

## NREC Meeting Minutes: January 6, 2020

Meeting Held at Julia Boyer Reinstein library  
1030 Losson Rd, Cheektowaga, NY 14227

Members present: Kerrie Gallo (Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper), Claudia Rosen (Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper), John Jarosz (Niagara Musky Association), Ann Ingleman (League of Women Voters of Buffalo Niagara), Jajeane Rose-Burney (WNY Land Conservancy), Larry Beahan (Sierra Club), Don Houck (Presbytery of Western New York), Bob Van Hise (Adirondack Mountain Club - Niagara Frontier), Lauren Makeyanko, (Buffalo Audubon Society)

### **Call to order: 2:00 pm**

- 1. Minutes approval** Motion to approve minutes from November 2019 made by Don, second by John. Lauren (Buffalo Audubon Society) abstains. Motion carries unanimously.
- 2. Chair update**
  - a. There have been no official GESC/ESC meetings since the last NREC meeting, however, there have been several project updates. One item required formal review, the Buffalo Audubon tern island project.
    - i. Claudia is in the process of updating the NREC website with these status updates from projects. There were 7 reports in the month of December, all will be uploaded and can be found on the member-only side of the NREC website.
  - b. The upcoming GESC/ESC cycle date, along with the proposed 2020 NREC meeting schedule, were sent to NREC members via email.
    - i. Ann and Bob did not receive this file. Claudia will be resend the document to them and upload it to the NREC website.
    - ii. Claudia will review NREC meeting schedule and make sure all meetings are set for Mondays. She will check 8/5 error and change to 8/3.
    - iii. Group discussed the option to change the NREC meeting schedule to allow for meeting before the GESC/ESC meetings. The group prefers to meet in person when voting is necessary for funding decisions, but is agreeable to voting via email when unanimous for greenway consistency decisions.
  - c. Financial update
    - i. Ann gave latest update available for end of September. The funding end balance is \$504,000.
    - ii. Continued discussion of NRECs ability to spend funds on a project. Kerrie has not yet been able to get in touch with contact Myra at the Community Foundation, but feels confident that per NREC bylaws there is nothing restricting the spending of funds.

- iii. Kerrie will continue to try and get in touch with Community Foundation to get the NREC funds question answered. She will have BNW CFO call Myra.
  - d. Secretary Election
    - i. Buffalo Audubon resigned position as secretary and a motion was made by Jejean to appoint Don Houck (Presbytery of Western New York) to the position. Larry seconds the motion and the group votes unanimously in favor.

### **3. Tern island habitat project update**

- a. This type of update doesn't typically get included in NREC meeting agenda. Kerrie included this update as an example of the type of updates she will authorize on behalf of the group. Aims to make the smaller decisions and engage in discussions.
- b. The tern island project update was a final design review that was consistent with what was proposed, did not include any significant changes, and was agreed upon by technical experts. For these reasons, Kerrie agreed on behalf of NREC.

### **4. 2020 NREC workplan and budget**

- a. A copy of the 2020 NREC work plan and budget was distributed to the group with assumptions and notes document. Increases this year are largely due to personnel changes and cost of living increases.
- b. The travel and supplies budget doubled to account for staff attendance at greenway commission meetings, NREC meetings outside of the BNW office, and potential rental fees for an NREC meeting space.
- c. Changes were made to hours and tasks to better fit the landscape of activities within this group and externally.
  - i. New items include two ad hoc groups NREC was invited to participate in- the Niagara River riparian restoration roundtable and a greenway pollinator partnership group. Greg Stevens (NRGC) has advocated for the GESC to take a lead role in those groups and discuss collaboration and inspiration of environmentally focused projects in the greenway.
    - 1. Greg offered endorsement of GESC/ESC and the large impact they have on the shape of greenway. Encourages their participation in meetings with stakeholders, to influence quality of applications they receive.
    - 2. 2020 work plan task #4 – “represent NREC's interests within the Niagara River Greenway” to represent NREC at select regional meetings
      - a. NREC members to think about what forums and issues the group would collectively be comfortable representing
        - i. Discussion of potential issues included the Queen City landing project at the Outer Harbor. Kerrie

voiced concern that this project is too controversial for NREC to come to consensus on involvement.

- ii. Motion to approve the 2020 NREC work plan and budget of \$35,912 made by Lauren, seconded by Ann, unanimous all in favor with one abstaining vote (Kerrie, Waterkeeper)

## 5. Greenway proposals

- a. Buffalo Olmsted Park System Wayfinding and Interpretive Signage
  - i. Discussion of comments encouraging coordination between the Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy, the City of Buffalo, the New York State Parks, and the Greenway Commission.
  - ii. Questions raised about the final approval process for the City of Buffalo Park System Wayfinding Standards Manual and the comprehensive interpretive plan for the Buffalo Olmsted Park System. Do the Greenway standards apply? Does the Olmsted Park System have its own set of standards? Do the standards of the City of Buffalo take precedent? Who develops the standards in the manual and who has the authority or higher jurisdiction to decide on standards if a conflict arises in the messaging between the City, the Conservancy, and the Greenway Commission?
  - iii. Question of how NREC can be notified of any potential response to these recommendations as the project will seek funding before a committee that NREC does not participate in.
  - iv. Unanimous all in favor that this project is consistent with the Niagara River Greenway Plan.
- b. Buffalo and Erie County Botanical Gardens and Expansion Project
  - i. Prior to submitting a proposal for funding, NREC recommends that the applicant clarify the details of the budget and specify the amount of funding it intends to seek from the Buffalo and Erie County Standing Committee.
  - ii. Suggestion to focus on native plants and living shorelines that demonstrate a clear connection to the Great Lakes Basin and WNY region.
  - iii. Unanimous all in favor that this project is consistent with the Niagara River Greenway Plan.
- c. Niagara Reservation State Park Visitors Center Programming Study
  - i. Unanimous all in favor that this project is consistent with the Niagara River Greenway Plan.
- d. Ralph C. Wilson Centennial Park
  - i. Discussion of project led by Kerrie. Work to determine feasibility is being done currently, engaging wide range of partners.
  - ii. Unanimous all in favor that this project is consistent with the Niagara River Greenway Plan, one abstention (Kerrie, Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper).

- e. Niagara Wheatfield Eco Campus
  - i. Permeable pavement, solar power sources, and LED lights are encouraged.
  - ii. Suggestion that prior to submitting a proposal for funding, the applicant should coordinate with the Greenway Ecological Standing Committee in order to improve the focus and scope of their application.
  - iii. Unanimous all in favor that this project is consistent with the Niagara River Greenway Plan.

## 6. NREC funds discussion

- a. NREC is taking initial steps to encourage collaboration between Olmsted Parks Conservancy, the City of Buffalo and the New York State Parks in their work towards interpretive planning and wayfinding signage. Comments will be included in the recommendations presented at the NRGC meeting on January 14<sup>th</sup>.
- b. Discussion of how to communicate to towns supervisors and other municipal leaders. Could send a letter describing NREC and soliciting interest in future projects.
  - i. Two years ago, Jo Johnson (BNW) set meetings with municipalities to accomplish this goal. This was a useful strategy and allowed prioritization of municipalities that are interested in Greenway projects.
  - ii. Possibility of distributing a brochure or newsletter to various organizations to inform them of the greenway, include a list of past projects. NREC could ask NYPA to hire an administrator to coordinate this project and follow up on ideas.
  - iii. Kerrie and Claudia will invite Greg Stevens (NRGC) to attend the next NREC meeting. We can collaborate and share ideas to further this discussion.

### *Action Items:*

- Kerrie will send first round proposal applications after January 31st due date. NREC members can review and send questions prior to GESC meeting the week of February 24th. Funding decisions will be made by March 13th.
- Claudia will upload relevant files to NREC website.
- Kerrie will continue to try and get in touch with Community Foundation to get the NREC funds question answered. She will have BNW CFO call Myra.
- NREC members to think about what forums and issues the group would collectively be comfortable representing as a part of the 2020 work plan task #4 – “represent NREC's interests within the Niagara River Greenway”
- Claudia and Kerrie will invite Greg Stevens and a representative of the Olmsted Parks Conservancy to the next NREC meeting to continue NREC funds and collaboration discussions.