

St. Lawrence County Planning Office
STAFF WORK REPORT
December 2023



ADVISORY BOARD SUPPORT

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board. The AFPB met on December 7th where: the 2024 meeting schedule was decided, Staff demonstrated updates to the solar mapping tool with proposed resolution to encourage towns to use the tool, and the Board reviewed the upcoming process for the eight-year review of Ag District 1 and the intent to consolidate both Ag Districts 1 and 2 into a single district. Sam continued to modify and refine the solar mapping tool. Sam began the process for the eight-year Ag district review.

County Planning Board (CPB). The CPB met on December 14th in the Conference room on the second floor of the Public Safety Building. No full review projects were discussed. There was, however, a staff training session on the new solar mapping application. The board also held an election in which the current chair, Kitty O’Neil, was re-elected to another term as board chair.

Environmental Management Council (EMC). The EMC did not meet in December. Our next meeting will be held on January 17, 2024 at 6:00 PM in the Human Services Center.

Fair Housing Task Force. Preston has received and reviewed data from advisory board members. He has been mapping this data to add it to the draft fair housing assessment.

BOARD OF LEGISLATORS

Countywide Broadband Assessment. SLIC Network Solutions awaits National Grid response on pole permit applications for ARPA-funded buildouts. One committee meeting was held in December; data was submitted to NYS ConnectALL on addresses subject to enforceable commitments by ISPs.

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 for these boards will be held in the 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 \$1,257,384.10.

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.

Solar Eclipse Preparation. The County Board of Legislators authorized the creation of an ad hoc committee to help prepare for potential mass gatherings in the County on April 8, 2024 for the solar eclipse. The County will see eclipse totality. Planning Staff will be part of the committee. Sam developed a GIS web map to help with the planning.

Arming of Probation Office Staff. On the 14th, Matilda and Preston participated in a meeting between Probation Office staff and the Board of Legislators' Arming of Probationary Staff Committee to: 1) Hear a virtual presentation by Clinton County Probation staff about the arming of their department; 2) hear a presentation from the County Attorney on liabilities associated with discharging a firearm; and 3) to review survey responses from Probation staff, and from other county probation offices. At the conclusion of the review, Matilda facilitated a discussion to gather reactions from staff for the Committee to take into consideration, and discuss next steps.

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, and final close out of the grant is underway. The Planning Office received notification of success for the latest CDBG application for the Countywide Housing Rehabilitation Program (CHRP 5).

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. Twenty three (23) units were completed and all funds have been expended. Program closeout materials will be prepared and submitted to HUD in January 2024.

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, 37 projects have been completed. In addition, staff are responding to a request for feedback from NYSDEC regarding future funds.

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

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

GIS. Sam and Preston have been working on creating a web map identifying areas that are suitable for solar development while protecting agricultural lands, forests, and wetlands. The hope is that town planning boards and developers will utilize that map to conserve prime agricultural land. The Solar Development Mapping Tool is accessible from the County Planning Office webpage. Sam developed a solar eclipse mapping app for emergency management services planning.

Village of Heuvelton Comprehensive Plan. Staff have had preliminary discussions with the Village of Heuvelton about the preparation of a Village Comprehensive Plan. Staff will be attending a Village Board Meeting in February to further discuss the initiative.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

County Transit System. During the week of the 4th, Matilda attended the National RTAP conference in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina and learned about the emergence of microtransit services; calculating financial projections and forecasts of annual operating expenses; route planning; and training topics for transit drivers and transit managers. On the 12th, Matilda, County Mobility Manager Sonja Jensen, and Public Transit Manager Rena Ryan participated in a virtual meeting with Clarkson University staff about the use of stickers to adhere to undergraduate student ID cards in order to track the ridership of Clarkson undergraduate and graduate students. Later that day, Matilda participated in a virtual meeting with Jefferson County Mobility Manager John Exford to review how bus order workbooks are completed. On the 14th, Matilda met with The Arc's Chief Executive Office Lynn Pietroski and The Arc's Communications Director Michelle Quinell to discuss the preparation of a 2024 scope of work for The Arc's Communications Office. On the morning of the 19th, Matilda visited The Arc's Dispatch Office to review the revision of monthly fleet work order summaries. Later that day, Matilda met with Volunteer Transportation Center's Executive Director Sam Purington and County Mobility Manager Sonja Jensen to draft a 2024 scope of work for Mobility Management. On the 20th, Matilda met with The Arc's Comptroller to calculate some of Public Transit's 2023 marketing expenses. On the 28th, Matilda submitted reimbursement requests for the purchase of fleet technology, and DSS bus shelter expenses. Throughout the month, Lisa processed a yearend advertising revenue payment, an accelerated 4Q STOA payment, and a final ARPA payment for bus operations. Lisa also processed payments for First Mile Last Mile, and prepared College Connector and bus advertising invoices.