

Chairperson Gaasch called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

ROLL CALL:

Members Present - Cynn timer Gaasch, Chairperson
Robert Amadon
Danielle Bagley
Jacqueline Balikowski
Michael Beltz
Evelyn Hicks
Tracey Skalski

Absent - Ryan Harrington

Associate members present: Brittany Hernon, and Alex Goodwin to introduce themselves.

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Julie Barrett O'Neill, Regional Director for NYS Department of Environmental Conservation's Region 9

- West Seneca native
- Gained knowledge from colleagues at the University at Buffalo and experience working for Erie County Urban Planning
- Joined the DEC within the past year
- The DEC is working to clean up the effects of the industrial heyday, for example, Bethlehem Steel, and prevent future environmental problems
- Challenges staff to get the best results for the environment at the least cost to taxpayers as quickly as possible while safeguarding the public's trust
- Listed the attributes of Region 9 and the divisions noting their work is broad
- The increase of electric vehicles will have a positive impact on the region
- NYS has one of the most ambitious climate plans adopted in the United States and noted climate leadership and natural resource protections are two bigger priorities
- Currently, the DEC is dealing with emerging contaminants, building the next generation of conservationists by engaging a diverse group of individuals, and leveraging state and federal resources to solve complex environmental problems within a way that helps to create jobs, eliminate poverty, and move communities into sustainability over time
- NYS Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act goal and scoping plan are the biggest initiative of the DEC and emphasized how important accurate information is
- Encouraged the Environmental Commission to think through the scoping document of the climate plan and how it might help advance or support other community objectives, for example, energy efficiency measures; noting good, meaningful conservation takes longer to return on the investment
- Transitioning from fossil fuel gas to electrification will improve air quality
- Focus on the protection of the Great Lakes protection and compatible uses; it is critical to review zoning codes and flood management overlays
- Resiliency and water management is an emphasis, noting rain has changed and current infrastructure is challenged

The following questions were received:

- Is Region 9 related to WMU's (Wildlife Management Units) – Ms. Barrett O'Neill stated yes, and the goal is to preserve 30% of state land by 2030.
- Not much coordination between local and state governments regarding the use of the wildlife management area at the state school and questioned how the town can conform to the NYSDEC plan – Ms. Barrett O'Neill stated ecologists and biologists were concerned additional funding would have a negative effect due to the relatively small size.
- Buffalo Waterkeeper has a grant to mitigate flooding on Buffalo Creek – Ms. Barrett O'Neill stated Region 9 has a flood hub outside of Rochester.
- Is NYS going to provide messaging regarding the transition from fossil fuels to electricity – Ms. Barrett O'Neil acknowledged it is a big change, but fossil fuels contribute to climate change.
- Is NYS going to offer support for electrification – Ms. Barrett O'Neill stated the question is how do we plan for climate resilience, super insulating homes, making them passive, installing batteries; there is technological planning and deployment required.
- Within the climate act, a portion of funding must go to disadvantaged communities, how will that impact West Seneca – Ms. Barrett O'Neill stated many details need to be worked out and each community must weigh the concerns of their residents. Region 9 does not yet have a formal climate person.
- Are there maps of electric car charging stations available – Ms. Barrett O'Neill stated apps are available that identify charging stations. Ms. Skalski stated Erie County provides a map of charging stations.

Review of Bylaws and recommendations for changes

Councilmember Piekarec suggested changing the Officers' terms to one year as opposed to two because half of the members terms expire each year. Chairperson Gaasch stated her concern would be the time it takes to elect officers and learning the job. Ms. Hicks stated an election would be necessary if someone holding a position were to leave.

Ms. Balikowski suggested changing the language for the nominations and elections from January and February to the first and second meeting. Ms. Hicks, Chairperson Gaasch, and Mr. Amadon agreed with this change. Chairperson Gaasch noted an additional change to the elections being held at the second meeting would be needed. Ms. Balikowski stated verbiage referring to Vice Chairs and Co-Vice Chairs should be changed from "of" to "or" and make it consistent.

Mr. Amadon referred to accomplishments recorded on a table and questioned the format to be used. Chairperson Gaasch suggested updating the language to indicate the commission will record what is accomplished, i.e., "deliverables." Ms. Hicks stated a spreadsheet exists if the members would like to use that format. Chairperson Gaasch stated a member is still needed to act as Recording Secretary to track what the board accomplishes in an accurate list and the meeting minutes should reflect what tasks members commit to. Ms. Balikowski questioned if the word table is being removed. Mr. Amadon suggested using summary of accomplishments. Chairperson Gaasch agreed accomplishments is preferable. Ms. Balikowski requested clarification on the word "deliverables." Ms. Skalski stated her understanding is a deliverable is what is required, what is the task. Chairperson Gaasch stated she sees it a requirement, also, and noted the bylaws indicate this is to be done for each meeting; the language should be changed to "summarize accomplishments." Ms. Balikowski questioned who would be responsible for documenting the accomplishments. Ms. Hicks stated the intention of the person completing the work to document it and provided an example of installing storm drain medallions but the current initiatives are more creative and less concrete. Chairperson Gaasch stated the commission can maintain an annual document that is updated monthly and shared with the agenda. Ms. Hicks suggested using the Google

Sheets app. Ms. Balikowski questioned if there would be any FOIL ramifications. Ms. Hicks stated it will be part of the record every month. Chairperson Gaasch stated the bylaws should reflect an annual document of accomplishments will be maintained.

Chairperson Gaasch stated the bylaws will be updated according to the changes for review at the next meeting before being voted on.

MINUTES TO BE APPROVED

Motion by Ms. Balikowski, seconded by Ms. Hicks, to approve the Meeting Minutes of January 23, 2023.

Ayes: All

Noes: None

Motion Carried

ISSUES OF THE PUBLIC

No comments were received.

COMMISSION PROJECTS

Bike friendliness in West Seneca, Center Road approach

Chairperson Gaasch confirmed that the commission members were comfortable forwarding Mr. Holmes' letter to the Town Board. Mr. Amadon questioned if Center Road was a town or county road and where the bike master plan is available. Councilmember Piekarec confirmed Center Road is a county road. Ms. Skalski stated the Bike Master Plan was created through Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC) and is online, Center Road is a priority for the region's plan.

Motion by Ms. Skalski, seconded by Mr. Amadon, to forward the letter written by Christopher Holmes of West Seneca Bikes to the Town Board.

Ayes: All

Noes: None

Motion Carried

Tree Inventory Grant

Chairperson Gaasch stated the grant writer would like to meet with the commission and requested an additional member to work with Ms. Bagley and Councilmember Piekarec. Mr. Beltz volunteered to assist Ms. Bagley. Chairperson Gaasch stated Councilmember Piekarec secured two requests for proposals and questioned if a third one was required for the grant. Councilmember Piekarec stated he will investigate the requirements with the grant writer.

Ms. Bagley stated Re-Tree Buffalo is offering the eight to twelve trees and she has contacted Highway Superintendent Adams for input on their placement. Ms. Hicks questioned the type of trees and when they are being made available. Ms. Bagley stated it is for the spring, possibly Earth Day, and the commission can select the type of trees. Chairperson Gaasch stated she prefers native species and inviting community members to help with planting. Ms. Hicks stated the town has assisted to prepare the holes for planting. Ms. Bagley stated volunteers dug holes for the bare root trees last year. Chairperson Gaasch requested Ms. Bagley advise the commission on updates from Re-Tree.

Chairperson Gaasch stated Young Development planted trees in the spring of 2022 as part of a settlement and

**WEST SENECA COMMUNITY CENTER
1300 Union Road
West Seneca, NY 14224**

**ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
March 6, 2023**

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Ms. Hicks, seconded by Ms. Bagley, to adjourn the meeting at 7:28 P.M.

Ayes: All

Noes: None

Motion Carried

Margaret A. Martin

Margaret A. Martin

Deputy Town Clerk/Secretary to the Environmental Commission