

NREC Meeting Minutes Monday, My 3rd

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), Jajeane 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), Edward Sirianno (Buffalo Audubon Society)

Members absent: None

1. Day to Day Business

- a. March minutes' approval
 - i. Motion by Larry to approve the minutes, second by John.
- b. Chair update – Kerrie
 - i. Both HERF pre-proposal applicants were asked to submit a full proposal (Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper, Cayuga Creek Land Protection Project and Buffalo Audubon, Tern Island Phase 2 Project). The review cycle may be shortened this year due to the time sensitive nature of the projects.
 - ii. The next round of proposals for the GEF are due at the end of May. Kerrie will send proposals to NREC to be discussed at our next meeting.
 - iii. Bitcoin mining in New York State is an emerging issue due to its unregulated energy consumption and thermal discharges of cooling water. Bitcoin operators are searching for old natural gas plants to use for bitcoin mining operations, making use of the water withdrawal and water discharge permits that are already in place. This is a gray area of regulation, and an emerging issue in NYS causing concern for the impact of thermal pollution and potential impact to fisheries. BNW engaging on the issue with elected officials and other advocates.
 - o Larry said that the Sierra Club has also discussed the issue.
 - o Ed asked what NRECs position on the issue is? What resources do we have to defend it?
 - a. Kerrie said that at this stage, BNW is gathering information and has not developed an organizational position. NREC members should ask their boards and think about whether or not NREC should organize around this issue.
 - o Kerrie will send a summary of information points about bitcoin mining, and how it relates to our work locally, to NREC via email.
- c. Financial update – Ann
 - i. There is no new financial statement. Ann will send the statement when it arrives in the next few days.

2. Niagara River Greenway Commission – project proposals

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

- a. Town of Lewiston, 2021 Lewiston Town Park at Pletcher Road Playground Construction Project

- i. Discussion regarding the lack of matching funds and concern that the town should provide investment and maintenance for the park. Design does not make a strong connection to the vision of the Niagara River Greenway Plan or local cultural or natural resources.
 - **Motion** by Don to recommend that this project is consistent with the Greenway plan, including comments about design and matching funds, second by Jajeen
 - a. Discussion: Don said that the design needs more natural elements, to take advantage of the natural landscape that represents the Greenway vision. By creating a playground that aligns with the Greenway values, Lewiston will attract more people to the Greenway.
 - **Ayes:** Jajeen, Kerrie, Don, Ann
 - **Opposed:** Larry, John, Bob, Ed
 - **Motion Not Carried**
 - **Comments:** NREC was not able to make a recommendation regarding consistency of this project. We recognize positive aspects of the proposed project including the fact that it is located on a waterfront property and will draw people from outside areas to the Greenway. However, the design of this project misses an opportunity to create an asset in the Niagara River Greenway that incorporates nature-based designs and the values and vision of the Greenway Plan. The design should also incorporate best practices for safety and the project should include stronger ties to the natural landscape and unique ecological and cultural resources within the Niagara River Greenway. Also, we recognize the project will primarily provide a benefit to the local community. In light of that fact, NREC requests that the Town of Lewiston bring some matching resources to pay for this amenity for its residents

- b. Town of Lewiston, Sanborn Park Playground Replacement Project
 - i. This project is far from the river, does not have strong connections to the Niagara River Greenway, and largely consists of repair of existing equipment and maintenance.
 - **Motion** by Jajeen to recommend that this project is not consistent with the Niagara River Greenway Plan, second by Don
 - **Ayes:** Jajeen, Don, Larry, Bob, Ed, Kerrie, Ann
 - **Opposed:** None
 - **Abstain:** None
 - **Motion Carried**

- c. Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper, Cayuga Creek Land Protection
 - i. Kerrie reviewed related project on the Weber Property in the Town of Niagara. The Town and BNW have a shared long term vision that includes floodplain restoration and a trail system.
 - ii. This proposal focuses on the acquisition of up to 3 parcels for habitat protection, as well as the addition of a conservation easement on the parcels that are currently owned by the Town of Niagara (the Weber property). Buffalo Niagara River Land Trust would hold the easement and two new parcels.
 - **Motion** by Bob to recommend that this project is consistent with the Niagara River Greenway Plan, second by John
 - **Ayes:** John, Jajeen, Larry, Bob, Ed, Don, Ann
 - **Opposed:** None

- **Abstain:** Kerrie
- **Motion Carried**

3. **Funding Guidance Statement Review**

- a. Claudia will send updated funding guidance statement to NREC for review