

Clarence Conservation Advisory Council Meeting Agenda January 11, 2024 Minutes

@Town Place, Kathleen Hallock conference room

7PM Call to order and Introduction (Steve)

Committee members present: Steve Diver, Barbara Maisch, Dennis Londos, Chick Biegner and Councilman Paul Shear. Several Council members reported illness or were unable to attend.

There were no correction of the December minutes.

Visitors: Josh Kavanaugh and Chris Sauls (BSA Troop 27); Denise Hicks, Laurie Sauls, Kelly Kavanaugh, Mary Kavanaugh

Updates

- Josh Kavanaugh Eagle Project (Trails at Beeman Creek Park)
Josh presented an overview of his Eagle project completed at Beeman Creek. Josh led trail marking, made a color-coded map of trail, cleaned up of junk at an old house site, built and installed a wooded kiosk sign with trail information. There were questions about the trail conditions, any hunters and when the project was completed. Troop 27 agreed to share digital map with the Council. The Committee complimented Josh and the troop and thanked him for his conservation project.
- Councilman Paul Shear informed the Committee that he will be stepping down as Liasion and be replaced by new Councilman Bob Alteri. Paul has extensive commitments associated with the Planning Board. Paul will stay on for a bit and both Bob and Paul will attend the next couple meetings.
- Deer control. Dennis Londos said about 55-60 deer have been taken. Generally, 100-120 are taken per year as a maintenance program, not to reduce the population. Questions were about spillover from adjoining towns and how DEC determines metrics of deer control. Dennis said loss of habitat is the biggest consideration and the deer move around as habitat is lost.
- 2024 Budget Balance is starting at \$1100.
- Recent purchases (headlamps and signs were part of 2023 expenses), batteries for headlamps will be first 2024 expense, about \$30.

Old Business

- Logo update: Barbara has nothing new to report. Needs a program to help with the design. There were questions about cost, and Barbara explained it was insignificant. She will continue to work on it.
- Headlamp Hike with Evan Vahratian is scheduled for January 20th 2024 at Nature Center 5PM-7PM. Steve asked for volunteers to help out as “docents” or those who could talk about the Nature Center and the Council’s efforts and goals.
- Winterfest January 27th 11AM-2PM—Steve asked for volunteers to help out. Chick volunteered to staff the table.
Cheryl Cantlon is taking the lead on the information and giveaways with seed packets, conservation literature and maps of the hiking trails at the nature Center. Visitor Denise suggested Hiking Etiquette guide. We will include Josh Kavanaugh’s map of the Beeman Creek hiking trails also. Some discussion around the goal of this information session and it was agreed that we are targeting novice hikers and those who don’t know about the Nature Center. Visitor Laurie suggested discussing when to use snow shoes and microspikes. Snow shoes can be obtained at Victory Sports on Main Street. The winterfest table will be located in the Main Street clubhouse. Dennis suggested future events like walking in the Memorial Day parade will help advertise the work of the Council.

New Business:

Steve summarized a meeting with Emily Root (Buffalo Waterkeepers) on Nov. 11, 2023. The entire committee had been invited to attend this Zoom meeting. Steve and Cheryl met.

Steve used some maps to show the location of a proposed watercraft launch on Town property along Tonawanda Creek. This is mostly for kayaks or canoes. Steve and Cheryl met with Emily Root from the Buffalo Waterkeepers to hear about the project overview and to suggest they present to the Council if the Council was interested in hearing more. There is wildlife viewing potential and paddling to Transit Road crossing is possible. The Town does not have a launch. The Buffalo Waterkeepers would pursue grant funding. Some discussion about the need for a launch in the Town and the quality of life it brings. We would like to hear more about wildlife since this seems a uniqueness to the site. Didn't seem to be any negatives, though location is remote at the northernmost point of the Town.

Steve summarized a meeting with James Dussing (Clarence Highway Superintendent) on Jan 5, 2024. Steve and Cheryl met.

- Jamie said he would be broadly supportive and could offer help in form of equipment. Departments are to coordinate and there is overlap in some domains by Parks and Highway. He had idea about the pocket park, memorial tree plantings along the bike path and supported our idea of a gravel trail at the Nature Center for people with limited mobility. He suggested placing gravel there for a work project. There were questions about whether this would damage tree roots and what grade of gravel would be best for wheelchair travel. Pea gravel would offer too much resistance. This has to be researched better and seek input from experts. Steve showed a map of the Highway Department and the site of the new pocket park on Goodrich Rd, with suggestion of a planting area. Paul mentioned that the Arboretum Committee already does memorial tree plantings and should consult with them.

Steve summarized a meeting with Nate Morey (DEC Forester) at Beeman Creek on Dec 28th, 2023. Steve and Cheryl met with Nate.

- Nate will attend/present at Arbor Day Open House on April 27th, 2024.
- He suggested some starting points for expanded use of the area to include better signage, park boundaries, a map, posted park rules, kiosk, history of the site. He suggested resource people including the Erie County Forester. He also provided maps of the area showing it was mostly previously farmland. Cheryl found that the hemlock stand dates back to the 1920s and could be old growth.)
- The Scout trail near Beeman Creek (east of the parking area) could be a good managed tree planting site. There were lots of dead ash and vines. Nate suggested cutting vines and nuisance trees too close to the trail. Also could clear dead ash if desired, in order to make more planting area available.
- We discussed the previous Beeman Creek Master Plan developed by Erie County in 1988 and wondered what the current master plan is, now that Clarence has taken over the park.

Steve thinks we need a better advertised eastern entrance to the Nature Center. The background has been discussed before but was re-hashed for the visitors. There are perceptions of limited access to the Nature Center off Sheridan due to locked gate. That drive is not attractive and confusing to people who think they've made a wrong turn into a dump. Steve thinks better signage near the Thompson Rd baseball diamond would make it clear that there is access from this side. This is needed because many residents "didn't know" the Nature Center was there. A sign could read: "**Welcome to the Clarence Nature Center-Thompson Rd Entrance**" with Park Rules, a map and a paper map. For examples, see the sign at Chestnut Ridge Park and the kiosk on entering the Reinstein Woods. Other items include the demolition of the old house by the senior center, a pollinator/shrub area as you cross the field and a trail re-route. Cheryl imagines this is a good place to plant shrubs;

we don't just need to plant trees. Jon Bleuer asked whether an alternative entrance on Sheridan was feasible.

Possible tree sites at the Nature Center was also discussed.

Paul suggested we might need to thin the trees planted in 2023 since they are so close and the survival rate was very high. The Council attributed this to the wet summer and tree tubes installed to protect from deer browse. Maybe the Town could use them and plant in the right of way, as part of the continual street tree planting. The Council liked this idea. Paul suggested that we could offer a planting site that could accommodate lots of trees, including greenways near Thompson and the Senior Center. Others felt that a smaller site was a good idea with maybe 100-200 tree seedlings. These will require ongoing care. Steve and Cheryl will seek input from James Burkhard.

- Next meeting will be February 8th, 2024 Kathleen Hallock room, One Town Place (planning for Arbor Day open house, tree seedling purchases)
- Meeting adjourned at 835PM.