

St. Lawrence County Planning Office
STAFF WORK REPORT
October 2024



ADVISORY BOARD SUPPORT

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board. The AFPB met on October 3rd at 6 p.m. in the HSC Building. Sam presented the results of the 2022 USDA Agriculture Census which showed a significant decrease in agriculture in the County, both in number of farm operations and the amount of acreage in agriculture. Jason updated the board on the current status of large scale industrial solar arrays within the County. 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.

County Planning Board (CPB). The CPB met on October 10th in the Conference room on the second floor of the HSC Building. Three full review projects were discussed; a use variance for a thrift store in the Village of Waddington (denied), a use variance for a motel in the Village of Canton (denied), and a Comprehensive Plan for the Village of Heuvelton (returned for local action).

Environmental Management Council (EMC). The EMC met on October 16th at 6 p.m. in the HSC Building. There were DEC representatives at the meeting to discuss: reports of well contamination along McCarthy Road, Deer River Pollution Update, PFAS testing in the County, questions about Black Lake Management Plan, and Great Lake Action Agenda. The reports of well contamination are the jurisdiction of the State Department of Health or SLC Public Health, and if they identify a potential source of contamination, then the DEC will become involved for remediation efforts. A large dairy in the area has been accused as the source of contamination. The DEC investigated and does not think the dairy is responsible for the issue; they have a valid nutrient management plan and CAFO permit. The Council continues to monitor the Deer River pollution issue. Additional chemical and biological sampling by DEC occurred on 9/3 and 9/4 with results still being analyzed. The sewage fungus is no longer apparent, and the DEC has a website for members of the public to report any issues. The North Country Dairy invested in upgrades to their waste water system, and will continue to be monitored by the DEC for compliance with new SPDES permit. The Council is exploring the ramifications of the new EPA regulations on PFAS concentrations in public water supplies. DEC answered questions about the sampling schedule for inactive landfills within the County. If PFAS is detected, which could impact public drinking water, remediation efforts will be initiated. The EMC also discussed the State's 30x30 strategy, forest tax law, and Adirondack Master Plan amendments on which the DEC is seeking public comment. Next meeting will be November 20th.

Fair Housing Task Force. Staff are working 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 1st at the Zoning for Housing Opportunity webinar hosted by CNY Fair Housing, and also at the Fair Housing Task Force meeting on August 27th.

BOARD OF LEGISLATORS

Countywide Broadband Assessment. Staff facilitated one committee meeting, had one planning session with NYS regarding the ConnectALL County Partnerships Program application, and one working group meeting with DANC; working closely with ISPs on ARPA-funded projects.

OCF Repurpose Committee. Staff have been assigned to the County's Ogdensburg Correctional Facility Repurpose Committee. The group last met in August.

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 \$1,927,188.86. Seven municipalities have expended all their awarded funds and/or completed their project: Brasher, DeKalb, Hermon, Heuvelton, Lisbon, Louisville, and Parishville. The remaining five municipalities have drawn down a portion of their awarded funds, with three projected to draw down their remaining balance this year.

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 \$293,840.00 in snowmobile trail maintenance for the 2024-2025 grant year. Sam is processing the payment from the State and submitting the 70% award of funds to the Trail Maintenance Entities.

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 I consisted of five projects for low to moderate income households, and all five projects have been completed. Phase II consists of four more projects. DANC visited the sites to create scope of work, and now are arranging to test for radon, lead, and asbestos. Sam mapped the projects to demonstrate no impact on wetlands and not within a flood plain. 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. Sam and DANC have begun to review the waiting list to identify Phase III projects.

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 occurred on October 1st.

JCC Center for Community Studies. On the 17th, Matilda and Preston attended a dinner and presentation at Jefferson Community College in Watertown to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Center for Community Studies. Prior campus presidents, program directors, and guest speakers John and Jeremy Zogby addressed the audience in Walker Theater following dinner.

GRANTS

NYS SWIMS Lifeguard Grant Program. Staff received a NYS request for additional work plan and budget details for this program; this was provided. A follow up inquiry from NYS was also addressed.

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, 80 systems have been repaired/replaced; \$560,758.89 has been expended; and \$1,039,241.11 in program funds remain available. A number of projects are pending and are anticipated for completion before the ground freezes.

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 and Preston updated the Solar Development Mapping Tool with additional information and the addition of new projects. Sam attended the New England Arc Users group GIS conference Oct 28-30.

Village of Heuvelton Comprehensive Plan. A public hearing was held on October 9th to review the draft Comprehensive Plan with the Village Board of Trustees and members of the public. Staff are preparing the final draft to be presented at a public hearing on November 13th at the Heuvelton Village offices. A copy of the final draft of the plan will be available to view by October 30th at locations to be determined. Staff would like to commend the Village for investing its time and energy in this process.

Town of Hammond Comprehensive Plan Update. A public meeting was held in Hammond on October 17th at 6:30pm to review the goals and recommendations of the draft pan and to solicit further public input.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

County Transit System. On the 3rd, Matilda participated in a virtual review of DOT’s new reimbursement forms and submission requirements, and began reimbursement calculations for 2021 and 2022 operating expenses. During the first half of the month, Matilda worked with staff from The Arc to upload documentation for the bus system’s Drug and Alcohol Compliance audit. Matilda also submitted a revised Title VI Plan for the DOT’s Civil Rights Office for review, and forwarded signed copies of capital and operating assistance contracts to the DOT. During the week of the 7th, Matilda prepared and submitted a 3rd Quarter STOA report. During the third quarter of this year, the system transported 36,144 passengers and traveled 236,981 miles. So far to date, the average monthly trip count is 14% higher than the prior year, and most of this is due to increased ridership among college students. Compared to 2023, ridership among college students grew by 20%. During the week of the 14th, Matilda updated the year-to-date monthly fleet work order summaries for bus operations, and

participated in a webinar on the DOT's demand analysis online mapping tool. Throughout the month, Matilda participated in virtual meetings with staff from VTC to discuss the ongoing commitment required to revise and maintain the bus system's digital mapping files, and issues that require resolution with technology vendor, Passio. At the end of the month, Matilda submitted draft draw requests for 2021 and 2022 operating funds; submitted financial draws for 2021 and 2022 Mobility Management funds; and submitted a draft draw request for the reimbursements of two buses. Matilda was also notified that the 5311 compliance review for years 2021 – 2023 was completed with no findings; and the 5311 Drug and Alcohol compliance review was completed with findings that were corrected. The DOT's Civil Rights Office also approved the County's revised Title VI policy for signature.