

Minutes

The Twenty Ninth Meeting Of the Niagara River Greenway Commission Beaver Island State Park Grand Island, NY July 28, 2009 3:00 pm

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Robert Kresse at 3:05 pm. Executive Director Rob Belue, filling in for the secretary, was directed to call the roll and a quorum of members was determined to be present.

The following Commissioners or their designated representatives were in attendance:

Robert Kresse, Commission Chairman
Paul Dyster, Commissioner, and Chairman Citizens Advisory Committee
Ron Pilozzi, Commissioner and Chairman Local Government Advisory Committee
Mark Thomas, NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
Dan David, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation
Ron Hayes, NYS Department of Transportation
Ray Witzleben, Empire State Development
Ed McDonald, Commissioner
Alice Roth, Commissioner
Rob Belue, Executive Director Niagara River Greenway Commission

Absent: John Giardino, Commission Treasurer
NYS-DOS
NYPA

Executive Director Belue noted for the record that he had received proxies with voting instructions from the New York State Department of State and New York Power Authority.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the May 19th, 2009 meeting were reviewed. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Commissioner Thomas and seconded by Commissioner Pilozzi. The meeting minutes were approved unanimously as submitted.

Comments from the Chairman

Chairman Robert Kresse reported that the commission will depart from procedure and entertain a discussion of a letter to the commission from one of the organizations. After a vote on the current projects, the commission will discuss the letter and ask the persons responsible to respond. There was nothing further from the Chairman.

Committee Reports

Paddles Up Niagara 2009

Executive Director Rob Belue reported that on Saturday July 25th the 4th annual “Paddles Up Niagara” event was held at Beaver Island State Park. There were 175 boats with 192 actual participants. Sponsors for this year’s event included Anchor Marine, Eastern Mountain Sports, Paths, Peaks and Paddles, the Buffalo-Niagara Riverkeeper, the Coast Guard Auxiliary, Modern Corporation and Uni-Lock Corporation. Eastern Mountain Sports is looking forward to being part of the event next year as we celebrate our 5th Paddles Up Niagara. There is interest to provide canoe and kayak rentals the day of the event as vendors are interested. Roe Woodard from NYS Parks Marine Division is willing to become part of the planning committee with suggestions such as an on the water scavenger hunt for younger participants in the morning. Commissioner Thomas thanked Park Manager Dave Clark along with the entire Beaver Island park staff for all their help, that without, the event could not have been a success. Mr. Belue advised that all vendors and sponsors have received thank you letters with a special thanks to Supervisor McMahon from the Town of Grand Island along with the Town Board and the Parks & Recreation Department for their wonderful support for this event since its inception. Chairman Kresse commented that Paddles Up represents what the Greenway is all about on the river.

Old Business

Project Consistency Review: Chairman Kresse asked the Executive Director to take over this part of the meeting. The Executive Director explained the procedures that would be followed for project review. First, he will provide a brief overview of each proposal and then invite the project sponsors to make a brief presentation. Following the presentation Commission members will be able to ask questions. The process will conclude with a vote on consistency with the Niagara River Greenway Plan.

New York State Parks- Niagara River Gorge Hiking Trail System

The project presentation was made by Landscape Architect Al Nihill, NYS Parks. Commissioner Pilozzi asked if the signage for this project will be consistent with the Niagara River Greenway. Mr. Nihill agreed that as the signage program is developed NYS Parks will work towards a consistent sign program. Commissioner Dyster commented that safety is important and it is good to have low tech maintenance, but he was concerned with the stairs and the railings in the gorge. Mr. Nihill reported that repairing the stairs and railings is part of the plan. Commissioner Roth asked how it would compare to the Canadian side. Mr. Nihill said that we have a continuous trail stretching over a number of miles where as the Canadian side is much shorter in length, also fishing access is better on the U.S. side. Commissioner Ed McDonald asked if there is any literature on the hiking/gorge. There are brochures and guided tours along the gorge and maps/signage also. Chairman Kresse called for a vote and members were unanimous in their finding that this project is consistent with the Niagara River Greenway Plan.

Re-Tree WNY- The 100,000 Tree Campaign

The project presentation was made by Arthur Traber and Justin Booth. Commissioner Dyster said it was good that someone was doing this, but had concerns because it is such a large scale project. He was also concerned with the maintenance of the trees. Commissioner Thomas commented that this project was Greenway wide and needed to be more structured. Chairman Kresse said it needs to

relate to the Greenway. Commissioner Roth feels that a tree inventory is important and benefits the communities that have such inventory. Commissioner Pilozzi expressed concerns about location/species/maintenance; this is a very aggressive project with the major work force being the volunteering public. Chairman Kresse called for a vote and members were unanimous in their finding that this project is consistent with the Niagara River Greenway Plan, while noting its concerns.

Niagara Relicensing Environmental Coalition Letter- Discussion

The full commission discussed a letter written to them regarding the “Lewiston Scenic Path” project. Commissioner Dyster stated that this project was not about the Robert Moses Parkway. It was a planning project about trail linkage which is what we are guided by in the legislation and the Plan. He would not change his vote. Commissioner Thomas said the project was about planning not construction. There will be future public involvement, but it is independent from the Parkway. Margaret Wooster spoke representing the NREC. She stated that the proposal was seeking the Niagara River Greenway Commission blessing only, but the next day was funded by the Host Community Standing Committee. She was concerned there was no evidence with the community involvement. She thought the Commission should have told them to come back later when they had more details. Chairman Kresse said the “Lewiston Scenic Path” project was consistent with the concept of the plan. There is no expanded roll the Commission can play. Dr. Lawrence Behann of the NREC feels the Commission doesn’t have a strong position. He feels the commission approved too quickly with out knowing anything about the proposal. Commissioner Dyster recapped the vote and re-stated the vote was on planning. The Chairman asked if there was a motion to further address the letter. There was no motion, so the letter will be filed. Commissioner Thomas suggested that a letter be sent to the Town of Lewiston.

Prior to the presentation, former commissioner Paul Leuchner was presented with a plaque and a letter from NYS Parks Commissioner Carol Ash for his hard work and dedication to the Niagara River Greenway and Commission. Paul thanked everyone for their support and asked that the commission maintain environmental and historic integrity.

Presentation- greenbuffalo.org

The presenters were Maria Burrage and Gina Siepierski. They presented on behalf of Green Trade Marketing. “gogreen.org” will focus on the entire Niagara River Greenway and is looking to become a “One Stop Shop” on everything green.

Public Comment

Paul Leuchner, Town of Grand Island: Paul spoke about the concerns he has with the delays with the Greenway funding. Specifically the Fisherman’s Landing project. He would like to see better accountability on the flow of money.

Margaret Wooster, Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper: She would like the Greenway commission to put the public comment before the project review and vote. Executive Director Belue reminded the public that there approximately 4-5 weeks to submit written comments. She also made a comment from the ecological stand point about the re-tree project.

Thomas Frank, Amherst, New York: Mr. Frank spoke on various subjects.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Commissioner Thomas seconded by Commissioner Pilozzi. The meeting adjourned unanimously at 5:05 pm.

Niagara River Greenway Commission