Canton Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP)

Waterfront Advisory Committee (WAC)
Meeting #1 Summary Notes

October 16, 2025
6:00PM – 7:45PM
Canton Municipal Building

Attendance

LWRP Committee
Tom Langen, Committee Chair
Wayne Cuthbert
Tom Greene
Kara McLuckie
Meghan Richardson
Leigh Rodriguez
Keith Zimmerman

Absent
Tim Bacon
John Danis

Barton & Loguidice
Keith Ewald, Senior Managing Landscape Architect
Dan Theobald, Project Community Planner

Aubertine & Currier
Brian Jones, AIA

4ward Planning
Todd Poole (absent)

Department of State
Greta Alvarado (absent)

The first meeting of the Waterfront Advisory Committee (WAC) for the Town and Village of Canton's Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) served as the official project kickoff. The meeting's goals were to:

- Introduce committee members, consultants, and project partners.
- Review the 2018 Waterfront Revitalization Area (WRA) along the Grasse River and discuss the inclusion of the Oswegatchie River, as required by the 2024 NYS Department of State (DOS) LWRP Preparation Guidance.
- Begin identifying strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities related to Canton's waterfront resources.

Dan Theobald (B&L) opened the meeting by reviewing the agenda, which included:

1. Introductions
2. What is an LWRP?
3. Planning Process Overview
4. WRA Boundary Discussion
5. Brainstorming Discussion (SWOT Analysis)
6. Next Steps

This project was prepared with funding provided by the New York State Department of State under Title 11 of the Environmental Protection Fund.

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1. Introductions

Dan and Keith introduced themselves and described B&L's role in facilitating the LWRP process. Brian Jones, Architect with Aubertine & Currier, joined via Zoom and introduced himself. Keith also described the role of Todd Poole (4ward Planning), who will lead the economic and market analysis components.

The designated NYS Department of State (DOS) representative, Greta Alvarado, was unable to attend.

Each committee member introduced themselves, highlighting their roles and interest in the waterfront planning process:

- Leigh Rodriguez: Director of Economic Development, Village of Canton. Involved in coordination across departments and emphasized the value of connecting recreation and economic development.
- Megan Richardson: Village Recreation Director, lifelong Canton resident. Recently secured grant funding for new recreational facilities.
- Tom Langen: Committee Chair, Grasse River Heritage member, Clarkson University Professor of Ecology and Environmental Science, and participant in the 2018 Plan.
- Kara McLuckie: Village Board member, SUNY Canton staff, member of the Complete Streets Task Force, focused on pedestrian and bicycle access.
- Wayne Cuthbert: Town Council member, long-time resident, interested in improving recreation access.
- Tom Greene: St. Lawrence University faculty member, environmental psychologist, and member of Grasse River Heritage.
- Keith Zimmerman: former director of planning for St. Lawrence County.

Dan reviewed the project schedule, noting that it remains consistent with the original proposal timeline. The immediate focus will be to refine the Waterfront Revitalization Area boundary, prepare the Community Outreach Plan, and begin drafting the Inventory and Analysis section of the LWRP.

2. LWRP Overview

Keith and Dan provided an overview of the LWRP program and its benefits. The LWRP is a State-recognized land and water use plan under the Waterfront Revitalization of Coastal Areas and Inland Waterways Act, providing communities with an implementation framework and eligibility for State funding.

They described the two major components of an LWRP:

- **Project Component**: identifies specific capital and planning projects for implementation.
- **Program Component**: includes policy updates, local law amendments, and coordination mechanisms to strengthen local control over waterfront resources.

3. Our Planning Process

B&L explained the step-by-step planning process following the NYS DOS LWRP Preparation Guidance (2024), emphasizing:

- Data collection and existing condition analysis
- Public and stakeholder engagement
- Policy development and project identification
- Draft plan preparation and adoption

The process will include close collaboration between the WAC, DOS, and the consultant team to ensure consistency with State coastal policies.

4. Section I – Waterfront Revitalization Area (WRA) Boundary Discussion

The committee reviewed large-format maps of the existing WRA boundary from the 2018 plan. The Village of Rensselaer Falls, located within the Town of Canton, has opted not to participate in this LWRP; therefore, the Oswegatchie segment within that village will not be included.

Key Discussion Points and Recommendations:

- Grasse River (Village of Canton):
    - Extend the boundary eastward to include all of St. Lawrence University, to enhance student access to the riverfront.
    - Include as much of the Little River as possible.
    - Extend boundary along Main Street to improve downtown, waterfront connectivity.
    - Extend boundary out to FS Banford Elementary and JM McKenney Middle School, enabling potential trail links to the waterfront and Partridge Run Golf & Country Club.
    - Include all of the village owned Partridge Run Golf & Country Club. The golf course has trails that could be extended to the waterfront.
    - Western Village Area: Extend boundary to the Village municipal limits to include The Arc Jefferson–St. Lawrence property near SUNY Canton.
- Grasse River (Town of Canton):
    - Extend the southern boundary near Pyrites to encompass the Fire Department's recreation fields and future canoe launch.
    - Ensure Taylor Park beach is included.
- Oswegatchie River (Town of Canton):
    - Include Indian Creek Nature Preserve; B&L noted the need to use roadways rather than parcel lines to define the boundary and cautioned that DOS may limit inclusion if the area is deemed too far from the riverfront. Keith also stated that DOS may deny the inclusion of the nature preserve as they denied the inclusion of one he is working on for another municipality.

5. Brainstorming & SWOT Analysis

Dan facilitated a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) discussion focused on both the Grasse River and Oswegatchie River areas.

Grasse River – Village of Canton:

- Weaknesses / Issues:

  - Limited public access points.
  - Dangerous crossings at Route 11; difficult north-south connectivity.
  - Poor lighting on covered pedestrian bridges.
  - Invasive species (mussels, red-eared slider turtles).
  - Shallow water levels and seasonal fluctuations.
- Opportunities / Strengths:
  - Potential to coordinate with NYS DOT on improved crossings and traffic signage.
  - Annual Rushton Canoe Races as a community asset.
  - Expanded trails and linkages to recreational areas.

Grasse River – Town of Canton:

- Flooding at Taylor Park and Pyrites recreational fields.
- Opportunities for improved drainage, dam maintenance, and expanded recreation infrastructure.

Oswegatchie River – Town of Canton:

- Issues / Weaknesses:
  - Boat launch could be improved; located along the Feeder Canal.
  - Limited access to waterfront resources.
  - Lack of parking and wayfinding signage.
  - Water quality degradation concerns.
  - Trespassing issues on private lands.
  - No designated trailhead or parking area for the existing snowmobile trail system.
  - Need to check the Comprehensive Plan for prior recommendations.
- Solutions / Strengths / Opportunities:
  - Add a kayak launch outside the Village to expand public access.
  - Establish a trailhead and parking area for the snowmobile/ATV trail system.
  - Explore extending multi-use trail connections along the former railroad corridor.
  - Opportunity to coordinate recreation access and signage improvements through the LWRP.

6. Next Steps

B&L summarized the upcoming work plan:

- Draft a revised WRA boundary for committee and DOS review.
- Develop a Community Outreach Plan for Leigh's review before distribution.
- Prepare Meeting Summary #1 (this document) and begin Inventory and Analysis data collection.
- Launch the Canton LWRP project webpage.

The committee discussed public engagement options, including setting up information booths at community events and hosting focus groups with local organizations and municipal departments. This information will be included in the Community Participation Plan.

Scheduling: Future meetings will be held on Tuesdays or Thursdays after 5:00 p.m., with Zoom access available.

Next Committee Tasks:

- Review the project matrix of prior plans to determine project status and continued relevance.
- Provide input on existing plans and studies (Leigh to share additional documents).
- Continue identifying waterfront opportunities, issues, and assets for discussion at the next meeting.

7. Meeting Adjourned

The meeting concluded at 7:45 p.m.