

*St. Lawrence County Planning Office*  
**STAFF WORK REPORT**  
*September 2024*



**ADVISORY BOARD SUPPORT**

***Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board.*** The AFPB will meet again in October. Sam is finalizing the map and report of the eight year review and consolidation of the Agriculture Districts for submission to New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. Sam is preparing a presentation on the 2022 Ag Census report for the AFPB members.

***County Planning Board (CPB).*** The CPB met on September 12<sup>th</sup> in the Conference room on the second floor of the HSC Building. Three full review projects were discussed; A use variance for a medical center in the Town of Canton (denied), a use variance for a two-family dwelling in the Village of Canton (denied), and a site plan review for a Dollar General in the Town of Dekalb (conditionally approved). Staff also provided training on proposed recommendations to the NYS Uniform Fire Code regarding Battery Energy Storage Systems.

***Environmental Management Council (EMC).*** The EMC met on September 18<sup>th</sup> at 6 p.m. in the HSC Building. At the meeting we reviewed the Deer River pollution issue. A member, a retired water chemist, had a series of questions for the DEC regarding the water testing results, and he gave us an overview and update. Additionally, members are going to reach out to personal contacts that live along that portion of the river to see the current status of the pollution. The Council is exploring the ramifications of the new EPA regulations on PFAS concentrations in public water supplies. The EMC also discussed Eastern Equine Encephalitis, the multiuse trail, and the reports of burning of trash. The Executive Board met on September 12<sup>th</sup> and discussed recruitment. Two members did interviews on the radio which resulted in 7 new applications. The Council is currently reviewing the applications and will rank them based on geographical representation and expertise in environmental matters.

***Fair Housing Task Force.*** Staff have begun preliminary work on an exclusionary zoning analysis for St. Lawrence County population centers. This analysis attempts to find a correlation between poverty levels in zoning districts and permitted uses in those zones. Staff have conducted a GIS zoning analysis and plan to put together an ArcGIS Story Map to illustrate their findings. Staff presented this preliminary research on August 1<sup>st</sup> at the Zoning for Housing Opportunity webinar hosted by CNY Fair Housing, and also at the Fair Housing Task Force meeting on August 27<sup>th</sup>.

**BOARD OF LEGISLATORS**

***Countywide Broadband Assessment.*** Staff had two conference calls with NYS regarding the ConnectALL County Partnerships Program application, and one working group meeting with DANC.

***OCF Repurpose Committee.*** Staff have been assigned to the County's Ogdensburg Correctional Facility Repurpose Committee. An announcement was made in July identifying two prisons that would be closed, one in Washington County and one in Sullivan County. The group last met on August 22<sup>nd</sup> and received an update from Assemblyman Scott Gray on the State prison closure process.

***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 \$1,823,438.86. Six municipalities have expended all their awarded funds and/or completed their project: Brasher, DeKalb, Hermon, Heuvelton, Lisbon, and Louisville. Six 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. We are currently in the process of applying for funds for the 2024-2025 program year. Phase 2 of the project was submitted on August 29<sup>th</sup>.

***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 (CHRP 5) is underway. The Development Authority of North Country (DANC), the subrecipient, and the Planning Office have been meeting regularly to discuss progress. Phase 1 consists of five projects for low to moderate income households. All five projects have been completed. We are reviewing applications for Phase II. Once the next 4-6 projects are selected, we will do site visits to assess work needs, and test for lead, asbestos, and radon. Sam has been working on a form that both DANC and the County can use to manage the waiting list for the program and to help guide future housing rehab programming.

***Rural Preservation Corporation Discussion.*** Staff met with Community Development Program (CDP) staff to discuss an opportunity to apply to become a Rural Preservation Company. A meeting between the State Office of Community Renewal, the State Office that manages Rural Preservation Companies statewide, and CDP is scheduled for October 1<sup>st</sup>.

## **GRANTS**

***NYS DOT Innovative Mobility Initiative and Carbon Reduction Program.*** See Public Transportation Section.

***Tooley Pond Road Bridge Replacement Project.*** Staff had two conference calls with County Highway and Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) regarding this award of \$750,000.

***NYS SWIMS Lifeguard Grant Program.*** Staff received a NYS request for additional work plan and budget details for this program; staff is coordinating with the nine participating municipalities to provide this information.

***Septic Repair Program.*** Program delivery has transitioned from the North Country Housing Council to SLC Public Health. To align program benchmarks with NYS, all projects completed and funds spent under this program since “Round One” have been combined. To date, 79 systems have been repaired/replaced; \$550,758.89 has been expended; and \$1,049,241.11 in program funds remain available.

***St. Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce Non-Profit Conference.*** Staff attended this one-half day event in Canton (9/11/24).

***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**

***GIS.*** Public Health requested assistance to develop a web-based dashboard for Overdose data in the County. Sam has been meeting regularly with public health to implement the dashboard to their specifications. Sam gave a presentation to the New York State Association on Conservation Committees about the Solar Development Mapping Tool. Sam and Preston are in the process of updating the Tool with additional information and the addition of new projects. Sam and Preston attended the NYS GIS Association annual conference on September 24.

***Village of Heuvelton Comprehensive Plan.*** Staff have finished preparation of a draft comprehensive plan for the Village. A public hearing will be held on Wednesday, October 9<sup>th</sup> at 6 pm at the Heuvelton Village Hall on 51 State Street, Heuvelton NY. Staff have also helped with preparation of the State Environment Quality Review (SEQR) for the plan; two copies of the SEQR forms and the draft Comprehensive Plan will be available to the public at the Heuvelton Village Hall and the Heuvelton Public Library. An additional copy of each document will be publicly available at the County Planning Office.

***Town of Hammond Comprehensive Plan Update.*** Staff is reviewing and updating base components of the 2013 Joint Comprehensive Plan. A public meeting is scheduled in Hammond on October 17<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm.

***Tropical Storm Debby.*** On August 9<sup>th</sup> Tropical Storm Debby caused widespread and significant damage both to public infrastructure and individuals' property. The Planning Office has received an increased number of phone calls from individuals inquiring about State aid. We investigated the programs and put information onto the website and have been directing people on how to receive help.

## **PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

***County Transit System.*** On the 5<sup>th</sup>, Matilda, Heidi and VTC staff met to discuss the preparation of an Innovative Mobility Initiative Microtransit Proposal. Throughout the month, Heidi, Matilda and Mobility Manager Sonja Jensen drafted and finalized the proposal, which was submitted to the DOT on the 24<sup>th</sup>. On the 19<sup>th</sup>, Matilda met with the DOT's 5311 Auditor who reviewed procurement files for 2022 to 2024, and reviewed fleet maintenance records for Public Transit buses 615, 620 and 623. During the second half of the month, Matilda prepared an addendum for the County's Title VI Plan to incorporate requirements for the receipt of Federal transit monies. This addendum was prepared in consultation with the County Attorney and the Human Resource Director. On the 26<sup>th</sup>, Matilda attended the Public Transit Task Force meeting. On the 27<sup>th</sup>, Matilda and Sonja participated in a virtual meeting with Clarkson representatives and The Arc staff to discuss the addition of a bus stop to Route 68.