



Jefferson County
NEW YORK

2026 Quarterly Newsletter

A Message from the Jefferson County Department of Planning and Community Development

Jefferson County is entering 2026 with fresh energy and a sense of possibility. Across our towns, villages, and the City of Watertown, communities are revitalizing downtowns, modernizing infrastructure, supporting housing development, and protecting the natural and cultural assets that make our region special.

Our newly renamed Jefferson County Department of Planning and Community Development reflects this expanded vision for our work. Planning and community development are rooted in people, the places they care about, and the partnerships that bring community goals to life. Connecting Jefferson County's towns, villages, and city with funding opportunities through project scoping, grant writing, and program administration, guiding comprehensive planning and zoning efforts, strengthening local boards, or coordinating countywide initiatives that build resilience and open new doors for growth.

The **Jefferson County Planning Board (CPB)** remains a cornerstone of that support. Each month, the CPB reviews proposed zoning and land-use actions to help identify intermunicipal or countywide impacts, ensuring that local decisions contribute to a stronger, more coordinated future for all of Jefferson County.

This year's newsletter highlights that spirit of collaboration. Inside, you'll find updates on the 239-m review process, local board training opportunities, and new staff who are ready to assist your community. You'll also see a renewed focus on helping communities plan smarter, grow sustainably, and take advantage of the opportunities ahead.

As 2026 unfolds, we invite every municipality to think boldly about what's next. The County is here to help and ready to share data, connect resources, and support local visions that move Jefferson County forward.

Together, we're planning what's next for Jefferson County.

175 Arsenal Street, Watertown, New York 13601

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Phone: (315)785-3144 Fax (315) 785-5092

Staff Members and Updates

Meet the New Planning Director!

Hartley Bonisteel Schweitzer, AICP, joined Jefferson County as Planning Director in September, bringing a strong record of work in community development, comprehensive planning, and infrastructure coordination across Northern New York.

A North Country native and a graduate of Cornell University, she has spent more than fifteen years supporting local governments and regional initiatives. Some readers may recall her earlier tenure with Jefferson County, when she served as a Community Development Coordinator and assisted towns and villages with zoning updates, comprehensive plans, and the 239-m review process. Since then, she has worked in both the public and private sectors, helping communities statewide advance projects in housing, water and wastewater systems, and downtown revitalization before returning to Jefferson County to lead the department. She resides in Watertown with her family.

Meet the new Community Development Coordinator!

Aileen Anderson joined the Planning Department as a Community Development Coordinator in November. Alongside the planning staff, Aileen reviews projects submitted to the Jefferson County Planning Board, assists local communities with planning activities, and works on county-wide community planning projects and initiatives.

A native of Watertown, NY, and graduate of Le Moyne College, Aileen brings deep expertise in federal grants management, as well as experience in procurement, government business management, program technical assistance, and housing. Aileen served 17 years with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), most recently as a Senior Grants Management Specialist leading junior staff in managing a large portfolio of complex and dynamic federal grants. After separating from federal service in September, Aileen is excited and grateful to continue in public service at a new, more local level.

Planning Staff:

Director: Hartley Bonisteel Schweitzer, AICP

Senior Planner: Andy Nevin

Community Development Coordinators:

Sam Wilson

Aileen Anderson

GIS Specialist:

Michelle Bunny

Typist: Emerald Macilvennie



Congratulations to Senior Planner Andy Nevin, who was recently honored for his 25 years of dedicated public service to Jefferson County. His expertise and commitment to thoughtful planning have strengthened our department and the communities we support. We are grateful for his contributions and delighted to see him recognized!

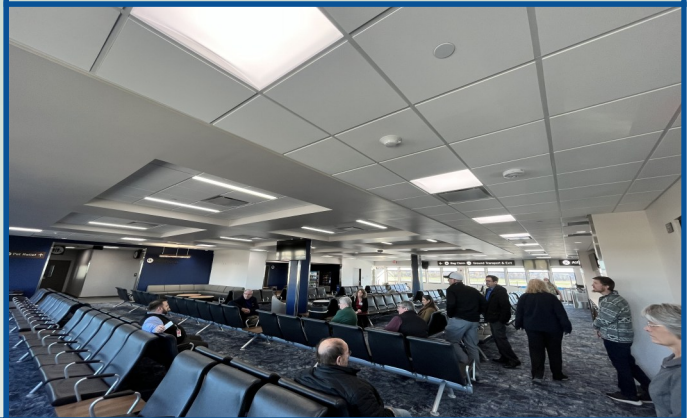
County Planning Board 2026 Meeting Schedule

The Jefferson County Planning Board meets the last Tuesday of each month at 4:00 p.m. in the Planning Department Conference Room, 175 Arsenal Street, Watertown, unless otherwise noted. The October meeting will be at the Watertown International Airport. (*Submission deadlines are typically set 12 days before each meeting.*)

Submission Deadline	CPB Meeting Date
Thursday, January 15	Tuesday, January 27
Thursday, February 12	Tuesday, February 24
Thursday, March 19	Tuesday, March 31
Thursday, April 16	Tuesday, April 28
Thursday, May 14	Tuesday, May 26
Thursday, June 18	Tuesday, June 30
Thursday, July 16	Tuesday, July 28
Thursday, August 13	Tuesday, August 25
Thursday, September 17	Tuesday, September 29
Thursday, October 15	Tuesday, October 27
Thursday, November 12	Tuesday, November 24
Thursday, December 17	Tuesday, December 29



Photos from the October 2025 CPB meeting, held at the Watertown International Airport. We had a “behind the scenes” tour of the newly opened terminal for the members!



What to Send:

Each referral must include a “**full statement**” of the action being reviewed. That means everything your local board has received as part of the application, such as:

- A completed **Environmental Assessment Form (EAF)**
- **Site plans** drawn to scale, showing existing and proposed features
- **Project descriptions**, reports, or studies (traffic, drainage, lighting, etc.)
- The **proposed zoning text** or local law if it involves a code amendment

Submitting a complete package ensures both the local and County boards can make timely, informed recommendations.

Planning Board Members:

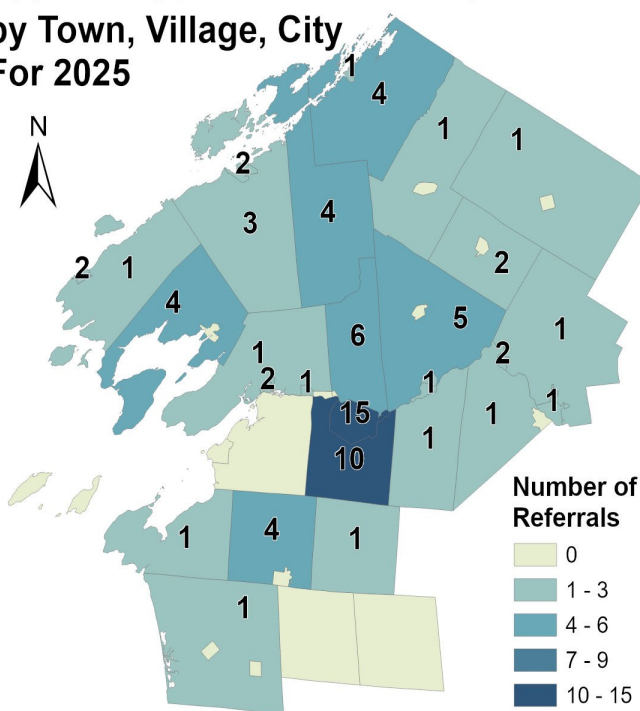
- Donna Dutton
- Randy Lake
- Lisa Ruggiero
- Jean Waterbury
- John Stano
- Neil Katzman
- Richard Nuijens
- Jon Storms
- Mitch Robinson– New member
- Joe McLaughlin– New member
- Karen Freeman– New member

Understanding General Municipal Law §239-m

When your board reviews a project that could affect neighboring communities, New York State General Municipal Law Section 239-m—or “239-m” for short—helps make sure everyone is on the same page.

This law requires towns, villages, and cities to send certain zoning or land-use actions to the Jefferson County Planning Board (CPB) for review before taking final action. The goal is simple: to identify potential county-wide or inter-municipal impacts, such as changes in traffic, drainage, or land-use patterns along shared borders.

239-M PROJECT REFERRALS by Town, Village, City For 2025



Why 239-m Matters:

The 239-m process exists to promote good communication and coordinated planning between towns, villages, cities, and the County. It helps identify and resolve potential county-wide or inter-municipal impacts before a project moves forward.

When a Referral Is Required:

Your board must send a referral to the County Planning Board **only when**:

The action involves one of the following:

- Adoption or amendment of a zoning law, ordinance, or local law
- Adoption or amendment of a comprehensive plan
- Site plan approval
- Issuance of a special use permit
- Granting of a use or area variance

And the property affected by that action is located **within 500 feet** of any of the following:

- The boundary of another city, village, or town
- The boundary of an existing or proposed County or State park or recreation area
- The right-of-way of any existing or proposed County or State road, highway, or parkway
- The boundary of County or State-owned land on which a public building or institution is located
- A farm operation within a NYS Certified Agricultural District

If the project does *not* meet both of these conditions, a County referral is **not required**.

When in doubt, contact **Jefferson County Planning Department!**

Staff can quickly confirm whether the 500-foot rule applies and what materials you'll need to include.

Call: (315) 785-3144 Email: planning@jeffersoncountyny.gov

Local Board Training

New York State law requires members of Planning Boards and Zoning Boards of Appeals to complete **at least 4 hours of annual training**. Each municipality decides which formats it will accept for credit, and many allow a variety of options, including workshops, webinars, reading assignments, and regional conferences.

Several free training opportunities are available online:

Jefferson County Planning Department: jeffersoncountyny.gov/Planning

Tug Hill Commission: tughill.org/services/training

NYS Department of State – Land Use Training: dos.ny.gov/training-assistance

New York Planning Federation (for member municipalities): nyplanningfederation.org

In 2026, the Jefferson County Planning Department will again partner with the Tug Hill Commission and Jefferson Community College to host in-person and hybrid workshops on land use procedures, SEQR, comprehensive planning, and zoning updates.

Notices of upcoming sessions will be distributed by email and posted on the County website.



This photo was taken at the most recent Land Use training provided by the New York State Department of State at Jefferson Community College in October 2025.

The workshop provided all attendees with 2 Credit hours and a certificate upon completion!