



FIRST 100 DAYS

A Foundation for the Future

July 2026

Village of Saranac Lake

A LETTER FROM THE MAYOR

One hundred days ago, I took an oath to serve the people of Saranac Lake.

Since then, I've spent my time listening, asking questions, learning how every part of our Village operates, and working alongside our employees, Board of Trustees, community organizations, business owners, and residents.

What has stood out most isn't the challenges we face. It's the people who are up for the challenge.

I've met residents who volunteer their time to improve our parks and neighborhoods. I've met business owners who continue to invest in our downtown and create opportunities for others. I've watched Village employees work long hours to keep essential services running. And I've spoken with people who may disagree on individual issues but share the same hopes for the future of our community.

I find hope in the people of Saranac Lake.

The first one hundred days of any administration are not enough time to solve long-standing challenges. However, they are enough time to establish priorities, strengthen an organization, and build the foundation for meaningful progress.

That's what the board, staff, and I have focused on.

Meaningful progress doesn't happen by accident. It happens when people work together, when systems function well, when expectations are clear, and when government earns the trust of those it serves.

The challenges ahead are substantial, but so are the opportunities.

Today, I am even more optimistic about Saranac Lake than I was before I became mayor because every day I see people stepping forward to make this community stronger.

I believe our best days are ahead!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kelly Brunette". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Kelly" and last name "Brunette" clearly legible.

Kelly Brunette
Mayor



SLHS Government Day



Meet-up with Assemblyman Michael Cashman and Sean Hennessey



Village Clean-up Day



Memorial Day



Pendragon Ribbon Cutting



MJ Engineering, Architecture, Surveying Ribbon Cutting



Anzac Day



Pride Celebration



Meet-up with Senator Dan Stec



Meet-up with Howard Riley, previous Village Manager and Mayor



WHERE WE STARTED — APRIL 2026

Like many communities across New York, Saranac Lake faces both significant challenges and tremendous opportunities.

Challenges

- Aging infrastructure
- Increasing costs
- Growing service demands
- Limited revenue and population growth
- Administrative transitions

Opportunities

- Dedicated employees
- Strong community organizations
- Significant grant funding
- Engaged residents
- Long-term planning already completed

Challenges do not define a community. How a community responds to them does.

WHAT WE KNOW

We listened to employees, residents, business owners, volunteers, and community organizations. Several themes emerged again and again.

- People care deeply about this community.
- Village employees work incredibly hard.
- Residents want clear communications from and with elected officials.
- Systems matter.
- Trust has to be earned.

What we learned will shape not only what we do, but how we do it.



BY THE NUMBERS

Saranac Lake is a small village with big responsibilities. Every day, Village government delivers essential services that residents depend upon while managing significant infrastructure needs and limited financial resources.

\$12 MILLION

Annual municipal operation supporting public safety, streets and sidewalks, snow and ice removal, parks and recreation, water and wastewater systems, planning and development services, code enforcement, and essential government functions.

75%

Approximate share of General Fund expenditures dedicated to personnel and employee benefits.

2%

Annual property tax cap constraint while costs continue to rise. The Village is also subject to state debt and bonding limitations that affect its ability to finance major capital projects.

\$39 MILLION

External grant funding secured to support clean water, efficient sewers, infrastructure improvements, parks, downtown investments, climate initiatives, and community projects that would otherwise be financially out of reach for a community our size.

\$115 MILLION ESTIMATE

Long-term infrastructure and facility needs identified through the Village's adopted Capital Improvement Plan. This figure is **not** a spending commitment, but rather a long-range inventory of potential needs that helps the Village prioritize projects and pursue funding opportunities over time.

These realities shape every decision we make. Decisions that require thoughtful planning, careful prioritization, and responsible stewardship of public resources.



BEFORE WE COULD START TO MAKE PROGRESS, WE HAD TO BUILD CAPACITY.

Before tackling long-term challenges, we needed to strengthen the foundation of Village government.

Progress requires dedicated people, effective systems, and a strong organization.

Strong organizations are built deliberately. They depend on capable people, clear expectations, and systems that allow good work to happen consistently.

The strongest solutions are built on the strongest foundations.



OUR FIRST STEPS

Good government depends on good systems. Managing a \$12 million organization requires sound financial practices, clear policies, and thoughtful decision-making that can build residents' trust in their government.

Actions Taken

- Adopted the 2026-2027 Village Budget.
- Adopted 2026-2027 Sewer Rates.
- Adopted a new Procurement Policy.
- Established dedicated Finance Work Sessions.
- Approved professional financial and legal services support.
- Began centralizing project tracking and financial reporting.

These actions strengthen accountability, improve financial oversight, and create a stronger framework for decision-making. Residents deserve a Village government that plans carefully, manages public resources responsibly, and follows through on its commitments.

Related Board Actions

84-2026, 85-2026, 96-2026, 106-2026, 109-2026, 111-2026, 115-2026, 137-2026, 138-2026, 140-2026, 141-2026



OUR FIRST STEPS

A village of approximately 5,000 residents depends on a relatively small workforce to deliver an extraordinary range of services. Every permit issued, every financial report completed, every road plowed, every water bill processed, every grant administered, and every emergency responded to depends on capable people working within effective systems.

Actions Taken

- Appointed a new Village Manager, Clerk, Treasurer, and Deputy Clerk/Treasurer in accordance with state law.
- Filled a Fire Driver position.
- Approved the hiring of three police officers.
- Established weekly leadership meetings and regular management reviews.
- Launched the Office of the Mayor webpage.
- Expanded information and resources on the Village website.
- Increased transparency by publishing meeting schedules, agendas, minutes, and membership information for Village advisory boards, committees, and task forces.
- Established the Housing Advisory Board and appointed members to the Housing Advisory Board and Climate Action Advisory Board.

Strong teams and clear systems are not always visible, but they create the capacity to deliver reliable services, respond to community needs, and successfully execute major projects.

Related Board Actions

89-2026, 98-2026, 109-2026, 110-2026, 116-2026, 117-2026, 119-2026, 123-2026, 129-2026, 130-2026, 132-2026, 133-2026, 134-2026



OUR FIRST STEPS

Maintaining and modernizing critical infrastructure is one of the Village's most important responsibilities. Reliable water, sewer, wastewater, streets, sidewalks, and other public utilities protect public health, support economic activity, and provide the foundation for everyday life.

Actions Taken

- Designated the Park Avenue Northern Replacement Sewer Line Project.
- Continued advancing sidewalk connections, including work with the Town of Harrietstown on the Ampersand Avenue sidewalk project.
- Accepted Smart Growth, Climate Smart Communities, and Zero Emission Vehicle grants.
- Approved an Emergency Water and Sewer Grant and Loan Program for eligible residents.
- Updated sewer regulations.
- Advanced water and wastewater planning and project development.
- Pursued cybersecurity funding for critical wastewater infrastructure.

Reliable infrastructure is rarely noticed when it works well, but it affects every resident every day. Planning ahead and pursuing outside funding whenever possible allows us to make needed investments while reducing the burden on local taxpayers.

Related Board Actions

85-2026, 93-2026, 95-2026, 101-2026, 108-2026, 112-2026, 113-2026, 114-2026, 118-2026, 120-2026, 125-2026, 127-2026, 128-2026, 131- 2026



OUR FIRST STEPS

Public spaces contribute directly to quality of life. Parks, trails, downtown improvements, recreation facilities, and neighborhood investments strengthen our community, support local businesses and tourism, and make Saranac Lake an even better place to live.

Actions Taken

- Approved paving, curb and sidewalk, asphalt milling, and gravel crushing contracts.
- Began testing more durable pavement markings on Main Street crosswalks.
- Worked with community partners to improve connections to the Adirondack Rail Trail.
- Authorized grant-writing services for Boothe River Park.
- Approved submission of a NY PLAYS grant application.
- Advanced planning for future athletic fields.
- Updated Downtown Streetscape Design Guidelines.

Some of these improvements are already underway, while others will require additional planning, engineering, design, permitting, and funding. Together, they represent a long-term commitment to vibrant public spaces, stronger neighborhoods, and an exceptional quality of life.

Related Board Actions

99-2026, 104-2026, 135-2026, 139-2026



PRIORITIES 2026-2030

Over the next four years, the Village will focus on projects identified in the Capital Improvement Plan that improve everyday life while protecting long-term financial stability.

Some projects are already underway. Others will require engineering, permitting, partnerships, grant funding, and public input before construction begins.

Initiatives will be evaluated based on public benefit, affordability, and the Village's ability to sustain it over time.

HOUSING

Objective

Increase year-round housing opportunities by removing barriers, supporting redevelopment, and helping property owners access available resources.

Funding Strategy

Private investment supported by state and federal housing programs, regional partnerships, and grant funding. The Village's primary role will be planning, coordination, permitting, and leveraging outside resources rather than direct construction.

How We Will Deliver

- Connect homeowners with available state and federal housing programs, such as single-family residential repair grants.
- Launch a housing initiative for the Village-owned Sand Pit property, including a development strategy.
- Advance policies and incentives that facilitate the conversion of vacant upper floors into year-round housing.
- Support accessory dwelling units (ADUs) consistent with neighborhood character.
- Inventory underutilized and vacant properties to identify housing redevelopment opportunities.
- Develop strategies to address long-term vacant properties through incentives and registration requirements.

NEIGHBORHOODS & PUBLIC SPACES

Objective

Strengthen neighborhoods by investing in parks, recreation, downtown, and public spaces that improve quality of life.

Funding Strategy

Local Waterfront Revitalization Program grants, Environmental Protection Fund grants, NY PLAYS, CFA funding, private investment and volunteer partnerships.

How We Will Deliver

- Complete planned improvements at Baldwin Park.
- Advance the planning and construction of Boothe River Park.
- Continue improvements at William Wallace Park and Garwood Park.
- Complete snowmaking improvements at Mt. Pisgah.
- Expand Riverwalk amenities, wayfinding, accessibility, and neighborhood connections.
- Implement the Downtown Streetscape Design Guidelines as redevelopment opportunities arise.
- Support neighborhood beautification initiatives through partnerships with community organizations, volunteers, and local businesses.

STREETS & SIDEWALKS

Objective

Create a safer, more connected transportation network for pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and people of all abilities.

Funding Strategy

Village Capital Budget combined with NYSDOT funding, Transportation Alternatives Program, Complete Streets, Safe Streets and Roads for All, and other state and federal transportation grants.

How We Will Deliver

- Complete the Woodruff Street reconstruction project.
- Prioritize reconstruction of streets and sidewalks identified in the Capital Improvement Plan.
- Coordinate sidewalk reconstruction with water, sewer, and roadway projects to reduce long-term costs.
- Develop and implement strategies to improve downtown parking.
- Increase enforcement of traffic laws related to speeding, crosswalk compliance, and the use of bicycles and e-bikes on sidewalks.
- Expand transportation connections between neighborhoods, schools, parks, downtown, Lake Colby Beach, and the Adirondack Rail Trail.
- Continue improving winter walkability through operational and equipment improvements.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Objective

Protect public health and support future growth through reliable water, sewer, and stormwater infrastructure.

Funding Strategy

FEMA Hazard Mitigation grants, Environmental Facilities Corporation financing, CFA funding, State Revolving Funds, federal infrastructure programs, and Village capital reserves where appropriate.

How We Will Deliver

- Advance water supply and distribution improvements to ensure we have reliable, safe water.
- Modernize the wastewater treatment plant and aging sewer collection systems.
- Complete engineering and environmental reviews needed to position projects for construction funding.
- Coordinate utility upgrades with future road reconstruction projects.
- Pursue climate resiliency and mitigation projects that reduce long-term maintenance costs and improve reliability.



PUBLIC SAFETY FACILITIES

Objective

Develop affordable, modern public safety facilities that meet the Village's long-term emergency service needs while protecting taxpayers.

Funding Strategy

USDA Rural Development financing, Restore New York, state and federal grants, capital reserves, strategic bonding when financially appropriate, and cost-sharing partnerships where feasible.

How We Will Deliver

- Complete a comprehensive review of the proposed Public Safety Building to determine the most affordable path forward.
- Evaluate project size, phasing, operating costs, and long-term financial impacts before committing to construction.
- Continue working with USDA Rural Development to preserve existing funding opportunities.
- Pursue Restore New York funding to redevelop the 33 Petrova Avenue property.
- Replace aging fire apparatus through a phased capital replacement program.
- Explore partnerships with neighboring municipalities and emergency service organizations to improve service or reduce costs.

AFFORDABILITY & RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT

Objective

Protect affordability by managing costs responsibly, pursuing outside funding, and improving the Village's long-term financial sustainability.

Funding Strategy

Annual budget process, operational efficiencies, grant funding, intermunicipal partnerships, capital planning, and long-term financial management.

How We Will Deliver

- Conduct regular financial work sessions with the Village Board and publicly discuss major financial decisions.
- Evaluate the long-term operating and maintenance costs of major projects before committing public funds.
- Prioritize projects based on affordability and long-term sustainability.
- Improve financial reporting and project tracking so residents better understand how public dollars are being spent.
- Build and maintain financial reserves to prepare for emergencies, equipment replacement, and future capital needs.
- Pursue grants and outside funding whenever possible to reduce the burden on local taxpayers.



WE MOVE FORWARD TOGETHER

Saranac Lake is a remarkable community.

People care about this Village. They volunteer. They serve. They start businesses. They raise families. They step forward when neighbors need help. That commitment is one of our greatest strengths, and it is the foundation on which our future will be built.

Success will not be measured by the number of reports we publish or meetings we hold. It will be measured by safer streets, stronger neighborhoods, reliable infrastructure, improved public spaces, responsible financial stewardship, modern public safety facilities, and a Village government that residents trust.

A village of five thousand people may seem small on a map, but communities like ours accomplish extraordinary things when people work together with a shared sense of purpose.

Today, our Village has a strong leadership team, better systems, a clearer direction, and renewed momentum than when I took office. We have begun important work, but there is much more to do.

The future of Saranac Lake will not be shaped by any one elected official or any one administration. It will be shaped by all of us – residents, employees, volunteers, business owners, community organizations, and partners – working together to solve problems, seize opportunities, and strengthen the place we are proud to call home.

We have laid the foundation. Now the real work begins!