

TOWN AND VILLAGE OF CLAYTON LOCAL WATERFRONT REVITALIZATION PROGRAM

MEETING SUMMARY

Purpose:	Waterfront Advisory Committee (WAC) Meeting #4
Date and Time:	May 13, 2026, 2:00 pm
Location:	Virtual
Attendees:	See Below
Agenda:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Welcome 2. Public Engagement Update 3. Resiliency & Risk Assessment 4. Proposed LWRP Project Discussion 5. Next Steps

1. Welcome

Discussion

Jen Ceponis (MJ) welcomed the Committee to the fourth Waterfront Advisory Committee meeting and reviewed the agenda.

Agenda:

- Welcome
- Public Engagement Update
- Resiliency & Risk Assessment
- Proposed LWRP Project Discussion
- Next Steps

Jen Ceponis (MJ) provided an update of the project schedule and current status.

- Fall/Winter 2025 – Inventory and Analysis, Community Outreach Process & Plan
- Winter/Spring 2026 – Stakeholder group meetings, 1st Public Information Meeting, Online community survey
- Spring 2026 – Proposed land/water uses and projects
- Summer 2026 – Draft LWRP in process, 2nd Public Information Meeting
- Fall/Winter 2026/2027 – Preliminary Draft LWRP submitted to DOS, DOS Review Process (timing to be determined)

Jen Ceponis (MJ) highlighted which components of the LWRP are already underway. LWRP Components already underway are noted with an arrow.

- Section 1 -- Waterfront Revitalization Area Boundary (Task 7)
- Section 2 – Inventory and Analysis (Task 8)
- Section 3 – Local Waterfront Revitalization Policies (Task 10)



1. Welcome

Discussion

- Section 4 – Proposed Land and Water Uses and Proposed Projects (Task 11)
- Section 5 – Techniques for Local Implementation (Task 13)
- Section 6 – State and Federal Actions Likely to Affect Implementation (Task 14)
- Section 7 – Local Commitment and Consultation (Task 15)

Key Decisions & Outcomes

N/A

2. Public Engagement Update

Discussion

Melia Hema (MJ) provided an update of the engagement activities:

- Public Open House #1
- Waterfront Survey
- Stakeholder Group Meetings

Waterfront Survey

- Online via Survey Monkey
- Live from March 4, 2026 - March 25, 2026
- Publicized via email, flyer, website, Open House #1, Chamber of Commerce
- 14 Questions
- Number of Responses: 236

Survey Highlights

Q1. Connection to Clayton

- Almost half of respondents (48.7%) identified as property owners in the Town or Village of Clayton.
- Year-round residents were the second most common group, representing 43.6% of respondents.
- Those who selected “Other” most often described themselves as frequent visitors or volunteers in Clayton.

Q3. Indicate Age

- The most common age group was 65–74 years old (27.9%), closely followed by 55–64 years old (27.1%), and then 35–44 years old (13.5%).

Q6: What activities do you do at the waterfront?

- The most popular activity was eating or drinking at restaurants or cafés (91.0%).
- Attending community events or festivals was the second most popular choice (79.1%).
- Respondents identified Frink Park, Rotary Park, Riverside Drive, Clayton Marina, and French Creek as key locations for these activities.

Q9: How do you typically get to Clayton’s waterfront area?

- Traveling by car was the most common way to reach waterfront areas (73.4%).



2. Public Engagement Update

Discussion

- Walking (48.3%) and boating (44.5%) were also popular options among respondents.

Q10: What are additional waterfront amenities, access, or services you'd like to see?

- Public parking was the most selected option (54.0%). There was also strong support for walking trails or paths (51.1%), swimming areas (50.7%), and public restrooms (48.3%).
- Respondents that selected "Other," suggested expanded sidewalks, increased water access in the Village, and dog parks.

Q12: Waterfront Vision

- Most responses focused on the need to preserve current ecological health and community character.

Key Themes

- **Development that caters to all ability levels:**
 - *"I'd like to see a walkable Town where people can age in place..."*
- **Public Access:**
 - *"The future of Clayton's waterfront should center on accessible recreation, walkability, and vibrant public spaces..."*
- **More events and retail options:**
 - *"Clayton will be the go-to destination for recreation in the Thousand Island shaping the region into a sustainable future."*

Q13: Additional Comments

- **Housing and affordability:**
 - Concern about vacation rentals
- **Comments on waterfront access and what development would be appropriate:**
 - *"Public views and access to waterfront should be paramount..."*
 - *"...Maintaining and supporting a working waterfront... diversifies the local economy, provides a year-round jobs and protects against downturns in tourism cycles..."*

Stakeholder Group Meetings

- Virtual meetings with people key knowledge in their field held on April 1 and April 2, 2026.
- Stakeholder Groups:
 - Environment & Sustainability
 - Local and Regional Partners & Community Services
 - Local Arts and History Community
 - Parks and Recreation
 - Economic Development & Business

Stakeholder Group Meeting Highlights

- Limited parking and congestion from traffic circulation can limit access and enjoyment of waterfront.
- Need for shared calendar among Clayton businesses and organizations to assist with coordination of events and activities.
- Increased boating traffic impacts other water recreation.

2. Public Engagement Update

Discussion

- Limited attainable housing continues to affect businesses and emergency/ first responder departments in need of employees and volunteers.
- The IDA's role is to support Clayton and other municipalities in their efforts, not to direct decision-making.

Public Engagement Common Themes

- Emphasized the importance of preserving Clayton's character while encouraging well-managed growth that supports its identity as a family-friendly, year-round destination with a working waterfront.
- Key priorities included improving walkability and connectivity along State Routes 12 and 12E through expanded bike and pedestrian infrastructure, enhancing water-based recreation access.
- Community members also highlighted the recreational value of Grindstone Island and Zenda Farms and the need for continued environmental stewardship through shoreline protection, marsh conservation, and wildlife preservation.
- Additional recommendations included expanding community events and recreational opportunities.

Key Decisions & Outcomes

There were no participants in the Environment & Sustainability and Local and Regional Partners & Community Services stakeholder group meetings. MJ will reach out to contacts from both groups to encourage them to participate in the next phase of public engagement and/or to submit comments and ideas at anytime during the plan process.

3. Resiliency & Risk Assessment

Discussion

Jen Ceponis (MJ) introduced the resiliency and risk assessment topic and its purpose in the LWRP and asked Peter Zimmer (DOS) to provide an overview of the upcoming DOS Resiliency Training.

"Resilience is the capacity for a community and its ecosystem to withstand extreme events and other forces or risks; quickly recover the interconnected social, economic and ecological systems' structure and function in the aftermath of a disaster; and develop ongoing adaptability to rapidly changing environmental conditions and forces."

More information about the DOS Resiliency Program can be found at <https://dos.ny.gov/resilience-planning>.

The DOS will conduct a training with the WAC at WAC meeting #5 in July.

Key Decisions & Outcomes

N/A



4. Proposed LWRP Project Discussion

Discussion

Jen Ceponis (MJ) provided an overview of the purpose of Section IV and introduced the Proposed LWRP Projects .

What's in Section IV

- Identifies proposed land and water uses
- Potential projects to support existing and proposed land and water uses
- Discussion of the Harbor Management Plan

What's the goal of Section IV

- Identifies proposed land and water uses
- Potential projects to support existing and proposed land and water uses
- Discussion of the Harbor Management Plan

What's the benefit of Section IV

- Implements the LWRP through proposed projects
- Unlocks funding opportunities for the proposed projects
- Provides clarity and guidance for local decision makers by highlighting the impact and timeframes of projects

How are LWRP Projects Identified?

- Discussions at WAC Meetings
- Public Open House #1
- Waterfront Survey
- Input at Stakeholder Meetings
- Professional Expertise

Proposed Project Categories

- Infrastructure & Resilience
- Public Space & Recreation
- Accessibility & Connectivity
- Natural Resources & Environment
- Public Safety
- Housing & Economic Development

Infrastructure & Resilience

- Upgrade Clayton Village Office Building
 - Invest in resiliency upgrades to the Clayton Village Office Building to better serve the public
- Green Streets
 - Develop Green Streets strategy to manage stormwater and reduce pollutants into St. Lawrence River.
 - Promote green infrastructure and tree planting throughout village to improve drainage and enhance the pedestrian environment.
- Reconstruct French Creek Bridge (Rte 12E)

4. Proposed LWRP Project Discussion

Discussion

- Reconstruct French Creek Bridge (Rte 12E) and create walking trails underneath
- Widen opening of French Creek
- Include fishing access (assess feasibility)
- Clayton Opera House Restoration & Modernization
 - Invest in restoration of historic features of Clayton Opera House
 - Modern and improve energy-efficiency

Public Space & Recreation

- Clayton Riverfront Swimming Area
 - Study feasibility of creating a shallow beach (areas mentioned by public – south of Clayton Harbor municipal marina, Centennial Park, Washington Island/Causeway)
- French Creek Accessible kayak launch
 - Create an accessible, public kayak launch at French Creek
 - Explore partnership with French Creek Marina
- Frink Park Scuba Diving Platform
 - Discuss location for platform/raft
 - Install a diving platform/raft on east end of Frink Park or at the Harbor Hotel public docks
 - Install signage about nearby shipwrecks and scuba diving to educate public
- Waterfront Dog Park
 - Identify area for a public dog park in waterfront area
- French Creek Blue Way Trail
- Lions Field & Parking Lot Site Study
 - What is the best use of this part for the community?
- Identify recreation opportunities for families with small children

Accessibility & Connectivity

- Comprehensive wayfinding signage system
 - Street side and water facing
- ADA-compliant sidewalks village-wide (Webb St specifically mentioned)
- Downtown Parking & Circulation Management
 - Inventory and assess parking supply and utilization for private vehicles and boat trailers
 - Identify satellite parking areas for events
 - Improve signage of public parking areas
 - Install directional signage for parking and major destinations (signage and wayfinding – is this needed for pedestrians?)
 - Identify pedestrian connections / walking routes between parking and destinations
 - Assess feasibility of shuttle / identify partnerships
- Connect to Sissy Danforth Rivergate Trail
 - Connect Sissy Danforth Rivergate trail to Riverwalk/ waterfront area
- Multimodal Corridor & Connections Study
 - Corridor Study of Route 12E to improve bicycle and pedestrian connections to Alexandria Bay and Cape Vincent
 - Corridor Study of Route 12 to improve bicycle and pedestrian connections within Village

4. Proposed LWRP Project Discussion

Discussion

The Village of Clayton stated that new bus route in Jefferson County is set to start in June.

Natural Resources & Environment

- Goose Bay Water Quality
 - Improve water flow to Goose Bay to improve water quality
 - Causeway planned to be replaced in 2027 – as part of the design process, DEC limited culverts to protect spawning grounds
- French Creek Sediment Reduction
 - Control/reduce sediment in French Creek, especially under Route 12E Bridge

Public Safety

- French Creek Bay Safety Lighting
 - Improve lighting in French Creek Bay to improve safety and reduce conflicts between commercial and recreational boaters in the evening
- Boater Safety Education
 - Identify potential partners to:
 - Raise awareness / education about designated anchorage areas to reduce conflicts with recreational boaters (especially at night)
 - Raise awareness about scuba diving in St. Lawrence River to avoid conflicts

Housing & Economic Development

- Grab-and-Go Dining
 - Identify location for food truck park
 - Encourage new dining options that provide quick service or grab-and-go options
- Short-Term Rental Management
 - Monitor growing number of short-term rentals
 - Identify potential zoning, enforcement and other regulatory approaches to manage STRs and balance housing availability
- Motel Redevelopment and Housing Strategy
 - Evaluate land use strategies to address underutilized motels for housing, other redevelopment for essential housing (i.e. Alex Bay)
- Regional Economic Development Coordination
 - Create a community calendar of events to help with the coordination and communication about local and regional events.
 - Cultivate partnerships to strengthen area as a regional destination
 - Establish committee or other group to meet regularly

Key Decisions & Outcomes

- Peter Zimmer (DOS) reminded the Committee that proposed projects do not have to meet all 44 coastal policies, however the proposed project cannot be inconsistent with *any* policy.
- The WAC confirmed that “Goose Bay” should be referred to as “Upper Goose Bay.”
- There are limited family friendly restaurants in the downtown and grab-and-go options should be encouraged but food trucks have posed a challenge.

4. Proposed LWRP Project Discussion

Discussion

- The WAC recommended changing the staving on Mary Street as a possible project. Instead of vertical, the staving should run horizontally.
- The WAC requested that an expanded breakwater system be added to the proposed project list.
- The Sissy Danforth Rivergate Trail project should include lighting between the northern end and Town. Committee members stated that this would benefit essential workers who use the trail for transportation.
- The WAC discussed including Cerow Recreation Park Improvements in the proposed project list.
- The WAC recommended expanding public dock space as a potential project.
- DOS will share its brochure on accessibility to provide guidance to the WAC on potential projects.
- The WAC supported extending the Riverwalk to the Antique Boat Museum or Kellogg's. Previous discussions have explored extending the Riverwalk, and a concept plan has already been prepared.

5. Next Steps

Discussion

Jen Ceponis (MJ) provided an overview of the next steps:

- Continue preparation of LWRP Sections
- Next WAC Meeting (#5)– Wednesday, July 8th
 - Resiliency Training
- WAC #6 Meeting – September
 - Refined Proposed Projects
 - Discuss Public Workshop #2
- LWRP Project Website: www.claytonlwrp.com

Key Decisions & Outcomes

- The Committee selected July 8th, 2026 as their next meeting date, MJ will send calendar invite.
- Peter Zimmer asked Committee members to think more about project in the proposed, WRA and how projects in the expanded area can tie to the waterfront and support approval of the expansion.

This meeting summary conveys our understanding of the items discussed and agreements reached at this meeting. Please forward any additions, corrections and/or questions to my attention.

Submitted by:

Melia Hema, MJ Engineering and Land Surveying, P.C.



cc: Consultant Team, Comprehensive Plan Update Committee, Town File



Waterfront Advisory Committee

Name	Present
Nancy Hyde	☑
Kristi Dippel	☑
Tim Doney	X
David Powers	☑
Kevin Patchen	☑
Doug Rogers	☑
Dave Wilder	☑
James Ganter	X
Mike Hooson	☑
Robert Riddoch	X
Ron Duford	X

Consultant Team and Support

Name	Affiliation	Present
Jen Ceponis, Project Lead	M.J. Engineering	☑
Melia Hema	M.J. Engineering	☑
Kerry Gibson	M.J. Engineering	☑
Peter Zimmer	Department of State	☑
Mike Boccuzzi	Department of State	☑

