

NREC Meeting October 31st, 2022

Members present: Kerrie Gallo (Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper), Claudia Rosen (Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper), Jajeon Rose-Burney (WNY Land Conservancy), Bob VanHise (Adirondack Mountain Club – Niagara Frontier), Larry Beahan (Sierra Club), Marisa Riggi (Western New York Land Conservancy), Edward Sirianno (Buffalo Audubon Society), Don Houck (Presbytery of Western New York)

Members absent: Ann Ingleman (League of Women Voters of Buffalo Niagara), John Jarosz (Niagara Musky Association), Louis Long (Niagara Musky Association)

1. Day-to-Day Business

- a. August minutes' approval
 - i. Kerrie will share the new package for GESC project approvals with NREC via email when it is available.
 - ii. Motion by Larry to approve the August meeting minutes, second by Bob. All members present vote in favor and the minutes are approved.
- b. Chair update – Kerrie
 - i. Kerrie will share a detailed summary of the most recent GESC meeting with NREC members.
 - ii. Marisa Riggi (WNY Land Conservancy) gave the presentation that she had shared with the GESC at their latest meeting. She discussed how the Land Conservancy calculates the cost of long-term stewardship for their properties to ensure that they can care for them in perpetuity. The slides from this presentation will be shared with NREC members.
 1. Stewardship is what the Land Conservancy does to properly protect land that they own, protect, and manage. Common stewardship activities include management (public access, invasive species, restoration, assessing site conditions, removing dumped material, management planning), landowner/neighbor engagement, monitoring property, ecological monitoring to inform adaptive management, and enforcement.
 2. The two categories of the costs of stewardship are annual costs that happen every year in perpetuity (monitoring, reporting, management, liability insurance, conservation defense insurance) and less frequent costs (enforcement, restoration/invasive removal, infrastructure maintenance, management plan updates).
 3. How is stewardship funding invested? Marissa reviewed the calculator in detail.
 - a. Larry – how often does it happen that you cannot close on a property because you do not have the stewardship costs? Marissa – this does not happen often because when the Land Conservancy considers protecting a property, they include stewardship costs in the budget and plan for that when fundraising or writing grants. The stewardship costs are considered an initial cost of the project.
 - b. Larry – how does acquisition cost compare to stewardship costs? Marissa – it depends on the project. If a property is not expensive property or a donation, then the stewardship fund would be a bigger portion, vs. a larger or more expensive property that the purchase price will likely outweigh the stewardship fund.
 - i. EX: Stella purchase price 2.1 million, stewardship 600k, total project 3.5 million

- c. The Land Conservancy also considers stewardship costs when doing the initial screening of a property. If they determine the long-term cost to be unmanageable, they will not move forward with the project.

2. 2022 Activities Summary

- a. Kerrie reviewed the 2022 NREC Activities summary, which was sent to NREC members prior to this meeting.
- b. Marissa – the Land Conservancy has talked with the Tonawanda and Seneca Nation about the STAMP Project. Any updates?
- c. BNW worked with the nations on the STAMP plan, on its own expense to generally look at the concerns. BNW engaged mostly on the permit for the 24-inch diameter pipeline. The applicant was looking for a permit to disturb wetlands, to draw water from the Niagara River and install a 19 mile-long pipeline to feed STAMP plant. BNW submitted comments on this DEC permit, requested a hearing to ask questions, and has not heard a response to date.
 - i. Other concerns regarding process to create hydrogen from water.
 - ii. The industrial facility approval went through several years ago, it was meant to house several different types of industrial activities.

3. 2023 Proposed Workplan and Meeting Schedule

- a. Motion by Ed to provide all NREC members an opportunity to submit proposals for the 2023 NREC Chair role. Proposals will be due to the group on November 21st. Second by Don.
 - i. **In favor:** Bob, Don, Ed, Kerrie
 - ii. **Opposed:** Larry
 - iii. **Abstain:** None
 - iv. **Motion passes**
- b. Claudia will send copy of NREC committee bylaws to the group.
- c. Claudia will update the BNW 2023 NREC Chair Role Workplan Proposal and share with NREC. Members will vote via email.
- d. Claudia will update the proposed 2023 NREC schedule with new GESC dates and share with the group.

4. Niagara River Greenway

Action: Review proposals and vote on whether they are consistent with the Greenway Plan

- a. Royalton Ravine Memorial Pavilion, Gasport Beautification Committee
 - i. Jajeon – this project does not feel like a Greenway project. It is located far from the River, and although it is connected via the Niagara Escarpment, the applicant does not make a good case for that connection.
 - ii. Bob – Agrees with Jajeon. This project is not consistent. A concert venue should not be near such an ecologically sensitive area.
 - 1. **Motion:** by Jajeon that this project is not consistent because it is not programmatically connected to an extension of the greenway, and not ecologically important, second by Bob
 - 2. **In favor:** Larry, Bob, Don, Jajeon, Kerrie, Ed
 - 3. **Opposed:** None
 - 4. **Abstain:** None
 - 5. **Motion passes**

5. Follow up to Greg Stevens Tonawanda Corridor Vision Project

- a. After discussing the Tonawanda Corridor Vision Project with Greg Stevens at the August NREC meeting, Greg sent a follow up email. Does NREC want to take this on as something to fund?
 - i. Kerrie - could not recommend that NREC has the capacity or infrastructure to take on managing grants.
 - ii. Jajeon - wants to help Greg and is supportive of the project concept, but understands the potential grant administration challenges.
 - iii. Don – NREC would need expertise to do that type of work. Bob and Larry also agreed.
 - iv. Larry - would the Clean Air Coalition be able to take on something like this? Could Clean Air be funded by one of the Greenway committees to do this project?
- b. Kerrie proposed telling Greg that NREC is supportive of the project concept but cannot take on granting funds at this time because of the administrative challenges. NREC can continue the conversation and would be willing to help in other ways (ex: provide expertise during the vision development). NREC members present agreed with this approach.

6. Outer Harbor Discussion

- a. Bob asked what NREC can do to reign in the seemingly unrestricted activities that are happening at Outer Harbor? He voiced concerns regarding the amphitheater, buildings at Wilkinson Pointe, and lack of response to public opinion.
- b. Kerrie recommends connecting to the Our Outer Harbor Coalition who is currently working on these concerns. Waterkeeper is focusing on the legislative side of this issue - including legislation to permanently protect outer harbor as a park. BNW is also completing a coastal resiliency study for the City of Buffalo that will include technical merits hoping to provide further reason to protect the Outer Harbor for resiliency's sake.

7. Member Updates

**** Next Meeting: February 21st, 10 – 12 pm ****

Action Items:

- a. Kerrie will follow up with Greg re: the Tonawanda Corridor Vision Project.
- b. Kerrie will share the new package for GESC project approvals with NREC via email when it is available.
- c. Kerrie will share a detailed summary of the most recent GESC meeting with NREC members
- d. Claudia will send a copy of the NREC committee bylaws to the group.
- e. Claudia will update the BNW 2023 NREC Chair Role Workplan Proposal and share with NREC. Members will vote via email.
- f. Claudia will update the proposed 2023 NREC schedule with new GESC dates and share with the group.