

DRAFT

ROLL CALL:

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

Absent - Councilmember Scott Robertson

Associate Members present: Brittany Hernon and Leane Schultz

WELCOME

Chairperson Amadon opened the meeting.

MINUTES APPROVAL

Motion by Ms. Lipiew, seconded by Ms. Bagley, to approve the Meeting Minutes of March 18, 2024.

Ayes: (6) Chairperson Amadon Noes: None Abstain: (1) Evelyn Hicks Motion Carried
Danielle Bagley
Barbara Lipiew
Thomas Mudd, Jr.
Ryan Taylor
Ben Szablewski

ISSUES OF THE PUBLIC

Chairperson Amadon stated guest speaker Scarlett Hanley will attend the June meeting and present her Community Gardens proposal, attached for reference.

CORRESPONDENCE

Chairperson Amadon stated no new correspondence was received.

WSEC PLANNING

Chairperson Amadon stated the May 13, 2024, will be utilized as a work session to continue working on the Environmental Commission's planning document.

Bikes

Chairperson Amadon referred to email correspondence provided by Councilmember Robertson that was attached to the agenda. The correspondence was received from West Seneca Bikes expressing disappointment that bike paths were not added to a county road that was re-surfaced. Ms. Lipiew stated she recalled attending a presentation a few years before the East and West Road project began and sidewalks and a bike path were included. Many property owners indicated they did not want curbs or sidewalks, and when the project was completed bike paths had also not been added. Chairperson Amadon stated the Town Board considered the issue closed and noted the author of the letter agreed with the information provided, attached for reference. The correspondence indicated the requirement of a sidewalk when a bike lane is added to a roadway. Ms. Hicks

questioned if this requirement is a NYS law. Chairperson Amadon stated this information was not included in the correspondence. Ms. Bagley stated this is not true in other municipalities.

Ms. Hicks stated she has advocated for many years for a Transportation Master Plan for the town as required by the Comprehensive Plan. To date, no plan has been created or approved by the town and subsequently the town has no bearing to tell the county or state what the town wants. Chairperson Amadon stated he will refer the commission's questions to Councilmember Robertson. Bike Lanes is a category on the planning document and the commission can discuss this during the upcoming work session. Ms. Bagley and Ms. Lipiew both expressed frustration that bike lanes were included on the original plans for the East and West Road reconstruction but were not added when the project was completed.

Trees

Chairperson Amadon stated Councilmember Robertson was following up with Supervisor Dickson regarding the status of the town's access to the new system utilized by the NYSDEC for grant projects. Ms. Lipiew stated the grant writer was also awaiting access to the new system.

Ms. Hicks questioned the time-frame of the grant. Chairperson Amadon stated he is not certain but the grant writer had anticipated a kick off meeting would be scheduled around Earth Day with the arborist. However, the first step is that the town must initiate the contract with the DEC and is not aware of this being accomplished. Chairperson Amadon stated his understanding is that it is a two year process. Ms. Hicks stated the members of the commission should be provided with a copy of the grant for review. Ms. Lipiew stated she will follow up with the Supervisor's Office.

The commission's tree replacement list was presented at the March 25, 2024 Town Board meeting. The Town Board referred the list to the Town Attorney for his review. Mr. Mudd stated Supervisor Dickson the recommendation was referred to the Town Attorney to draw up the language, but understands the recommendation is adopted. Ms. Hicks stated a public hearing is required for any changes to the Town Code.

Education

Chairperson Amadon thanked Ms. Lipiew and Ms. Schultz for attending the March 26, 2024, composting event at the Senior Center and Ms. Bagley for providing the composting containers. Some questions were raised during the events:

- ✓ What trees should be planted by residents in their backyards – Chairperson Amadon stated he recommends residents select trees from the list but advised the town cannot tell a property owner what to plant elsewhere on their property. Mr. Mudd agreed any of the native trees on the list will do well.
- ✓ What can be done about Japanese Knot Weed – Ms. Hicks questioned Ms. Hernon if there have been any new develops in eradicating the knot weed. Ms. Hernon stated there have not but referred to the Best Practices on Western New York Prism's website. Mr. Mudd commented that goats were brought in to eat the knot weed, but noted it was a small area and not a permanent solution. Ms. Hernon stated goats will eat everything.

Ms. Hicks stated at one time the Environmental Commission received a grant from National Fish and Wildlife Foundation for the Oxbow Wetland that provide for planting native trees and eradicating Japanese Knot Weed. The DEC permit allowed for herbicide but it was not used that this location. The knot weed was knocked down and carried out the cuttings but the knot weed came back. Mechanical digging was also utilized to remove the roots and composted onsite, but the knot weed grew threw the fabric barriers. The Japanese Knot Weed is everywhere and is not worth discussing at this point unless there are new developments and concluded it is not

ornamental or pretty, not beneficial, and should not be planted. Mr. Mudd stated Japanese Knot Weed was brought over as an ornamental plant and it could be used as a precautionary tale and reason why native plants should be used.

Chairperson Amadon stated the town's Earth Day event will be held On April 22, 2024, in the gymnasium between the hours of 5 P.M. – 7 P.M. Mr. Szablewski, Ms. Lipiew, and Mr. Taylor volunteered to attend. Chairperson Amadon stated he has a presentation about the Environmental Commission available for the commission's table. Ms. Bagley volunteered to bring composting buckets.

Ms. Lipiew reminded all of the Erie County NEST program providing the 30" upside down barrels with the rodent guards for backyard composting.

Waterways

Chairperson Amadon questioned if any member was aware of an update on the order of storm drain medallions. Ms. Hicks stated she does not have an update on the order and acknowledged Councilmember Piekarec's efforts to have the order placed. Chairperson Amadon stated Councilmember Robertson was also investigating the status.

Chairperson Amadon referred to the commission's October 2023 meeting minutes and questioned if there were any updates on the soil erosion at the Burchfield and Nature Art Center. Ms. Hicks stated she does not have any updates but Erie County is aware of the erosion and when the ice scarring of bridge on Union Road is addressed she imagines the erosion will be, also.

Ms. Bagley stated the BNAC is having a park clean up event on Saturday, April 20, 2024, and waterways will be cleaned up on Sunday, April 21, 2024.

Chairperson Amadon questioned if there were any updates on the implementation of flood control methods along the Buffalo Creek. Ms. Hicks stated official word of the awards have not been released but understands West Seneca will be receiving funding for plans to be drawn up. Ms. Hicks reminded all of the caveat National Grid has that does not allow building under the power lines on their right of way. However, this was accomplished on Meyer Road and feels that it can be done at the Buffalo Creek site. The next step will be to have a public hearing or meeting for the adjacent landowners along the creek as their permission will be needed, also.

Chairperson Amadon stated there is nothing new to report with regards to Community Needs and Interests.

Governance

Chairperson Amadon stated the Town Code requires nine (9) members for the Environmental Commission including at least one (1) but not more than two (2) youth members and noted presently there are seven (7) members and no youth member. Ray Weimer stated he sent correspondence to the Town Board but has not heard back. Ms. Hicks volunteered to follow up with him.

Chairperson Amadon stated a Vice Chairperson is needed. Ms. Hicks stated she will volunteer in the absence of another member volunteering. Mr. Mudd questioned any expectations of a Vice Chair, such as becoming the Chairperson. Ms Hicks referred to the Bylaws that exist for the Environmental Committee and explained the Town Board appoints the Chairperson.

Chairperson Amadon stated the Bylaws that are posted on the town's website are not the most current version. Secretary Martin volunteered to investigate and provide the commission members with the most recent version for confirmation and update the website. Ms. Hicks sent the version she had from 2023 to Chairperson Amadon and Secretary Martin.

Chairperson Amadon stated the commission also needs a Treasurer/Financial Secretary. Mr. Mudd volunteered for this position. Ms. Hicks requested Mr. Mudd contact her for information on funds available for the Environmental Commission; the commission has funds allocated by the Town Board. A monthly report should be included at each meeting.

Chairperson Amadon stated Ms. Hicks will be the Vice Chair as Mr. Mudd has volunteered for the position of Treasurer/Financial Secretary. Ms. Hicks stated nominations are required at this meeting and a vote will be held at the next meeting.

Motion by Chairperson Amadon, seconded by Mr. Mudd, to nominate Evelyn Hicks as Vice Chairperson and Thomas Mudd, Jr. as the Treasurer/Financial Secretary of the Environmental Commission for 2024.

Ayes: All

Noes: None

Abstain: None

Motion Carried

New Business

Chairperson Amadon questioned the history and use of the Environmental Corner webpage on the town's website. Ms. Hicks stated a former member, Ms. Skalski, had access to information through the Department of Environment and Planning and would forward items to the Supervisor's Office for posting on the webpage. Secretary Martin stated both she and Deputy Supervisor Greenan can update the website. Ms. Hicks suggested Mr. Mudd could utilize this page to provide information about planting trees in the town. Ms. Lipiew commented that the town's policy about planting trees in the right of way has changed over the years. Chairperson Amadon suggested information about the Japanese Knot Weed can be added to the Environmental Corner webpage also.

Mr. Mudd questioned if there are any updates on the deer policy. Chairperson Amadon stated he was told to expect questions at the Senior Center composting event but did not receive any. Ms. Lipiew stated she anticipates discussion following the Community Gardens presentation, specifically the location of Sunshine Park.

Ms. Lipiew questioned if she would add a link to the Environmental Corner webpage on the BNAC website. Ms. Hicks stated that is a good idea.

Motion by Ms. Hicks to suspend the meeting to have a discussion. Ms. Martin stated Open Meetings law limits executive sessions to particular subjects. Ms Hicks withdrew her motion and stated this can be public record. There is a Facebook group called Keep West Seneca NY Green and questioned if anyone was familiar with the group and encouraged the commission members to look at the group. The Environmental Commission should include this group as a means of reaching more town residents. Mr. Mudd questioned if the group has a stated mission. Ms. Hicks stated she does not know but mentioned they included the "Know Your Backyard" document the commission made available years ago. Ms. Hicks requested the group be added to New Business on the agenda.

Ms. Hicks stated the Environmental Commission is tasked with maintaining an inventory of green space and open space in the town. A former commission member, Mr. Rutkowski, has access to the county maps and created a list. Ms. Hicks noted that she had requested previous administrations to pull deeds for open, vacant

town owned parcels and would like permanent deed restrictions added to the properties. The town is under development pressure and holding spaces as green space in perpetuity is important. The town owns property in the corridor behind Sunshine Park and the developmental center noting a tree inventory was conducted and rare plants were identified. The town also owns property along East and West Road. Ms. Hicks stated she would like the commission to move in the direction of preserving green spaces and requested adding this to the agenda. Chairperson Amadon stated he will add this item to the ongoing commission projects list. Ms. Hicks added that some of the green spaces are abandoned parcels developers could not build on.

Mr. Mudd questioned if the area Ms. Hicks identified as having rare plants is accessible. Ms. Hicks stated the area is not easily accessible. Mr. Mudd stated with the presence of rare plant species, there may also be species of birds breeding in this location and would like to be certain that information is captured. The state is in the third year of a three year breeding bird atlas which is a project done every five years in NYS; it is peak migration season for this area until the end of May.

Chairperson Amadon questioned where the green space inventory is located and when it was last updated. Ms. Hicks stated either 2010 or 2012 and some of the greenspace has been lost, specifically along Route 219 where the new residential development is located. In her opinion, the town should also acquire any green spaces along the stream bank corridor to remain unadulterated for habitat noting this is in compliance with the Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Lipiew agreed with the description and noted how overused the BNAC park is; with the addition of walking paths at the parks, people will use them. Ms. Hicks stated she would prefer any green spaces open to the public only be used for passive recreation purposes only noting motorized vehicles degrade the conditions and suggested the uses of each of the green spaces be reviewed. Mr. Mudd stated a group of both Orchard Orioles and Red Headed Woodpeckers are breeding at Oxbow Lake.

Ms. Bagley stated the West Seneca Farmers Market is seeking produce vendors.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr. Mudd, seconded by Ms. Hicks, to adjourn the meeting at 7:47 P.M.

Ayes: All

Noes: None

Abstain: None

Motion Carried

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