

NREC Meeting Minutes Monday, July 11th, 2022

Members present: Kerrie Gallo (Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper), Claudia Rosen (Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper), Jajeane Rose-Burney (WNY Land Conservancy), Ann Ingleman (League of Women Voters of Buffalo Niagara), John Jarosz (Niagara Musky Association), Bob VanHise (Adirondack Mountain Club – Niagara Frontier), Don Houck (Presbytery of Western New York), Edward Sirianno (Buffalo Audubon Society), Larry Beahan (Sierra Club), Marisa Riggi (Western New York Land Conservancy), Louis Long (Niagara Musky Association)

1. Day-to-day Business

- March minutes approval
 - i. Motion by Larry, second by Don to approve the March meeting minutes. All members present vote in favor and the minutes are approved.
- Chair Update
 - i. Unfortunately, the amount in the Greenway Ecological Fund (GEF) is not available at this time. The GESC may not have enough funding for all of the projects up for consideration. Kerrie will share this financial information with NREC as soon as possible.
 - ii. Greg Stevens, the Executive Director of the Greenway Commission, reached out to Kerrie to present an idea to NREC, something to consider funding that relates to the Tonawanda Corridor. Kerrie relayed to Greg that NREC is not ready to fund any projects at this moment. She will meet with Greg and gather more information about his idea and share with NREC.
 - iii. The next GESC meeting is scheduled for July 20th. Kerrie will share agenda when it is available.
- Financial update
 - i. The last financial statement was received on May 11th – investments have decreased by \$29,000 and the ending fund balance is \$585,000.

2. Greenway Ecological Standing Committee – GEF Proposals

Action: Review proposals and vote on whether or not to fund

- Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper, Gill Creek Master Plan
 - i. BNW is requesting \$47,080 to incorporate community input into the preliminary Gill Creek master plan. The project will include intentional conversations with community members and stakeholders, as well as identifying 2 – 3 priority Living Shoreline restoration sites.
 - ii. Discussion on funding – if the GEF does not have enough to fund all projects, in the past NREC has given Kerrie the go-ahead to participate in prioritization discussions at the GESC level on their behalf.
 - Ed asked about deferring projects to a later cycle. In the past, the GESC has asked applicants reapply at the next cycle. GESC has also given applicants an amount the GEF is able to fund and asked for resubmission in line with that.
 - **Motion** by Larry to approve funding, second by John
 - **In favor:** Jajeane, Larry, Bob, Ed, Ann, John, Don

- **Opposed:** None
- **Abstain:** Kerrie
- **Motion passes**

- Western New York Land Conservancy, Creating the Meadowsweet Nature Preserve
 - i. The Cornerstone Church on Grand Island has offered to sell 25 acres to the WNYLC for the creation of a publicly accessible nature preserve. The property has some really important amphibian habitat, including vernal pools, as well as bird nesting habitat. The parcel drains to Spicer Creek and acts as flood control and water filtration.
 - ii. The WNYLC project will include the purchase of the property, creation of a small parking area, invasive species control, as well as an elevated ADA-accessible board walk and bird watching platform. They are requesting \$460,349.
 - Access is planned on adjacent Meadow Lane Road, not a part of Church property. The WNYLC also plans to prevent ATV use as much as possible by working closely with neighbors.
 - iii. The GESC funded a WNYLC program that looked comprehensively at Grand Island and identified strategic properties for future acquisition for the purpose of land protection.
 - **Motion** by Don to approve funding, second by Ed
 - **In favor:** Kerrie, Larry, Bob, Ed, Ann, John, Don
 - **Opposed:** None
 - **Abstain:** Jajeen
 - **Motion passes**

- Pollinator Conservation Association, Aqua Lane Expansion / River Road Sites
 - i. The PCA will improve parcels near Aqua Lane Park by covering with compost, overseeding, and installing live plant plug.
 - Discussion on budget breakdown and definition of overhead costs.
 - ii. John – would like more information on the success of past projects. Evaluation could include pollinator counts. Don agreed that monitoring should be built into the project.
 - iii. Kerrie will find the last status report on the previously funded sites and share with NREC.
 - **Motion:** by Larry approve funding with the condition that the PCA does an annual evaluation of progress, second by Don
 - **In favor:** Kerrie, Larry, Bob, Ann, John, Don
 - **Opposed:** None
 - **Abstain:** Jajeen and Ed
 - **Motion passes**

- Town of Lewiston, Camp Stonehaven Acquisition
 - i. The Town of Lewiston will purchase the Camp Stonehaven property to create a 66 acre publicly accessible nature preserve. The Town is requesting \$319,000, which is

the amount previously approved to WNYLC for this purchase. The Town will cover the remaining cost of the purchase using other funds.

- In the future, the Town and the WNYLC plan to complete a conservation easement and to do habitat restoration at the property.
- ii. The GESC will require a deed restriction that states that the property must be available to the public and protected for environmental purposes. It is likely that the Town will go back and do the additional protection in the form of a conservation easement.
 - **Motion** by Don approve funding, second by John
 - **In favor:** Kerrie, Larry, Bob, Ann, John, Don, Ed
 - **Opposed:** None
 - **Abstain:** Jajean
 - **Motion passes**

3. Member Updates

- Jajean – WNYLC: The Niagara Gorge restoration project is going well, and several Grand Island properties acquired.
- Bob – ADK Mountain Club: The Club is leading 4 paddle outings on the Erie Canal. Statewide, the ADK has purchased the Cascade Ski Center in the Adirondack.
- Larry – Sierra Club: On Jewett Holmwood Road, a farmer wanted to use 50 acres for solar panels. The Zoning Board of Appeals ruled against it. Sierra Club was also involved in advocating against the Flea Market and concerts at the Outer Harbor.
- John – NMA: Caught an Atlantic Salmon in Lake Ontario!
- Ed – Buffalo Audubon: The Tern Island sheet piles are staying around the island. Tern researchers came from Penn State to this island and found that the colony there is the largest colony of Common Terns in US and Canada! 800 total birds in the colony. Ed will share the report with NREC.
- Kerrie – Waterkeeper: Completed a fish passage project along Crow Creek near Attica. Improved habitat by replacing a culvert and installing lunger boxes.

Action Items:

- Kerrie will share GEF financial information and upcoming GESC meeting agenda as soon as possible
- Kerrie will meet with Greg Stevens about his Tonawanda Corridor idea and share with NREC
- Kerrie will share latest PCA project status reports
- Ed will share Tern research report with NREC

**** Next Meeting: August 29th 10 am - 12pm ****