

WEST SENECA ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION (WSEC)
ANNUAL REPORT 2021

MEMBERSHIP:

Evelyn Hicks, Chair (EH), Rick Rutkowski, Vice-Chair (RR), Mike Wass (MW), Lauren Masset (LM), Emily Baker (EB), Tracy Skalski, Andrew Beehler, Youth Member (AB)
Cynn timer Gaasch (CG), Jacqueline Balikowski (JB) (replaces Camie Jarrell (CJ) who resigned due to family issues); Town Council Liaison: William (Bill) Hanley (BH)

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIVITIES

1. Meeting Minutes from 2021 are posted on the Town's web site.
2. Financial Report – 2021 WSEC Working Budget
 - a. Town Budget: \$1,500.00
 - b. Funds held in Escrow for the Environmental Commission:
 - i. National Fish and Wildlife Federation (NFWF) - \$2,710.76
 - ii. US Fish & Wildlife Service - \$29,000.00
 - iii. National Grid Mitigation Fund - \$61,000.00

*** Note that items 2bi, ii and iii are encumbered funds for special projects:

2bi: Funds are to be used for Oxbow Wetland initiatives, or office admin (computer) per NFWF Grant

2bii: Funds are to be used for the purchase of land/open space in or adjacent to the Oxbow Wetland (NYS DEC BU-17). These funds are part of the US Fish & Wildlife Service NRD Funds previously earmarked for the Orchard Park Road open space, which the Town had already purchased. Funds were transferred to the Buffalo Creek Oxbow area for land acquisition to secure open space in perpetuity.

2biii: Funds were gifted to the Environmental Commission by National Grid as part of the reconstruction of the power grid which runs through the Meyer Road wetland (NYS DEC BU-13).

3. Mike Wass agreed to attend the Erie County Department of Environment and Planning monthly meeting – Erie County Environmental Management Council and reports issues that may be important to the Town of West Seneca.

WSEC PROJECTS - UPDATES/DISCUSSION

1. Oxbow (2805 Clinton St.)- There continues to be difficulty with ATV's and other motorized vehicles driving through the wetland. We have discussed this and are interested in creating a permanent Nature Sanctuary designation for that site and provide education to the public on the damage that is done when motorized vehicles drive through the wetland. It is noted that some of the trees we had planted were knocked down or are failing.
2. Standing Subcommittee reports:
 - a. Tree Issues Subcommittee: 1) The Town Board adopted an update to the local Tree Ordinance to increase the penalty for the illegal cutting of trees on a parcel. 2) much work was done by MW and EH as to the settlement agreement with Young Development regarding the remediation plan for the damage done by the clear cutting of the lot at 945 Center Road.
 - b. Creek Awareness Subcommittee:
 - i. The Commission again postponed the in-person presentation for the Creek Awareness & Safety program due to COVID. We continue to work on the Power Point presentation.
 - c. Education Subcommittee:

- i. TS continues to maintain our Facebook page and also maintains the FB page for Birds of West Seneca. She regularly updates the Environmental Corner for the Town's Website.
3. Water Quality Issues (WQI) Subcommittee:
 - a. Residential Rain Barrels –Rain Barrel was installed
 - b. Municipal Rain Barrels – one Rain Barrel was installed at the BNAC
 - c. Storm Drain Medallions – Final installation of Storm Drain Medallions were placed on streets in West Seneca.
 - d. 2020 WQI Accomplishments RR forwarded the Annual Water Quality Report to the Town Board so that activities can be included on the Town's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System Annual Report for 2020.

TOWN PROJECT: We are happy to announce the completion and opening of the viewing platform at the Meyer Road Wetland. This was a multi-year project undertaken with sponsorship from National Grid. We took part in a grand opening of the viewing platform on September 17 with Town Officials and representatives from National Grid. EH made remarks on behalf of the WS Env. Comm.

GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

WSEC continues to work with Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper who secured a National Fish & Wildlife Foundation Grant titled: National Coastal Resilience Fund 2020. This grant opportunity seeks to mitigate the effects of high-water events and ice-jam flooding along the Buffalo Creek in West Seneca between Union Road and Harlem Road. Waterkeeper presented the project to the WS Town Board.

OTHER

The Commission continues to support the group, West Seneca Bikes, who was instrumental in developing the Pump Bike Track at the Harlem Road Park. We congratulate the group on this wonderful accomplishment in the Town. The West Seneca Bikes group continues to gather for weekly group bike rides throughout the good weather months. They also continue to work on a bike transportation plan for the Town – seeking both on road and off-road opportunities.