

DRAFT

ROLL CALL:

Members Present - Robert Amadon, Chairperson
Danielle Bagley
Evelyn Hicks, joined at 6:56 P.M.
Barbara Lipiew, joined at
Thomas Mudd, Jr.
Ben Szablewski
Councilmember Scott Robertson

Absent - Ryan Taylor

Associate Members present: Brittany Hernon and Alex Goodwin

WELCOME

Chairperson Amadon opened the work session at 6:30 P.M.

WSEC PLANNING DOCUMENT

Planning worksheet attached for reference.

- a. Items to be removed or combined with another item: No changes were suggested
- b. Items to be added: No items were suggested
- c. Changes to the priority scale:
 - 1. High – Mr. Goodwin: irreversible conditions, preventative measures versus reactive
 - 2. Medium – no comments
 - 3. Low – no comments

PRIORITIZE ITEMS

Water Quality

Buffalo Niagara River Keeper: Ongoing project, leave at "1." Ms. Hicks agreed with the priority rating and advised she has ongoing communication with the Buffalo Niagara Water Keeper about next steps of the Buffalo Creek flood bench project including scheduling two public hearings for the grant. There is interest in forming a citizen's coalition, stakeholders, who will publicize the project; volunteers from the commission and public are needed. Ms. Hicks stated she will forward the related documents to Councilmember Robertson. Ms. Hicks volunteered to chair a sub-committee to move the grant forward and requested the Environmental Commission and Town Board assist in publicizing events.

Storm Water Coalition: Ms. Hicks recommended a member of the Environmental Commission attend the quarterly Erie County Department of Environment and Planning meetings and noted former Councilman Hart attended the meetings in the past. Historically, the Town of West Seneca has not been a priority for remediation projects. For example, the ice scour by the Burchfield Nature and Art Center Park, BNAC, is an issue but nothing catastrophic has occurred and therefore is not a higher priority for Erie County. Ms. Hicks recommended a priority rating of "3" for this item as well as assigning a commission member to be a delegate to the Erie County DEP meetings.

Chairperson Amadon advised Ms. Hicks of the addition of the following to the definition of high priority: irreversible condition or preventive measures versus reactive measures which have a higher cost to remediate. Ms. Hicks explained the ice scour occurs more so on the north side of Buffalo Creek and the BNAC is located on the south side. The ice is undercutting the rock formation on the north side and noted Clinton Street and Union Road are NYS roadways and NYS tends to wait until a catastrophic event occurs before addressing the situation. Chairperson Amadon stated the definition of low priority is something that needs additional research and benchmarking. Ms. Hicks stated the priority rating should remain at "3."

Pesticide/Herbicide Use: Overused on lawns, assign a rating of "1". Mr. Mudd suggested an information campaign. Chairperson Amadon agreed and stated the commission is tasked with community outreach and education. Mr. Mudd questioned if the town utilizes pesticides and herbicides on town properties. Councilmember Robertson stated the DEC is pushing governmental entities to utilize environmentally friendly products and will follow up with Highway Superintendent Adams. Ms. Hicks stated Erie County Department of Environment and Planning has resources the commission can use, and Ms. Shultz may have more information as she attends the monthly meetings. Further, the DEC has been and continues to monitor the giant hogweed along Buffalo Creek between Clinton Street and Borden Road; the DEC removes plants and applies herbicide. The private use of herbicides along the creek corridor must be discouraged but acknowledged their use cannot be eliminated due to the greater health risk giant hogweed poses to people.

New subdivisions impact on Sanitary Sewers: The commission agreed on a rating of "3" as more information is needed. Councilmember Robertson commented that the new sewer lines are not the problem, it is within the older infrastructure where problems occur. Mr. Mudd suggested changing the name of the category to "Conditions of Sewers" based on this information and questioned what the Environmental Commission's concern is, for example, overflow of sewage into creeks and pollution. Perhaps "Environmental impact of sanitary sewers on natural waterways" is more appropriate. Chairperson Amadon stated he renamed the category to be "Limitations of sanitary sewers being overloaded and flowing into waterways."

Storm Drain Medallions: Leave as "1" as it is ongoing. Councilmember Robertson stated new developments in town are required to install the medallions and Highway Superintendent Adams will be placing an order for the commission. Mr. Mudd questioned if there was an alternative to the medallions. Chairperson Amadon stated paint wears off, also. Ms. Hicks stated the commission has been installing the medallions in new subdivisions and neighborhoods where the roads have been replaced. Ms. Hicks will forward the vendor information to Councilmember Robertson. Chairperson Amadon stated this topic will be on the June meeting agenda.

Ms. Hicks joined the meeting at 6:56 P.M. and the commission returned to the Buffalo Niagara River Keeper. Ms. Hicks agreed it is a high priority as it is ongoing and there is interest in forming a citizens' coalition and a sub-committee should be formed to move the grant along; Ms. Hicks volunteered to chair the sub-committee.

Trees

Tree Inventory Grant: Rating of "1" as it is an ongoing project. Chairperson Amadon stated the town received a grant and is awaiting the contract from the DEC to move forward. A tree sub-committee is in place and will be involved in the Urban Forestry Master Plan. A formal letter of partnership between the Environmental Commission and the town was included with the application requiring the commission to perform public outreach and communication activities such as public meetings and informational articles. The commission can also participate in the request for proposals for a tree maintenance company that will perform the inventory of town owned

rights of way and possibly the town parks and other town owned properties. There are many steps in the process including a kickoff meeting for the public. Chairperson Amadon stated this type of project typically takes two years to complete. The second component of the grant is establishing an urban forestry management plan based on the data from the tree inventory including maintenance and replacement protocols among other things.

Urban Forestry Management Plan: Rating of "1" as it is ongoing and is the 2nd part of the tree inventory grant.

Tree City USA: Chairperson Amadon stated he is not familiar with the process for obtaining this designation. Ms. Hicks stated the town ordinance must comply with the requirements for Tree City USA; formally establishing the tree subcommittee and performing the tree inventory are also requirements. The designation will give the town clout when applying for grants. Chairperson Amadon questioned if the rating of "2" would be appropriate. Mr. Mudd suggested assigning this item to the tree subcommittee. Ms. Hicks agreed that a rating of "2" is appropriate.

Invasive Species: Mr. Mudd suggested the rating of "1" as invasive species affect the quality of the environment in West Seneca. Ms. Lipiew stated in her opinion the problem is already pervasive and is unsure of the immediate actions the commission can take, noting many groups across NYS are already involved. Invasive species is not as local as the tree inventory. Ms. Hicks stated it is prevalent and there are many groups addressing the issue, for example, Ms. Hernon's job with WNY Prism exclusively deals with invasive species and suggested a rating of "2" as this would be a long-term project. Ms. Lipiew agreed with Ms. Hicks' comments but reiterated the commission's ability to address the tree inventory and is hopeful the DEC can help all communities address invasive species. Ms. Hernon stated WNY Prism has held volunteer removal workdays for early detection of invasive species at Mill Road Park and the Soccer Park, postcard mailings in the area, and mapped invasive species at the BNAC Park have also been accomplished. Invasive species is a prioritization issue as it is impossible to treat everything. Ms. Hicks stated the town has invasive species in land, water, and air and it is not possible to manage them all at one time. Ms. Hernon noted it is challenging to receive DEC support due to the prioritization of the problem, but choosing one to focus on may be to the town's benefit. Ms. Hick's referred to WNY Prism's efforts with the lantern fly. Ms. Hernon stated lantern fly traps were placed and a Japanese silkweed removal workday was held and agreed these were focused efforts. Ms. Lipiew stated the Invasive Species category is too broad. Mr. Szablewski suggested making a list of the top five invasive species. Ms. Hick's questioned if Ms. Hernon would be a liaison to the commission to advise of the more immediate threats and remediations. Ms. Hernon stated mapping done by WNY Prism is available online at iMapInvasives.com. Chairperson Amadon suggested the rating of "3" which was agreed upon.

Approved Tree List: Chairperson Amadon stated the revised tree list is awaiting comments from the Town Attorney. Councilmember Robertson will follow up with Mr. Trapp on the status of his review. Ms. Hicks stated she is not familiar with the tree list and commented that all trees are not suitable for all locations. Ms. Bagley stated the trees are intended for public spaces and public parks; the list includes trees for different areas. Mr. Mudd stated the list was not differentiated by habitat. Ms. Hicks commented that NYSEG is clearing trees near power lines and noted there are zoning codes throughout the town that should be considered. Mr. Mudd stated the trees were listed as over or under 30' and the list was provided to all commission members. Ms. Hicks stated builders have a propensity for overusing trees they can obtain at a low price. Mr. Mudd stated the trees were selected from pre-approved street tree lists for the City of Buffalo and New York City, noting both cities share the concerns of sidewalks being lifted and underground sewer lines. Mr. Mudd suggested a rating of monitoring, for example, as the project has been completed. Ms. Hicks suggested adding "4" for completed projects that the commission will be monitor. Ms. Lipiew stated a "4" makes the category sound unimportant and suggested using a non-numerical designation. The commission members agreed upon "M" for maintenance. Ms. Bagley

questioned whether the list should be forwarded to the Planning Board for future projects. Ms. Hicks stated once the list is adopted by the Town Board it will become part of the Town Code and developers must comply with the list; it is the Highway Superintendent who oversees the trees planted in the subdivisions. Councilmember Robertson stated Highway Superintendent Adams is aware of the list and would like to avoid trees with heavy droppings that contaminate storm drains from being planted on roadside edges. Ms. Lipiew stated her concerns about future Highway Superintendents' awareness of the list.

Green Space

Town Parks: Chairperson Amadon questioned if the commission members considered the town parks green space. Ms. Hicks suggested adding "Open Space" to the category and stated there is great value to have open spaces in town to support wildlife. Ms. Lipiew questioned if every parcel in town is owned by the town or private individuals. Ms. Hicks confirmed that every parcel is accounted for in the town. Ms. Lipiew questioned if every parcel would fit into one of the categories listed. Ms. Hicks stated parcel use is dependent upon the zoning; the town's zoning code is substantial and includes residential, commercial, and utilities, among other designations. Ms. Lipiew questioned where this information can be found. Ms. Hicks stated the Comprehensive Plan includes maps and ecode360.com is available online. Chairperson Amadon acknowledged the change to the category name.

Mr. Mudd referred to the town parks and questioned if there is a percentage of each park that is left as "no or low mow" areas and if there are any plans to put in native plants or pollinator gardens, or any other measures to support biodiversity. For example, the City of Buffalo has designated areas in Delaware Park that have fencing around them, and these areas are no longer mowed to provide areas for native habitat. Ms. Hicks stated this does not exist in town but commented that she observed an area on Route 219 in Hamburg that is being left natural. Ms. Hicks suggested the open spaces have their own designation with a rating of "3" as more research is needed. Further, the town needs a cluster development zoning code which would require the portion of a subdivision to remain undeveloped. Ms. Bagley questioned if cluster development zoning should be included in the Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Hicks stated the intent could be included in the Comprehensive Plan, but the zoning would be included in the Town Code.

Ms. Bagley referred to the need for a transportation plan to be created and would like to encourage the Town Board to update the Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Hicks clarified that the town has not moved forward with developing and implementing a transportation plan although it is in the Comprehensive Plan. Councilmember Robertson stated there are many factors involved in adding bike lanes. Ms. Hicks stated if the town had a transportation plan it would have to be considered for road projects throughout the town. Everyone should become familiar with the Comprehensive Plan. Chairperson Amadon stated the Environmental Commission can pass a resolution recommending the Town Board implement the development of a transportation plan. Ms. Bagley suggested a "1" rating. Chairperson Amadon stated the appropriate category would be Road Traffic. Ms. Hicks stated the transportation plan would encompass hiking trails, bike paths, bike lanes, essentially anywhere people can walk. Chairperson Amadon questioned if Hiking Trails and Bike Paths should be moved to the Road Traffic category. Ms. Lipiew questioned if hiking trails and bike paths should be listed under both categories. Mr. Mudd stated in his opinion, hiking trails should remain under Open Space / Green Space. Ms. Hicks suggested limiting the activities under Green Space to passive recreation activities such as walking - with wheelchair access, birdwatching, hiking, etc., and referred to the activities at the BNAC Park.

Ms. Lipiew suggested adding wild or natural space under the Open Pace / Green Space category. Chairperson Amadon added a sub-category and moved the bike paths to Road Traffic. Ms. Bagley stated bike paths can be listed in both categories. Ms. Hicks suggested rating bike paths a "3."

Chairperson questioned what the commission can accomplish for town parks in addition to the no or low mow areas and applied a rating of "3."

Buffer Zones for Subdivisions: Chairperson Amadon stated he thought there was a reference to this in the Comprehensive Plan as the area between subdivisions. Ms. Lipiew stated this brings to mind retention ponds in the subdivisions. Ms. Hicks stated the zoning code requires retention ponds and provides the specifications and any changes to retention ponds would be changes to the Town Code. Ms. Lipiew stated based on this information, retention ponds do not serve as a buffer between subdivisions and should not be considered buffers. Ms. Hicks stated this is correct and suggested the rating of "3."

Hiking Trails: Ms. Hicks suggested a rating of "3."

Growth / Zoning Impacts: Chairperson Amadon questioned if open space or green space is considered by the town. Ms. Hicks stated the town adopted an open space plan in 1989 and suggested the commission review this; rating for the item should be "3."

Community Gardens: Chairperson Amadon stated a proposal from a town resident will be reviewed at the June meeting. Mr. Mudd questioned if the garden will be a vegetable garden. Chairperson Amadon confirmed. Ms. Lipiew stated Sunshine Park was mentioned and is concerned about the deer in that area. Chairperson Amadon rated this item as "1." Ms. Hicks stated she would like the town to grow its own trees and shrubs. Ms. Bagley supports this idea. Mr. Szablewski stated students could be recruited to assist with the gardens.

Ms. Hicks suggested making zoning its own category that would include cluster development zoning and new models of eco-friendly subdivision codes. Chairperson Amadon stated he will add this to the "Other" category.

Road Traffic

Pedestrian Walkways: Ms. Lipiew stated other than sidewalks, she is unsure what this means on town roads. Chairperson Amadon stated some towns have connecting walking paths. Ms. Hicks stated this would fall under the transportation plan. Mr. Szablewski stated the sidewalks are not consistent in his neighborhood and is unsure if this item would be relevant to the Environmental Commission. Chairperson Amadon will remove the item. Ms. Hicks suggested combining this with bike paths. Mr. Mudd stated he prefers leaving bike paths separate, especially if the town were to pursue bike paths.

Wildlife Concerns

Deer Overpopulation: Chairperson Amadon questioned why this was passed back to the Environmental Commission and why the Deer Management Plan is not being followed. Councilmember Robertson stated he will follow up with the Town Board regarding their expectations of the Environmental Commission. In his opinion there has not been good direction provided as to how to solve the problem. Ms. Lipiew questioned if a referendum could be held to hold a deer cull. Ms. Hernon explained the Deer Task Force accomplished the research and developed a plan. Secretary Martin stated the Deer Task Force was commissioned to conduct research and provide a management plan; it is the Town Board that must make a decision on behalf of the town

whether or not to hold a cull. Councilmember Robertson stated the fiscal responsibility of the town embarking on a culling program is unknown. Ms. Lipiew stated she understands a second survey needs to be conducted. Ms. Martin advised that the Professor from Canisius College, who was a task force member, has the second survey prepared and is awaiting directions from the town. Councilmember Robertson understands the town needs to provide funding for the survey. Commission members agreed on the rating of "M" as the Town Board will follow up on the plan.

Coyotes: Ms. Hicks suggested removing this item from the document and advised there have been no incidences reported in the town.

Recycling

Hazardous Waste and Electronic Waste: Ms. Hicks suggested rating these items "3" as Erie County has recycling initiatives. Councilmember Robertson stated the Highway Department will take electronics. Ms. Lipiew stated there are many upcoming events.

Composting: Ms. Lipiew stated NEST is mostly finished with the composters for this year.

Climate Smart Community: Ms. Lipiew spoke with a member of the Village of Hamburg Environmental Commission and learned there are contacts at the University at Buffalo who will assist the town. Designated communities earn points which results in additional grant funding. Ms. Hicks advised Erie County Department of Environment and Planning will also help and the town has begun to address certain items, for example, replacing streetlights with LED lighting. Ms. Hicks questioned if any first ring suburbs have achieved Smart City status. Ms. Lipiew stated no first ring suburbs are listed on the map.

The commission members decided to address the remaining items at a future meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr. Mudd, seconded by Ms. Hicks, to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 P.M.

Ayes: All

Noes: None

Abstain: None

Motion Carried

Margaret A. Martin
Deputy Town Clerk/Secretary to the Environmental Commission

WEST SENECA ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to protect and improve the environment as a valuable resource and asset for the people and the Town of West Seneca. We strive to advise the Town Board and make recommendations that will promote a clean, healthy, and well protected environment supporting a sustainable society and economy. The committee shall also provide community outreach and education to achieve these goals.

Environmental Issues for current action and long term planning purposes for the West Seneca Environmental Commission (WSEC)					
Category Sub-categories	Priority 1 = High 2 = Medium 3 = Low	Details	Actions	Team Members	Status / Comments
Water Quality					
Buffalo Niagara River - keeper	1		1. Assisting with National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Grant for implementation of flood control methods along the Buffalo Creek. 2. Floor bench in Buffalo Creek.	Evelyn Hicks	Attended several meetings in 2023
Storm Water Coalition					
Pesticide / Herbicide Use					
New subdivisions impact on Sanitary Sewers					

Storm Drain Medallions	1	Was a past major project for WSEC. A recent study (sampling) determined about 46% are now missing from where placed.	1. Purchase replacement medallions. Determine how and when to replace. 2. Idea: What can be done to have developers install these on storm drains in new developments? Update town codes for new subdivisions?		DEC marking requirements?
Trees					
Tree Inventory Grant	1	Grant awarded to the town in Dec. 2023.	1. WSEC is a partner with the town for the grant activities with focus on public outreach and education during grant implementation. 2. Delay caused by new DEC system and NYS Comptroller. 3. Project team to be formed and represented by commission members .	Tree Subcommittee (Thomas J. Mudd, Jr., Danielle Bagley, Ryan Taylor) include others as needed.	1. Formal letter of partnership provided to gran writer in June 2023 and included with grant application. 2. Pending contract to be signed by Town Supervisor with DEC May 2024. 3. TBD
Urban Forestry Management Plan	1	Subsequent to completion of tree inventory above. 2nd part of the grant.	See above.	Tree Subcommittee (Thomas J. Mudd, Jr., Danielle Bagley, Ryan Taylor) include others as needed.	

Tree City USA		Is this something the town board would support?				
Invasive Species						
Approved Tree List	1		1. Tree Subcommittee has a proposed tree list. 2. Formal letter with tree list recommendations sent to the town board 3/21/2024.	Tree Subcommittee	1. Links to tree inventory grant, future grant opportunities. 2. On agenda of town board meeting on March 25, 2024. Was referred to town attorney for review.	
Green-Space						
Town Parks						
Buffer Zones for Subdivisions						
Growth / Zoning Impacts						
Community Gardens	1		Agenda topic for 6/10/24 WSEC mtg. Town resident input.			
Hiking trails						
Bike Paths	?	GObike and West Seneca Bikes	Interface with these organizations to identify priorities for WSEC.	Danielle Bagley		
Road Traffic						

Bike Lanes	1	GObike and West Seneca Bikes	1, Interface with these organizations to identify priorities for WSEC. 2. Letter from Chris Holmes, founder of West Seneca Bikes, expressing concerns about bikeability in West Seneca received January 2023.	Danielle Bagley	1. On-going. Letter was sent to West Seneca Town Board in April 2023. emails and discussions occurred with Chris Holmes. Commission reviewed email chain during April 15, 2024 meeting. Still have concerns and questions. Feedback provided to town board liaison.
Pedestrian Walkways					
Growth / Zoning Impacts					
Wildlife Concerns					
Deer Overpopulation	1	Deer Task Force / Survey, Other Information	1. West Seneca Deer Management Plan published May 2022. 2. Town Board meeting 5/6/2024 presentation on Ecological Impacts of White-tailed deer by Zach Goodrich Head of Land Stewardship at Tiff Nature Preserve Buffalo Society of Natural Sciences.		1. What is plan for 2nd survey? Funding? Why was this given back to WSEC vs. Further TB actions. Plan not being followed. 2. Presentation copy provided. Bob Amadon attend the TB meeting. Will review at future WSEC meeting.
Coyote Overpopulation		Is this a real concern?			

Growth / Zoning Impacts								
Recycling								
Hazardous Waste								
Electronics Waste								
Composting	1	1. Farmer Pirates (Farmers Market) 2. NEST (Northeast South Towns) Solid Waste Management Board	1. Attending events in March and April 2024 to support the events and inform the public about the WSEC. 2. Attend NEST meetings and bring back information to the WSEC.	1. Bob Amadon, and others? 2. Barb Lipiew	1. Both events were attended by commission members as part of public outreach. Refer to commission meeting minutes. 2. On-going			
Climate Change Impact								
Water Quality								
Forest / Trees								
Impacts from Extreme Weather Events								
Climate Smart Community	?	Refer to what East Aurora and Lancaster have done on this.						
Air Quality								
Traffic congestion								
Industrial Pollution								
Pesticide / Herbicide Use								
Noise Pollution								

Highway Traffic						
Industrial Sources						
Noise Ordinances						
Other						
Survey Town Residents (voice of the customer)						
Rank and summarize Environmental issues important to them						
Effectiveness of the town's environmental policies						