

ROLL CALL:

Members Present - Robert Amadon, Chairperson
Evelyn Hicks
Barbara Lipiew
Thomas Mudd, Jr.
Ryan Taylor
Ben Szablewski
Adam Reger

Absent - Danielle Bagley
Councilmember Scott Robertson

Associate Members present: Brittany Hernon

WELCOME

Chairperson Amadon opened the meeting and welcomed Adam Reger to the Environmental Commission.

MINUTES APPROVAL

Motion by Mr. Mudd, seconded by Mr. Szablewski, to approve the Meeting Minutes of April 15, 2024.

Ayes: All

Noes: None

Abstain: None

Motion Carried

ISSUES OF THE PUBLIC

Rob Kendrick, Union Road, referred to Go Car Wash on Union Road and stated the quality of life for residents around the car wash has been negatively impacted by the constant noise during business hours. Mr. Kendrick has communicated with the Town Board and the Code Enforcement Office regarding his concerns about the noise without resolution. Ms. Hicks encouraged Mr. Kendrick to approach the Planning Board with his documentation and to call the Police Department for any noise violations outside of business hours.

Mitchell Staunch, Flohr Avenue, questioned if the town has ever conducted a feasibility study for the Rails to Trails program or mixed-use trails. Ms. Hicks stated the town is not part of the Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council's (GBNRTC) master plan and reiterated the information shared at the previous meeting regarding the town's need to develop a transportation plan. Mr. Mudd stated the area around the creeks serves as some of the last remaining green spaces and wildlife corridors in the town and is very different from the area around the Erie Canal, but the Rails to Trails would be a great idea. Ms. Hicks encouraged Mr. Staunch to continue advocating for mixed use trails and if he becomes aware of grant opportunities to bring this to the town.

CORRESPONDENCE

Chairperson Amadon shared the attached Community Garden Initiative proposal from Scarlett Hanley.

Ms. Lipiew questioned who was involved with the proposal. Chairperson Amadon cannot answer for certain but believes Ms. Hanley and her husband prepared the proposal.

Mr. Mudd questioned the anticipated costs and commented that a vegetable garden would not meet the benefit of education about local flora and wildlife. Ms. Lipiew stated this calls to mind the current state of the deer

population in the town and that a deer cull should be performed before attempting to plant gardens. Mr. Mudd agreed and referred to the tall fencing installed in the deer exclusionary area at Tift Nature Preserve, noting the type of fences needed are very costly. This paragraph of the plan is erroneous.

Ms. Lipiew stated Ms. Hanley did not mention if she has communicated with the group running the garden at The Well and wondered if she spoke with them. A resident of Flohr Avenue suggested a community garden would better serve parts of town that are less affluent and suggested the locations be changed from Sunshine Park and Centennial Park. Mr. Reger agreed, commenting Sunshine Park is not easily accessible and Harlem Road Park and Fisher Road Park might be better locations among others. Ms. Hicks stated more detail is needed before moving forward, including who would oversee the garden.

Carol Yetter, resident and volunteer from the BNAC, reminded the commission certain areas of town receive Community Block Grant funding and spoke highly of Ms. Hanley. Ms. Yetter encouraged the Environmental Commission to speak directly with Ms. Hanley.

Chairperson Amadon follow up with Ms. Hanley to request additional information. Mr. Reger suggested the garden could start on a small scale. Mr. Szablewski suggested engaging students as partners in maintaining the gardens and noted Centennial Park is close to many of the schools. Ms. Lipiew, Mr. Szablewski, and Mr. Reger offered to speak with Ms. Hanley, also.

STRATEGIC PLANNING DOCUMENT

Chairperson Amadon provided the attached updated document. Ms. Hicks recommended a thorough review twice per year. Mr. Szablewski stated the document should be amended as needed throughout the year and offered to share access to his Google folder.

ONGOING COMMISSION PROJECTS

Bikes

Chairperson Amadon stated Councilmember Robertson was following up with the Town Board regarding the status of a letter from West Seneca Bikes from March 2023 and is not present to provide an update.

Trees

Chairperson Amadon stated the grant contracts are still unavailable through the DEC's website.

Education

Ms. Lipiew stated the BNAC hosted an event, Soil Sunday, that was well attended and provided the opportunity for participants to learn about soil and composting. Participants had strong interest in composting and Ms. Lipiew was able to pass out more countertop composting buckets; additional education and outreach opportunities should be encouraged.

Mr. Szablewski questioned if the Environmental Commission could establish accounts on additional social media platforms to disseminate information. Mr. Reger stated he would allow the commission to use the Facebook page he created. Ms. Hicks stated the Environmental Commission has a Facebook page and can provide the credentials to Mr. Reger. Mr. Mudd questioned if Town Board permission is required. Ms. Hicks stated permission was already given to the commission. Secretary Martin advised the town implemented an archiving software for town related social media and encouraged the commission to confirm with the Supervisor's Office. Additionally, Ms. Martin stated the town's newsletter might be utilized to provide information to the community. Mr. Mudd suggested the commission continue to use the established Facebook page. Ms. Hicks stated Mr. Reger should

Community Garden Initiative, West Seneca

Proposed by: Scarlett A. Hanley

Introduction: West Seneca, NY, is a vibrant community with a strong spirit of collaboration. In the coming years, a focus on enhancing our neighborhoods and promoting mutual aid within our community is necessary. We propose the establishment of community gardens in one or several key locations across the town. These gardens will serve as gathering spaces, educational hubs, and sources of fresh produce for residents. By harnessing the power of community engagement and local partnerships, we aim to create beautiful green spaces that benefit both individuals and the environment.

Objectives:

- Establish community gardens in Sunshine Park and/or Centennial Park (or other proposed spots by the council or community)
- Foster a sense of community ownership and pride in these public spaces.
- Promote sustainable gardening practices and environmental education.
- Provide residents with access to fresh, locally grown produce.
- Enhance the aesthetic appeal and functionality of the community.

Purpose of the project:

[Research Paper regarding a NYS study of gardens](#)

This article discusses the specific populations that community gardens impact most greatly, including the elderly and youth population. Providing a community garden allows for a source of nutrition, exercise, and mental stimulation.

[Overview of Benefits](#)

Social engagement in special populations: Many retirees or elderly citizens do not receive the proper amount of social engagement, community gardens provide a source to meet this need. Having a network of positive social connections amongst isolated populations is imperative to decreasing the high depressive rate of these groups. [Isolation in Older Populations](#). A similar rate of depression, lack of social skills, and delinquency in disadvantaged youth is reported. With the implementation of a garden, that again, facilitates positive relationships and community engagement. With a heightened rate of engagement will also follow high civic engagement and mutual trust. When community and neighborhood attachment increases, crime (specifically vandalism) decreases. [Crime Prevention through Environmental Design](#)

Beautification: Through the creation of a community garden, we not only find function, but beauty. Via wide pathways and raised beds designed to promote accessibility to our disabled residents, we allow beauty to be within reach. These gardens can also provide an area for presentation of art, West Seneca presents many wonderful artists who may have outdoor pieces

Community Garden Initiative, West Seneca

Proposed by: Scarlett A. Hanley

to display. Seating within these gardens allows a moment of viewing for art, community, nature, and growth.

Education about local flora and wildlife: A community garden drastically increases the educational resources surrounding local wildlife and plantlife. Not only does this provide a low cost field trip for children in our schools learning about the food web, nutrition, and the history of our town, but it gives people a place to watch birds and animals in their habitats. There are many benefits to spending time outdoors, and appreciating and understanding the biodiversity surrounding West Seneca is the first step towards that. When people are educated about their ecosystem, they grow an appreciation for it, and begin to take care of it for others and future generations.

Increase nutritional understanding: In the United States, obesity has become an epidemic, and is at an all time high. Nutrition education is an imperative tool to ensuring the health of our citizens. Not only will a garden provide access to fresh food, but it also promotes learning cooking skills, rather than having to rely on fast food due to its easy accessibility and cost effectiveness. As previously stated, the garden also provides physical activity which promotes heart health. The community garden actively targets populations vulnerable to lack of education surrounding food: namely, the poor, the elderly, the disabled, and children. This is a necessary implementation that will aid longterm in our fight against misinformation.

Implementation Plan:

1. Site Selection:

- Sunshine Park and Centennial Park have been identified as suitable locations for the community gardens.
- Each site will be evaluated for sunlight exposure, soil quality, and accessibility.

2. Community Engagement:

- Host town hall meetings and information sessions to solicit input and involvement from residents.
- Recruit volunteers to help plan, design, and maintain the gardens.
- Establish a community garden committee to oversee the project and ensure ongoing collaboration.

3. Partner Engagement:

- Reach out to local businesses for donations of materials and resources.
- Collaborate with nurseries, seed suppliers, and landscaping companies to provide mulch, seeds, plants, and other necessary supplies.

4. Garden Design and Implementation:

- Work with local landscapers to design a garden accessible to young children, the disabled, and the elderly.

Community Garden Initiative, West Seneca

Proposed by: Scarlett A. Hanley

- Install raised beds, pathways, composting areas, and other essential features.
- Organize community workdays to prepare the sites and plant the first crops.

5. Maintenance and Management:

- Develop a maintenance schedule and recruit volunteers to tend to the gardens on a regular basis.
- Provide training and support for gardeners, including workshops on organic gardening, pest management, and composting.
- Establish guidelines for garden use, including rules for harvesting and sharing produce.

6. Educational Programming:

- Offer workshops, classes, and demonstrations on gardening, nutrition, and environmental sustainability.
- Partner with local schools, libraries, and community centers to integrate garden-based learning into educational programs.
- Create signage and interpretive displays to educate visitors about the plants, wildlife, and ecological benefits of community gardening.

7. Celebration and Outreach:

- Host opening ceremonies and seasonal celebrations to showcase the gardens and recognize the contributions of volunteers and partners.
- Use social media, newsletters, and local media outlets to share updates and success stories with the broader community.
- Encourage residents to visit the gardens, participate in events, and get involved in ongoing initiatives.

Thank you and finalities: By creating community gardens in Sunshine Park, Tim Russert Park, Westgate Playground, and/or Centennial Park, we have the opportunity to transform underutilized spaces into vibrant hubs of activity and growth. Through the collective efforts of residents, businesses, and community organizations, we can cultivate healthy fruits and vegetables, and a stronger sense of connection and belonging. We look forward to working together to make this vision a reality and to sow the seeds of a brighter, greener future for West Seneca. Thank you for considering our proposal.

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)					
Priority Definitions:	<p>1 = High priority is something that currently affects the quality of the environment in West Seneca, is something WSEC historically has been working on, or can be irreversible or have a strong potential for getting worse (such as stream erosion) and is cheaper or easier to remediate earlier than later (such as invasive species). 2 = Medium priority is something that can or may soon have an affect the quality of the environment in West Seneca, and resources (grants, etc.) are known to be available to address it. 3 = Low priority is something that needs to be better understood, and needs research and benchmarking to learn more about it and methods to address it. M = Actions have been implemented and is now in Maintenance status.</p>				
Category Sub-categories	Priority	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. Flood bench in Buffalo Creek.	Evelyn Hicks	Attended several meetings in 2023. Public hearings to be scheduled. In phase 2. Recommend a sub-committee. Town board support and public input.
Storm Water Coalition	3			Leane Schultz	

Pesticide / Herbicide Use	1		Community Outreach and Education	Bob Amadon	Scott discuss with town officials as far as town usage. Erie county dept. of env. and planning has information.
Limitations of Sanitary Sewers. Being overloaded and overflow into waterways.	3		Need more information from experts		Issues may not be in new subdivisions it is limitations of older infrastructure.
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? Scott is expecting information from Brian Adams tomorrow. June commission mtg. agenda.
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	2	Is this something the town board would support?			Includes tree inventory, tree sub-committee, tree ordinance
Invasive Species	3				Top 5 invasive species issues communicate to public. Brittany to send information. for future meeting.
Approved Tree List	M	M=maintenance	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. Town codes to be updated.
Open Space / Green-Space					
Town Parks	3	Plans for bio-diversity in town parks? No-mow, kept natural, etc.			

Open space / green / wild space within or adjacent to Subdivisions	3				Zoning issues. Do retention ponds, ect. go to town after development?
Town Open Space Plan	3				Town Comprehensive Plan, etc. Have our own greenhouse or area for growing trees, etc.reach out to local schools also, on school property.
Community Gardens	1			Agenda topic for 6/10/24 WSEC mtg. Town resident input.	
Hiking trails	3				
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.	1. On-going. Letter 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 liasion. Danielle Bagley
Bike Paths	3	GObike and West Seneca Bikes		Interface with these organizations to identify priorities for WSEC.	Regional / town transportation plan? Move to next section. Danielle Bagley

Growth / Zoning Impacts									move to Other.
Wildlife Concerns									
Deer Overpopulation	M	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. If TB needs WSEC to do something, reach put to WSEC. 2. Presentation copy provided. Bob Amadon attend the TB meeting. Will review at future WSEC meeting.
Recycling									
Hazardous Waste	3								WSEC mtg. in June. County / Town
Electronics Waste	3								County / Town
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	3	Refer to what East Aurora and Lancaster have done on this.			Barb Lipiew		
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							

Cluster Development zoning