

St. Lawrence County Planning Office
STAFF WORK REPORT
September 2022



ADVISORY BROAD SUPPORT

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board. During the week of the 12th, Matilda spoke with Boralex representatives, and with Cornell University professor Todd Schmit to schedule presentations for the next Ag and Farmland Protection Board meeting on the 29th. Boralex plans to present an overview of the 2 Rivers Project solar project proposed in the Town of Brasher, and to discuss how the project can be designed to accommodate a compatible agricultural use within the fenced area of the project. Professor Schmit will deliver a presentation on the economic contributions of the agricultural industry to the North Country's economy, and how to calculate the economic impact from farmland conversions that host solar energy facilities. On the 16th, Matilda participated in a Town of Canton meeting with EDF representatives to discuss visual impacts about the Rich Road Solar Project. On the 20th, Matilda provided a letter of support to GardenShare's grant application for funds to manage area farmers markets in the county. During the week of the 26th, Matilda finalized and submitted the Eight-Year Review for Ag District 2 report to the Department of Agriculture and Markets for certification.

County Planning Board (CPB). The CPB met via Zoom on September 8th. Two projects were presented for full review. A 3.3 MW Solar Array in the Rural Zone at 676 Old Canton Road in the Town of Canton was approved with conditions, and a 5 MW Solar Array in the Rural Zone at 295 SH 310 in the Town of Canton was denied.

Environmental Management Council (EMC). The EMC met on September 21st. The speaker was Dr. Katherine Cleary of SUNY Potsdam. She made a presentation about her research on the Algonquin to Adirondacks Trail. The A2A Trail is a natural pathway used by animals to travel between the wilderness of Algonquin Park in Canada and the wilderness of the Adirondack Mountains. The viability of this pathway was captured by the journey of "Alice the Moose". In 1998, Alice had been radio-collared by researchers at SUNY ESF in the middle of the Adirondack Park; by winter 2001, she was recorded in Algonquin Park.



Due to staff contraction, it has been necessary for the Planning Office to withdraw from the Black Lake project to control milfoil management at Black Lake.

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>

EAB Task Force. The Emerald Ash Borer Task Force will meet next on October 21st.

Fair Housing Task Force. During the second half of the month, Matilda secured funds from NBT Bank

Canton Branch to sponsor the costs for Fair Housing Stakeholder Sessions scheduled for October 4th and 5th. Event announcements were electronically distributed to stakeholder groups during the week of the 19th and 26th. Announcement postcards were also prepared and mailed to organizations without email addresses.

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 September, staff participated in one Committee meetings, a meeting regarding wireless solutions, and assisted with the RFP for USDA ReConnect Round 4 funding; two proposals were received and are under review.

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 September, the Planning Office reports that 19 units have been completed, 2 units are in progress, and 12 clients are in an application phase.

GRANTS

DR-4480 COVID-19 Pandemic Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP). Staff responded to a request for additional information from NYS DHSES on the \$437,400 application requesting funds to install a backup generator at the Human Services Center.

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 revised 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.

During September, the Planning Office took steps to accept a third round of funding for this program.

PLANNING MATTERS

Lake Champlain – Lake George Regional Planning Board. On September 22, John attended a half-day conference sponsored by the LCLGRPB.

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 Service Board hearing on August 9th where the North Side project was denied its certificate of public good.

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 Hammond.

Staff assisted the planning board chair with gathering resources for hosting monthly meetings and short-term rental regulations.

Town of Rossie.

On the 27th, Matilda participated in a virtual meeting with Rossie's Planning Board Chair to review application templates for site plan reviews and subdivision reviews, and provided template applications for area variances and use variances.

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

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

County Transit System. On the 9th, Matilda submitted the County's final monthly COVID19 recovery report to the Department of Transportation. On the 15th, two Lot G buses – buses 624 and 625 – were delivered to The Arc and are undergoing DOT inspection and registration. Both vehicles are anticipated to be placed in service at the beginning of October. On the 21st, Matilda conducted a monthly visit to review randomly selected STOA records at The Arc's Public Transit dispatch office. On the 22nd, Matilda attended the Public Transit Task Force meeting and announced the public transit bus system is projected to provide more than 85,000 one way trips in 2022, and will be the highest annual ridership rate on record. During the week of the 26th, the DOT release a Notice of Funding Availability for 5311 Rural Transit funds for FY 2021, 2022 and 2023. Also that same week, Matilda forwarded electronic invitations to area officials announcing the scheduling of a ribbon cutting for a newly installed, solar powered bus shelter off Munson Street in Potsdam. The ribbon cutting is scheduled for October 11th.

EMPLOYEE MILESTONES

On September 1st, staff gathered for dinner at a local restaurant. The purpose for this dinner was two-fold: to wish Dakota Casserly "Bon Voyage" as he moves on to another job, and to celebrate Heidi Ames'

15 LONG years working in the Planning Office.

Dakota arrived at the Planning Office in 2020, just as COVID was shutting down the County. He quickly became involved with the County's COVID Emergency Response effort; he also proved himself invaluable working on project reviews for the County Planning Board, and helping to staff the Environmental Management Council. To say he will be missed does not do justice to his many contributions to the office.

Heidi came to work in the Planning Office in 2007. As Grants Manager, Heidi is always working on a variety of projects, writing applications, conferring with other departments as they work on apps, keeping abreast of which programs are accepting applications, etc. She also does some of the reporting, requests for reimbursement, and other parts of the "Grants Administration" responsibilities.

Thank you Dakota, and thank you Heidi, from the bottom of our hearts.



Left to Right: Matilda, Heidi, Lisa, John, Dakota and Jason