

DRAFT

ROLL CALL:

Members Present - Cynnie Gaasch, Chairperson
Robert Amadon
Danielle Bagley
Jacqueline Balikowski
Evelyn Hicks
Ryan Taylor

Absent - Michael Beltz
Ryan Harrington
Tracy Skalski

Associate members present: Leane Schultz and Alex Goodwin

MINUTES APPROVAL

Motion by Ms. Balikowski, seconded by Ms. Bagley, to approve the Meeting Minutes of June 12, 2023.

Ayes: All

Noes: None

Motion Carried

ISSUES OF THE PUBLIC

Members of the audience introduced themselves.

CORRESPONDENCE

Chairperson Gaasch reported that no new correspondence was received by the commission.

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Chairperson Gaasch advised that four current commission members including herself will be leaving at the end of the year.

Ms. Balikowski recommended the Environmental Commission should have goals and objectives for members to accomplish. Ms. Bagley agreed and questioned who will replace Chairperson Gaasch. Chairperson Gaasch stated any interested parties should contact the Town Board.

Ms. Bagley questioned the status of strategic planning. Chairperson Gaasch stated there are many items that have not been completed and were discussed at the September meeting including:

- Reviewing items in the Comprehensive Plan that align with the Environmental Commission's responsibilities
- Previous presentation regarding the SEQRA process by NYSDEC Regional Director Julie Barrett O'Neill
- Opportunity for the town to become a Climate Smart Community and scheduling a guest speaker to provide information
- Ongoing collaboration with the Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper on the stream bank stabilization project on the Buffalo Creek

- Scheduling an elected official, for example NYS Legislator Burke, to speak on environmental priorities
- Collaborating with Go Bike and West Seneca Bikes
- Storm water coalition priorities
- Deer impact items

ONGOING COMMISSION PROJECTS

Bikes

Chairperson Gaasch stated when Center Road was scheduled to be repaved the Environmental Commission forwarded a letter from West Seneca Bikes to the Town Board in March with several recommendations regarding safe bike travel in West Seneca. The Environmental Commission has not received feedback from the Town Board and Chairperson Gaasch will follow up. Ms. Bagley stated the bike season has come to an end and when Center Road was repaved it did not include green paint which was a recommendation in the letter.

Ms. Bagley stated communication between the Environmental Commission and Town Board needs improvement. Chairperson Gaasch stated the commission should also follow up with the Town Board. Mr. Amadon questioned if the Town Board liaison should have this responsibility. Chairperson Gaasch stated the commission can communicate with the Town Board in different ways and stated formal communications must have the commission's approval. Ms. Balikowski stated the Town Board liaison, currently Councilmember Piekarec, should fulfill this task.

Community Needs and Interests

No items were discussed.

Trees

Chairperson Gaasch referred to the settlement whereby the town was awarded a certain number of trees to be replanted by a Young Development. Subsequently, several trees died, and the town requested the company replace them. Ms. Bagley stated the company advised the town there would be a \$500 charge per tree for any additional replacement trees. However, Ms. Bagley advised the additional trees were scheduled to be planted today at no charge to the town.

Chairperson Gaasch stated the Environmental Commission was asked by the Town Board to compile a list of trees acceptable for planting in the town and listed the trees compiled by Ms. Bagley including Maples, Plane-Sycamore, and Ginkgo. Ms. Bagley highly recommended the Ginkgo and stated it has been used around Western New York, it stays small without being too small, and it is the most resistant tree in the area; one drawback is that the Ginkgo is not native to this area but noted it is resistant to pests. Further, the list forwarded from the Town Board included trees that would require more maintenance.

Chairperson Gaasch read from the September meeting minutes and agreed with Ms. Hick's suggestion that no more than two out of five trees should be the same. Ms. Schultz suggested the Tulip tree. Ms. Bagley stated the Tulip trees grow taller and would need to be placed away from power lines. Chairperson Gaasch stated she will prepare a memo with the Environmental Commission's recommendations for the November meeting.

Mr. Amadon summarized the tree inventory grant process and follow up steps should the town be awarded the grant. Chairperson Gaasch stated it will be a benefit to the town to receive the grant.

Waterways

Ms. Hicks stated there are no updates regarding the grant to reduce flooding in the Lexington Green neighborhood from the Buffalo Waterkeeper, but the town has been encouraged to discuss this with the property owners where the flood bench and water retention area would be created. Unfortunately, there are some challenges to overcome on National Grid's property which may hinder the project from moving forward.

Ms. Hicks stated she will follow up with the Burchfield Nature and Art Center regarding the erosion they reported at this location and noted Erie County Soil and Water was addressing the concern.

Storm Drain Medallions

Chairperson Gaasch stated the commission should move forward with purchasing additional medallions and currently has \$1,000 in the budget. Mr. Amadon summarized his research on the status of storm drain medallions across nine streets and reported 54% were still in place and 46% were missing.

Ms. Hicks advised that the 2021 pricing was \$2.51 per medallion plus shipping and the commission ordered 100. Additional materials are required including adhesives, wire brushes, and personal safety items. In past years, the commission has coordinated the medallion placement with the Highway Department. Ms. Hicks suggested allocating \$300 - \$350 to order 100 medallions.

Chairperson Gaasch stated the commission's budget is based on their spending and recommended purchasing 200 medallions and spending up to \$700; it would be to the commission's benefit to use the funds as that have been allocated.

Motion by Ms. Hicks, seconded by Ms. Balikowski, to approve the purchase of 200 storm drain medallions at a cost not to exceed \$750.

Ayes: All

Noes: None

Motion Carried

Giant Hogweed

Ms. Hicks stated for the record that the NYSDEC completed a giant hogweed control summary along Buffalo Creek from the Burchfield Nature and Art center to Cindy Lane. The NYSDEC treated 45 giant hogweed plants with an herbicide and the flower and seed heads of one plant were bagged at Site No. 2384. Additional giant hogweed information: do not touch giant hogweed dead or alive with your bare skin, before approaching it one should read the NYSDEC Giant Hogweed Control Methods Guide which explains public health hazards and safety instructions, the giant hogweed that is controlled is left onsite where the control work was performed, if the herbicide was applied do not enter the sprayed area for 24 hours, seedlings typically develop under very crowded conditions, the site will be monitored for three consecutive years and if no plants are found within three years it is considered eradicated. Ms. Hicks noted this has been ongoing for ten years and the NYSDEC has not been able to control it; the town does have giant hogweed on the stream banks.

GOVERNANCE

Chairperson Gaasch stated four members will be leaving the Environmental Commission as their terms end at the end of the year including herself, Ms. Balikowski, and Ms. Skalski. Mr. Beltz will also be leaving at the end of the year. Chairperson Gaasch encouraged the Associate Members to consider joining and anyone interested in applying should contact a Town Board member.

A member of the audience questioned how effective the storm drain medallions are at deterring people from using the storm water drains. Chairperson Gaasch stated she is not able to answer the question, but it is an initiative the Environmental Commission uses for community education and awareness. Ms. Hicks agreed with the purpose is education and awareness and believes over time people have reduced the amount of waste they dump into the drains.

Ms. Hicks questioned if an outline of the Strategic Plan could be provided before Chairperson Gaasch completes her term. Chairperson Gaasch stated the commission has not gathered material to put into an outline.

Chairperson Gaasch stated she will follow up with the Supervisor's office to advertise for new members.

Motion by Chairperson Gaasch, seconded by Ms. Hicks, to adjourn the meeting at 7 P.M.

Ayes: All

Noes: None

Motion Carried

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