

St. Lawrence County Planning Office
STAFF WORK REPORT
October 2023



ADVISORY BOARD SUPPORT

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board. The AFPB met on the 5th where: A discussion ensued about the future of the Cornell's Regional Ag Team; a draft map of preferred solar siting criteria and locations prepared by Sam and Preston was reviewed; a survey highlights from this year's Ag Tour was reviewed; and updates from those in attendance were heard. On the 10th, Matilda attended the final meeting of Cooperative Extension's Local Food Advisory Board. On the 12th, Matilda, Preston and Jason participated in Cornell's webinar to hear perspectives from solar developers on their efforts to integrate agricultural uses in the fenced areas of solar energy facilities.

County Planning Board (CPB). The CPB met on October 12th in the Conference room on the second floor of the Public Safety Building. Two full review projects were discussed: An agritourism venture in the Town of Massena (No Action) and a Local Law Review for proposed dock regulations in the Town of Fowler (Approved). There was also a staff training session on the role of planning boards and zoning boards of appeal.

Environmental Management Council (EMC). The EMC met on October 18th and passed the updates to the EMC bylaws. Cathy Shrady from the Canton Sustainability Committee presented on Eco Adapt. We also met with Cait Darfler, the chair of EMC for Thompkins County, and discussed their activities, successes, and weaknesses, and how it might apply to St. Lawrence County EMC activities. Sam participated in a Canton Sustainability Committee meeting, Potsdam CSC, and the Green living Fair to recruit members and make connections to other organizations.

Fair Housing Task Force. On the 3rd, SLU PIC Summer Intern Sasha Henderson and Matilda participated in a North Country Matters podcast where Sasha presented the socio-economic and demographic statistics that she compiled for the next Assessment of Fair Housing.

BOARD OF LEGISLATORS

Countywide Broadband Assessment. In October, SLIC Network Solutions completed permit applications for all of its ARPA-funded buildouts. Some projects involve buried lines, these are anticipated to be done prior to ground freeze. 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 RRAC and SRRAC met on Thursday, October 26th. There were reports on funded projects and on the budget for each council. The next meetings will be held next Spring.

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 \$962,000.00.

County Snowmobile Grant. The Planning Office has been tasked with preparation and management of the County Snowmobile Trail grant. The NYSOPRHP awarded the county \$224,568. Sam has 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). All projects have been completed.

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 October, the Planning Office reports that 22 units have been completed, and 1 unit is under construction. It is anticipated that all program funds will be expended by the end of 2023.

GRANTS

DR-4480 COVID-19 Pandemic Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP). Staff was notified that the County was awarded for \$437,400 to install a natural gas-powered generator for the Human Services Center.

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, 35 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. Over 200 attendees participated in the Fall Local Government Conference held on Tuesday, October 10th at SUNY Potsdam.

SLC Public Health Strategic Planning Committee. Staff is participating in Public's Health strategic planning process.

Conference. Preston and Sam attended NY Planning Federation conference in Lake Placid on Oct 12.

Emerald Ash Borer Taskforce. Sam held the final meeting of the EAB taskforce on Oct 20th. The decision was reached to officially disband the taskforce. Members expressed interest in maintaining communication about terrestrial invasive species and general forest health. This will be folded into the EMC activities with a quarterly report.

GIS. The Board of Elections reached out to the Planning Office to make a series of maps for individual election districts that they could put on to their website to satisfy state election requirements. Sam and Preston created the seventy maps.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

County Transit System. During the week of the 2nd, Matilda prepared and submitted the 3rd quarter trip and mileage report to the Department of Transportation. For the 3rd quarter, St. Lawrence County Public Transit provided 94,565 one way trips. So far in 2023, the monthly average of one way trips provided is 23% higher than in 2022. Ridership among college students has grown by 34%, while ridership among the general public is 11% higher. Throughout the month, Matilda participated in a number of virtual meetings with Passio to prepare and finalize digital mapping files for a mobile app that will provide real time information on the location of public transit buses. On the 6th, Matilda met with VTC's Executive Director Sam Purington to discuss the 2024 budgets for Mobility Management and First Mile Last Mile. Also on the 6th, Matilda met with Mobility Manager Sonja Jensen to discuss the extension of bus advertising agreements. During the week of the 16th, Matilda prepared and distributed invoices for bus advertising and College Connector bus service. On the 19th, Matilda participated in the Public Transit Task Force meeting which included a preliminary review of revised bus route maps that were presented by VTC's mapping intern. At the end of the month, Matilda drafted a resolution to accept \$3.9 million in Federal funding to cover operating expenses for 2021 to 2023, and to purchase six new buses. Also at the end of the month, Matilda reviewed and processed invoices for First Mile Last Mile and Mobility Management services.