

Minutes
Niagara River Greenway
State Park Standing Committee 17th Meeting
February 10, 2017 – 1:00PM
DeVeaux Woods State Park Theater

Attendees

Mark Thomas, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
Lou Paonessa, New York Power Authority

Introduction and Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

Mark Thomas called the meeting to order at 1:04 pm. Mark Thomas moved to have the minutes from the July 28, 2016, meeting approved; Lou Paonessa seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Public Comment on Agenda Item

Request to approve funding from New York Power Authority to New York State Parks for the completion of design and construction of the Grand Island West River Parkway trail project. Public comment as follows:

1. Frank Greco – President of the West River Homeowners Association. In favor of multi-use trail and West River Parkway. Feels there is room for both. The cheaper option is not always the best option. NYSDOT traffic study was cited. Expressed possible future concerns of public trust in the Greenway Commission. Mr. Greco provided notes for record.
2. Paul Leuchner – Former member of the Niagara River Greenway Commission. Has advocated trails throughout Greenway system for many years. Stated Governor Cuomo has noted the importance of multi-use trails with goal of New York State having the largest state multi-use trail network in the nation. West River Trail will allow public access to scenic corridors and offer benefits locally, regionally and statewide. Encouraged funding approval for construction of West River Trail. Mr. Leuchner provided notes for record.
3. Nathan McMurray – Town of Grand Island Supervisor. West River Trail will guarantee public access to the waterfront. It will preserve and prevent space from overdevelopment or used for any purpose other than recreation and allow public nature and water access. Looks forward to utilizing the parkway as a recreational corridor in 2018.
4. Liz Lutnick – West River Resident. Grand Islanders have shared and been good stewards of the river. Understands the want for connections across NYS. Questions the need for ADA trail when other existing connections do not support. Not against a bike path. In favor of connecting south end through snowmobile trail. In favor of Share the Road, vehicular use on weekdays and bicycles on weekends. Either option is more affordable and increases visibility. Wants reassurance of duck blinds, overlooks and views. Does not want any commercial entities or additional infrastructures (signs, trash cans, bathrooms) on West River. Beaver, Buckhorn and Big Six offer existing infrastructures that can be enhanced.
5. Terry Funk – West River Resident. Supports path and hopes the project moves forward soon. Adds value to property and enhances entire West River. Feels the West River Homeowners Association is misinformed. Does not agree with their opposition.

6. Richard Garlapow – West River Homeowners Association Board of Directors. Favors a bike path along West River Parkway but strongly opposes closing the road. Feels closing the Parkway contradicts with Governor Cuomo’s plans to promote tourism. The Parkway is currently a tourist attraction, allowing automobile traffic to enjoy the scenic parkway along the river. Feels Supervisor McMurray is misrepresenting the residents in stating the majority of residents favor closing West River Parkway.
7. Rose Bugman – West River Homeowner. Feels homeowners have been ignored by state and media. Stated hundreds of homeowner petitions against closing the Parkway have been submitted. The riverfront has always been open and accessible to public. Residents currently mow, clean and maintain this state-owned property. Wants reassurance that no structures will be built. Concerned with parkway plans showing median areas that may promote vermin.
8. Mike Madigan – Town of Grand Island Board Member. Feels access to water on Grand Island is misrepresented since there are many areas providing waterfront accessibility. Has safety concerns. Requested safety impact results on proposed change. Compared accident reports on impacted roads. Feels quality of life will be affected. Majority of Town Board and community opposed to project. Supports Option 4.
9. Sandra Nelson – West River Homeowner. West River homeowner for 66 years. Family property taken away by eminent domain. They have become caretakers of property because no one else oversees property. Safety concerns. International waterway needs protection. Wants to preserve current quality of life. Questioned future property maintenance.
10. Bonnie Fitzgerald – West River Resident. Residents are caregivers of West River Parkway. Waterfront access has always been open to the public and everyone is welcome. Favored her alternative idea of a shared road (Option 5), with commuter use on weekdays and pedestrian traffic on weekends. Questioned whether an environmental impact study was done. Concerned about property maintenance. If project moves forward, she wants written guarantee that lawn will be mowed once a week.
11. William Hennigar – West River Homeowner. Lived on West River for over 60 years. Many concerns. Does not see the need for a multi-use path. State has neglected property. Border issue concerns. Feels border patrol will not be able to effectively maintain and patrol the eight miles of international border without parkway access. Feels the parkway is more useful for year-round commuters and scenic driving rather than 3-4 months of recreational use.
12. Bev Kinney – Town of Grand Island Board Member. Homeowners have been good stewards of West River and need assurance that the property will be maintained. There has been great and broad support across Grand Island in support of this project. This is not just a bike path but rather an ADA multi-use trail. Encourages the project to move forward to provide a passive park for all Grand Islanders, surrounding communities and tourists to enjoy.

Funding Request

The following project was deemed consistent with the Niagara River Greenway Plan as determined by the Niagara River Greenway Commission.

Beaver Island State Park – West River Trail Design, Bidding and Construction	\$410,000
Administration Services	
Beaver Island State Park – West River Trail Construction	<u>\$490,000</u>
Beaver Island State Park – TOTAL GREENWAY COST of West River Trail Project	\$900,000
(Total Project Cost \$2.5 Million. Balance to be covered by NYS Parks Capital Program.)	

- Requesting NYS Parks Greenway funding be approved for these projects.
- Lou Paonessa motioned to approve NYS Parks Greenway funding for these projects. Mr. Paonessa offered assurance that the project went before the Niagara River Greenway Commission. The Commission's intent is to make sure projects are consistent with the Greenway Plan, which calls for a series of parks and trails along the Niagara River Corridor. This project is consistent. New York Power Authority's role is to make sure funding allocation is consistent with the Greenway Plan projects. Seconded by Mark Thomas. Mr. Thomas noted several public meetings have been held on this project. Comments will be reviewed as we continue the design process and the establishment of parkland, scenic overlooks, issues of long-term maintenance and further non-development paths and recreation. The vote was unanimous.
Lou Paonessa – approve Mark Thomas – approve

Next Meeting

The next meeting is to be determined at a later date.

Adjournment

Mark Thomas motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Lou Paonessa. The meeting adjourned at 1:43 pm.