

NREC Meeting Minutes: Monday January 4th 2021

Meeting held virtually 2 – 4 pm

Members present: Kerrie Gallo (Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper), Claudia Rosen (Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper), Ann Ingleman (League of Women Voters of Buffalo Niagara), Jajeane Rose-Burney (WNY Land Conservancy), Bob VanHise (Adirondack Mountain Club - Niagara Frontier), Don Houck (Presbytery of Western New York), Edward Sirianno (Buffalo Audubon Society), John Jaroz (Niagara Muskee Association)

Members absent: Larry Beahan (Sierra Club)– votes provided via email

1. Day-to-Day Business

- a. November minutes approval
 - i. Motion by Kerrie, second by Don, all present vote in favor and the minutes are approved.
- b. Chair update
 - i. An Ecological Standing Committee meeting was held on November 13th. The committee discussed the Cayuga Creek Habitat and Floodplain Restoration “Weber Property” HERF proposal from Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper.
 - ii. The ESC also heard project updates from Little Beaver Island, Shoreline and Coastal Wetland Habitat project by BNW, the Buckhorn Island State Park project by Ducks Unlimited, the Tern Island project by Buffalo Audubon, and the Unity Island beneficial use of dredged materials by the United States Army Corps of Engineers.
 - iii. Claudia will send the minutes from this meeting to NREC when they are available.
- c. Financial update
 - i. The quarterly fund status report was received for 1/01/2020 – 9/30/2020

2. Niagara River Greenway Commission Project Proposals Actions: Review proposals and vote consistent or not consistent.

- a. Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy, Prospect Park Pathways and Furnishings Project
 - i. Larry’s comment submitted via email: “Repair of the sidewalks is maintenance which is not covered by Greenway funds. The improvements in the building appear to be something more than maintenance but the details of these changes and their costs are missing. Partially consistent.”
 - ii. John - the sidewalks at Prospect Park require reconstruction and this effort is beyond normal maintenance.
- Motion: To recommend that the project is consistent with the Niagara River Greenway plan made by John, second by Ann
 - Note: Reaffirm that this project is beyond maintenance and worthwhile
 - Ayes: all
 - Opposed: Larry – partially consistent
 - Abstain: none
 - **Motion Carried**

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- b. Black Rock Riverside Alliance, The Habitat Project – Phase 2 and 3
 - i. Larry’s comment submitted via email: “The fact that they have achieved certification by the NWFCWH must mean something. But it means nothing to us until they spell out for us what they did to accomplish this. Not consistent without documentation of previous achievements.”
 - ii. Jajeen – the WNYLC may partner with the BRRA in this application and he will abstain from the conversation and voting
 - iii. Kerrie – the concept behind this project is consistent with the Greenway plan, but it doesn’t necessarily translate into something that is fundable.
 - iv. John – the proposal is lacking specificity and would like to know how will they engage the public?
 - v. Ann – would like more information on the certification requirements
 - o Motion: To recommend that this project is consistent with the Greenway plan and provide guidance that while consistent, additional details regarding strategy, approach, and the certification criteria should be provided in order to make the proposal fundable made by Kerrie, second by Ann
 - o Ayes: Kerrie, Ann, Ed, Bob, Don, John
 - o Opposed: Larry
 - o Abstain: Jajeen
 - o **Motion carried**
 - c. Pollinator Conservation Association, Niagara Greenway Pollinator Action Plan
 - i. Larry’s comment submitted via email: “This proposal again lacks specifics in past accomplishments and in proposed accomplishments. The generalities are appropriate and highly desirable. Not consistent without more specifics”
 - ii. John – question about metrics used to evaluate success? Would like more information about project goals and deliverables.
 - o Motion: To recommend that the project is consistent with the Greenway plan and provide suggestion that additional metrics, deliverables, and information about the outreach strategies be provided prior to submitting a funding request made by Kerrie, second by Bob
 - o Ayes: Kerrie, Ann, Ed, Bob, Don, John
 - o Opposed: Larry
 - o Abstain: Jajeen
 - o **Motion carried**
3. **Project List update – Claudia**
- a. Claudia is developing a list of projects that NREC has reviewed and provided comments about. The list will include common topics such as statutory, private property, and the Greenway focus area.
 - b. Claudia will send the draft list to NREC for review.

4. 2021 Workplan Discussion – Kerrie

- a. In general, the 2021 workplan maintains the same level of effort and types of activities as completed in the 2020 workplan. The tasks were consolidated and simplified to allow for more efficient efforts and flexibility.
 - Motion to approve 2021 workplan made by Ann, second by Ed.
 - Ayes: Ann, Ed, Bob, Don, John, Jajeon
 - Opposed: none
 - Abstain: Kerrie (BNW)

5. Project Funding Discussion – Kerrie

- a. NREC was asked to consider NRECs position on funding projects in the Niagara River Greenway that involve private or partially private land and research.
- b. The desired outcome of this discussion is to have an NREC guidance statement to use internally and to provide to applicants.
- c. Kerrie will gather feedback and draft a statement that can be share via email
 - i. Public vs. Private Benefit of Projects in the Niagara River Greenway
 1. Jajeon – WNYLC properties are private land, many allow for public access. Conservation easements can be held on public or private land. An easement is an agreement that prevents the land from ever being developed.
 - a. Protecting the habitat has big public benefits that can happen on private land. Conservation easements and restoration projects are examples.
 - b. It would be helpful to give examples of what public benefit and environmental benefit means – explain how that doesn't only mean public access.
 2. John- discussion of past Buffalo Harbor development project, where there was little ecological benefit, and a large private benefit to the landowner.
 - a. It would be helpful to ask - How much money does the private owner stand to make? What is the private benefit?
 - ii. Potential HERF research and land conservation projects
 1. GESC and ESC was in a cycle of funding research projects several years ago. After some time, the committee decided to shift their focus to projects that have a tangible, physical benefit.
 2. During the next HERF cycle the committee expects to receive a research project proposal.
 - a. Kerrie – It would be helpful to ask - What are the measurable outcomes that will lead to improvement in the Greenway and/or implementation of restoration projects?

Action items:

- Don will provide more comments regarding the project funding discussion via email
- Kerrie will gather feedback after project funding discussion and draft a statement that can be share via email
- Claudia will send NREC a draft copy of the project list
- Claudia will send NREC the minutes from the November ESC meeting