webinar.