

NREC Meeting Minutes Monday, March 1st
Meeting held virtually 2 – 4pm

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

Members absent: Edward Sirianno (Buffalo Audubon Society)

1) Day-to-Day Business

- a) January minutes approval
 - i) Motion by John, second by Don to approve the January meeting minutes. All present vote in favor and the minutes are approved.
- b) Chair update – Kerrie
 - i) A Greenway Ecological Standing Committee meeting was held on February 23rd. Kerrie and Larry attended the virtual meeting. Applicants for the next round of the Greenway Ecological Fund presented about their project proposals. NREC will be discussing and voting on whether to fund those proposals today and Kerrie will attend a future meeting with the GESC for consensus building.
 - ii) Kerrie also participated in conversations with the NREGC regarding the Gill Creek corridor restoration. Greg Stevens is rallying to create a vision for the restoration and engage stakeholders.
 - iii) Kerrie also participated in conversations about stewardship and volunteer engagement in the Niagara River Greenway.
 - iv) Kerrie shared the NREC funding guidance summary and asked members to provide feedback. Kerrie and Claudia will finalize statement and distribute to NREC.
- c) Financial update – Ann
 - i) Claudia will send the latest financial update to NREC members.

2) Niagara River Greenway Commission – project proposals

Action: Review proposals and vote on consistency with the Niagara River Greenway Plan

- a) Town of Niagara, Veterans Memorial Community Park
 - i) The Town of Niagara is asking for Consistency for Phase II and III of their Master Plan for the Veterans Memorial Community Park. They are requesting over \$3 million from the Host Community Standing Committee, some of which are future funds they plan to encumber.
 - ii) The Town of Niagara had previously partnered with Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper on a similar project to restore Elmer's Pond. After receiving funds from the GESC, the Town decided to return the funds because they no longer believed they could complete the project within the original budget and they felt they could complete the project more efficiently in-house without the administrative costs of working with Waterkeeper.
 - iii) John expressed concerns over encumberment of funds. How do we know they are not underestimating their budget now, as they had in the past? Concerns over securing funds and then returning them.
 - iv) Kerrie would like greater detail about ecological aspects of the project.

- v) Elements of concern that do not contribute to the Greenway vision - the clock tower and mini golf, dog park. Other components are consistent including the bocce court and ecological components. Request they look at which specific amenities provide an enhancement.
 - Motion to recommend that the project is partially consistent with comments regarding elements of concern and suggestion to reevaluate encumbering future funds made by Larry, second by Ann.
 - Ayes: Ann, Larry, Jajeon, Don, John, Kerrie
 - Opposed: None
 - Abstain: None
 - **Motion carried**

3) Overview of current GEF funding – Kerrie

4) GESC – GEF Proposals

Action: Review proposals and vote to fund or not fund

- a) Town of Porter, Fort Niagara Beach Shoreline Restoration Project
 - i) This is the 3rd time the Town of Niagara has applied for GESC funding for the Beach Shoreline Restoration Project. In the past, NREC has voted not to fund because of concerns over the cost and ecological benefits.
 - ii) The Town of Porter has hired Applied Ecological Services to assist with the ecological components. Their plan now included quantities of plants, but no planting plan.
 - iii) Jajeon expressed concerns over lack of detail. Can we assume they will be creating quality wildlife habitat when it is not detailed in their proposal?
 - Motion to approve funding made by Larry, second by Ann.
 - Ayes: Larry, Kerrie, Don, John, Ann
 - Opposed: Jajeon
 - **Motion carried**

- b) Western New York Land Conservancy, Creating New Publicly Accessible Nature Preserves on Grand Island
 - i) The WNYLC was funded for two other projects that were submitted along with the current projects. They were asked to choose two projects to be funded and re-submit the others.
 - ii) Jajeon reviews the current projects - one is a conservation easement on a historic farmstead to protect grassland and forest habitat. Another is a purchase of 10 acres of forest adjacent to town-owned forest.
 - i. Larry – how will public access work? Management?
 - ii. Trails are not a part of the current request, but it is in the long-term intent for both properties.
 - iii. On the conservation easement – the landowners intend to create a non-profit and provide public access. The WNYLC will utilize their staff and trail stewards to maintain the purchased property.
 - Motion to approve funding made by Kerrie, second by Don

- Ayes: Larry, Kerrie, Don, Ann, John
 - Opposed: None
 - Abstain: Jajeen
 - **Motion passes**
- c) Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper, Greenway Restore Corps
- i) Restore Corps volunteers are specially trained to assist with higher level adaptive management tasks. Each site has its own needs and landowners are often not able to address those needs. Restore Corps volunteers will be able to at a low cost. There are hopes for the model to be duplicated across the region and it will inspire community involvement and buy-in.
 - Motion to approve funding made by Jajeen, second by Don.
 - Ayes: Jajeen, John, Ann, Don
 - Opposed: None
 - Abstain: Kerrie, Larry
 - **Motion passes**
- d) Buffalo Scholastic Rowing Association, Adaptive Rowing on the Buffalo River
- i) Kerrie clarified that Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper is not a partner on this project, and advised the BSRA not to apply for this fund. Although it is a positive project, it is not an ecological project and most components focus on public access. Clarific
 - Motion to not approve funding made by Jajeen, second by John.
 - Ayes: Jajeen, John, Ann, Don, Larry
 - Opposed: None
 - Abstain: Kerrie
 - **Motion passes**
- e) Black Rock Riverside Alliance, The Habitat Project: Phase 2 – Erie County & Phase 3 Niagara County
- i) Discussion of the tangible habitat benefits this project would project. The project focuses on stewardship and community engagement. Presents a good opportunity to emphasize public engagement aspects that the committee has not focused on in the past.
 - ii) BRRAlliance will engage private homeowners and public landowners to certify and improve their habitats. The proposal includes 5 years of monitoring after creation and annual check-ins with private property owners who certify their habitats. BRRAlliance staff will lead educational sessions, coordinate plantings, as well as restoration and cleanup activities.
 - Motion to fund made by Kerrie, second by Larry.
 - Ayes: Jajeen, John, Ann, Don, Larry, Kerrie
 - Opposed: None
 - Abstain: None
 - **Motion passes**

Action Items:

- Kerrie will attend the consensus building meeting with the GESC.
- Kerrie and Claudia will finalize funding guidance statement and distribute to NREC.
- Claudia will send the latest financial update to NREC members.
- Claudia and Kerrie will inform NREC members of future GESC and ESC meetings.