



Onondaga County Legislature

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PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES – OCTOBER 22, 2025 **DAVID H. KNAPP, CHAIR**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Meaker, Ms. Fiato, Ms. Harvey, Mr. Olson
ALSO ATTENDING: Chairman Burtis; also see attached

Chair Knapp called the meeting to order at 9:33 a.m., and the previous meeting's minutes were approved.

1. VISIT SYRACUSE:

- a. Designating Visit Syracuse as the Agency Authorized to Make Application to the New York State Department of Economic Development and to Receive Matching Funds Therefrom Under the New York State Tourist Promotion Act for January 1, 2026 Through December 31, 2026**

Chair Knapp presented the following:

- State money is available for tourism promotion
- Visit Syracuse is designated each year as an authorized agency to make application for matching funds

A motion was made by Mr. Olson, seconded by Mr. Meaker, to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

- 2. PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:** Troy Waffner, Director of Planning; Marty Skahen, Director of Community Development, Bob Petrovich, Deputy County Executive Economic Development
 - a. Calling for Publication of the Notice of Eight-Year Review of Agricultural District No. 1, Towns of LaFayette, Onondaga, Otisco, and Tully in Onondaga County**

***PURPOSE:** This resolution initiates the 8-year renewal process for New York State Agricultural District No. 1 on lands west of Route I-81 in the Towns of LaFayette, Onondaga, Otisco, and Tully. The resolution calls for publication of notice that the County Legislature has begun its 8-year review of the district.*

***OBJECTIVE / WORK PLAN:** New York's Agricultural Districts Law, Article 25-AA PDF of the NYS Agriculture and Markets Law (AML), was enacted in 1971 to help keep farmland in agricultural production. Agricultural districts are designed to protect agriculture through a combination of landowner incentives and protections that discourage the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses.*

Responsibility for the creation, review and management of the State's agricultural districts lies within the authority of the county's legislative bodies. NYS AML Sections 303 (district creation), 303-a (district review), 303-b (annual inclusion of lands) and 303-c (district consolidation) detail the role county agricultural and farmland protection boards and legislative bodies play in district creation and review and prescribe the public notice and public hearing requirements.

Per NYS AML Section 303-a, the county legislative body is responsible for conducting a review and renewal of each agricultural district in the county on an eight-year schedule. During the renewal period, landowners and municipalities can request to have property added to or removed from the district, usually January 1-30, to align with the annual open enrollment process for all districts in the County.

A report is then prepared by the Onondaga County Agriculture & Farmland Protection Board and presented to the County Legislature. The County Legislature reviews the report, holds a public hearing, and determines if the the district should be continued, terminated, or modified; and then submits its findings and required documentation to the Commissioner of Agriculture & Markets for certification.

Agricultural District No. 1 in the Towns of LaFayette, Onondaga, Otisco, and Tully currently has approximately 38,726 acres enrolled in the program.

FUNDING SOURCE: *No fiscal impact.*

BUDGET: *No fiscal impact*

Chair Knapp presented the following:

- There are 4 agricultural districts in Onondaga County; eight-year renewal rotates every other year
- Currently district 1 is up for renewal (LaFayette, Onondaga, Otisco, Tully)
- Being part of an agricultural district is about zoning, not taxes and has the following benefits
 - Protects farms and property from zoning that could negatively affect the farming operation
 - Any district can add property during a renewal period
 - Property can only be withdrawn during the cycle in which the corresponding district is up for renewal
- The Agricultural & Farmland Protection Board does a great job leading the review process to ensure properties qualify for protection
- Legislative staff coordinates mailings to every property owner within the towns of affected district

A motion was made by Mr. Olson, seconded by Ms. Fiato, to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

b. INFORMATIONAL: Quarterly Update on PlanOn

Community Development presented the following:

- *Community Development Funding Streams*
 - *Main Street \$5m*
 - *\$3.75m allocated with a match of \$1.4m for a total investment of \$5.15m*
 - *59 projects in 12 municipalities*
 - *\$1.25m Northside Main Street*
 - *In process*
- The program has been very successful
- There are very few villages where an impact from the Main Street program cannot be seen
 - Village of Liverpool, Marcellus, East Syracuse, and Manlius have all benefited
- Currently talking to business owners about the Northside Main Street program; there is a lot of interest
- There is money in the 2025 budget for another round of \$1M; currently reviewing applications
- *Housing Programs \$12m*
 - *\$5m for infrastructure*
 - *\$5m for Senior Housing*
 - *\$2m for mixed use*
 - *Still in the pipeline*
 - *Expecting significant increase when Micron work begins*
 - *Have been fielding calls recently from developers*
 - *Meeting with one on Friday proposing a big project*
 - *O-CHIP is very successful*
 - *Awarded over \$8.6m in grants to support nearly \$845m in development*
 - *Funding will create nearly 2,300 units of housing*
 - *70% in City, 30% in suburbs*
 - *Applications keep coming in*

Questions/Comments from the Committee:

- How much money is left in O-CHIP?
 - \$6.4M plus the \$12M approved through Planning
- Commend County Executive and Community Development staff on Main Street Program
- The housing programs have had a dramatic impact
- The infrastructure (sidewalks, street lights, etc.) is not keeping up with the beautiful things that have been done
- Suggest looking at programs available that can help municipalities
 - Would be a logical next step for the future
- Is there money available for infrastructure?
 - The infrastructure money is for residential infill development where the site does not have the proper sewer and water running into the property
- Where exactly on the Northside?
 - Anywhere, but will depend on what businesses respond
 - Will apply the same principles to cluster a footprint where it makes a significant change; do not want to jump around
 - Currently doing the footwork on the Northside to get properties together
 - Would like to see it on the Westside also
- Shout out to Mike LaFlair who works directly with the municipalities to get paperwork done

Department of Planning presented the following:

Comments from Chair Knapp

- Congratulations to Troy Waffner, Director of Planning, for receiving the Cornell Cooperative Extension Association Cooperator Award of the Year in the category of Agriculture and Food Systems

Greenways + Blueways - \$5,000,000*Department of Planning*

- *\$5M toward implementation of planning objectives relative to development and improvement of greenway and blueway programming and facilities. These projects may be county projects in parks, but will also include potential funding to municipalities, and possibly even private interests to further greenway and blueway development. Where possible, these funds will be matched with other funding sources.*

Quarterly Activities:

1. *Greenways + Blueways Masterplan: Colliers has been awarded the contract for developing the Greenways + Blueways Masterplan. Work is estimated to begin on or around January. The Masterplan development will take approximately twelve months. The contract is for \$214,300.*
 - Colliers will collaborate with municipalities to see what ideas are out there and work towards a spending plan
 - Will look for grants outside of county government
2. *Greenways + Blueways Grant Program: Approximately \$1.2 million has been set aside for the Greenways + Blueways Grant Program of which \$885,000 has been awarded.*
 - Grant program is to assist municipalities with greenway + blueway projects
 - The \$88K awarded was mostly spent on planning and design which includes:
 - Village of Skaneateles
 - Plan is to go from Empire State Trail to Martisco and eventually to the Village of Marcellus
 - Shotwell Brook (headwaters to Skaneateles Lake)
 - Will put trails on the property owned by Finger Lakes Land Trust
 - Town of Camillus
 - Will make improvements to trail heading west away from the village along the canal to solve flooding issues

- Village of Marcellus
 - Creating a gateway trail across from the school that will include handicap fishing along the creek
 - Eventually will tie to the Village of Camillus and Martisco
 - The idea originated with students from Marcellus as part of a science program
 - Village of Fayetteville
 - Will create the first blueway using a small feeder creek to get to the Erie Canal
 - Village of Baldwinsville
 - Requested \$50K to finish sections of the trail through the village and along Paper Mill Island; will send plans
 - Longer term vision is to tie into the Empire State Trail using public roadways
 - Will enhance the commercial area along the river
3. *Bear Trap Creek Trail: Working with SMTC on a connection plan for the Bear Trap Creek Trail to connect it to Park Street, Regional Market and Loop the Lake Trail. Also, looking at any improvements to the current length of the Bear Trap Creek Trail. The funding included for Bear Trap Creek is \$150,000.*
- Trying to figure out the best connection points coming down Ley Creek; will need some environmental cleanup
 - Current Bear Trap Creek Trail will need some improvements (paving, seating, etc.)
4. *Amphitheater Bypass Trail: Working with Parks Department on the development of an Amphitheater Bypass Trail. There is \$350,000 allocated for this project.*
- The trail currently goes through the middle of the lawn section and closes for 20-23 days for concerts
 - Looking for a way around the amphitheater so the trail is not crossing the side and back part
 - Still have \$1.8M left in the Greenways + Blueways fund
 - Upon completion of the Masterplan, financial assistance to municipalities will continue utilizing county money as matching funds for federal and state grants

Agriculture - \$5,000,000

Department of Planning

- *\$5M toward implementation of planning objectives found in Plan Onondaga and the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan centering on agritourism, farmland protection, and Regional Market improvements.*

Projects

- *Agritourism Grant Program: Generally completed with \$790,000 awarded to fifty-three agritourism operations.*
- \$2.5M in private match has helped agritourism operations
- Every section of the county benefited
- *Central New York Regional Market Strategy Plan: The Strategy Plan has been completed at an approximate cost of \$250,000.*
- *Central New York Regional Market Capital Improvement Project: The Capital Improvement Project(s) at the Regional Market being funded by the County will total approximately \$3.75 million and include a Gateway Entrance, Improvements to the C Shed and the construction and fit out of shared commercial kitchens. The contract with the Regional Market is in process.*
- C shed improvements will include new doors and insulation to make it a year round marketplace
- Gateway entrance on Park Street will provide clear signage for cars to enter the market
- There will also be a gateway entrance off Carbon Street for those people who walk to the market
 - To improve safety, the city will be adding sidewalks and bike paths around the perimeter of the market and stadium
- Shared commercial/ghost kitchens will allow people to experiment with recipes and start a restaurant to hopefully go into brick and mortar space

Questions/Comments from the Committee:

- Is there still a plan to take over the buildings where the produce people are now?
 - Chair Knapp presented the following:

- The county money will be used for physical upgrades, ghost kitchens, seed money for the regional economic development process
- Seeking \$40M grant through the RED SEE program (Regional Economic Development Seed Program)
- Grant would be used to:
 - Improve the areas where the produce people are
 - Build a facility for a food hub
 - Take in product from smaller producers
 - Process and package product to service larger institutions such as schools and Syracuse University
- That building is pivotal to the success of the entire project
- Is there a timeframe?
 - Yes, there is \$150M set aside for 3 regions
 - Each region is competing for \$50M
 - CNY Region will be submitting for the Regional Market by the end of November
 - Should know something by the end of the year
- When will the city begin the sidewalk and bike path project?
 - A great design is underway, with construction planned for late 2026 or 2027
- To make better use of the property, the market is hosting food truck rodeos as well other activities in conjunction with the Syracuse Mets games
- Have there been any talk or plans about putting in a stage for live music?
 - Have had 3 or 4 concerts in the F Shed this year
 - Need to be careful not to disturb the neighbors with loud music

Town Planning Grants - \$2,300,000

Department of Planning

- *\$2.3 million to assist municipalities in Onondaga County with the completion of updated Comprehensive Planning and related zoning regulations.*

Projects

\$1.393 million has been allocated to fourteen (14) municipalities for the updating of their Comprehensive Plans.

- Every corner of the county has been reached with the comprehensive planning money
- Put out RFP to begin Safe Streets For All strategy plan
 - Will work with municipalities to look at roadways, intersections, accident data and come up with interventions
 - The plan takes into account infrastructure of the road and mentality of drivers when driving
 - Being paid for by federal grant with small grant from county
- Will be about a 12 month process
- At that point, will be halfway through phase 2 of the housing plan

Questions/Comments from the Committee:

- Fayetteville is changing the housing code to look at different ways to create more housing opportunities

County Executive's Office presented the following:

- Small Business Micro Loans
- Target businesses that are up and running but need a little bit of help
- \$3M being deployed; had several applications
- Awarded 2-\$100K projects
 - Saving Face Barber Shop – Manlius and Baldwinsville
 - Provided \$100K loan for brick and mortar improvements
 - \$34K has been used so far; remaining will be coming in
 - Fisk Electric – Geddes
 - Provided \$100K loan for brick and mortar improvements

- Vetting a couple more applications
- Requirements for the program are:
 - An entity in existence for at least a year
 - Business in good standing
 - Not in arrears in property tax payments
 - No pending litigation
 - It is a niche opportunity; need to be big enough but not too big to be able to take advantage of the program
 - To receive \$100K; must have 50 FTE (full-time equivalent) employees or less; graduates down with the \$50K and \$25K program
- Unpacked approximately \$250K of the \$3M
- Once Micron breaks ground, believe there will be more activity

Questions/Comments from the Committee:

- Is there a contact?
 - Rob Schoeneck in Economic Development is running the program on a day to day basis
 - Entity now in place and trying to promote program
 - Mr. Schoeneck is promoting throughout the county in various towns and villages and other locations
 - Anything the County Executive’s office can do to promote more accurately would be appreciated
 - Below market interest rates are attractive compared to conventional commercial borrowing (+/- 3%)
- Are these grants, loans or both?
 - The \$25K and \$100K increments are loans
 - \$5K is also a loan but could be forgiven as a grant with certain metrics
- How long?
 - Supposed to be a revolving loan fund with low market interest
 - The goal is for it to be self-sustaining and to perpetuate the program in the future

The meeting was adjourned at 10:12 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



TAMMY BARBER, Deputy Clerk
Onondaga County Legislature

ATTENDANCE

COMMITTEE: PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
DATE: OCTOBER 22, 2025

NAME (Please Print)	DEPARTMENT/AGENCY
Dan Krantz	CE
Darcie Lesmaie	leg
John DeSantis	leg
Ethan LaMontagne	leg.
Troy Wathner	Planning
Bob Petrovich	CE
Marty Skalen	Community Dev.
Ryan Ockenden	Law