



Wednesday, February 18, 2026

Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo, 726 Exchange St., Suite 525, Buffalo, NY

Meeting Minutes

Committee Members Present:

Daniel Castle- Chair (Erie County), Kevin Kelly (Olmsted), Thomas Baines, Esq. (City of Buffalo) and Carol Jasen Sampson (NYPA)

Also in attendance were:

Mike Vogel- Buffalo Lighthouse Association
Jeanne Beiter- Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper
Catie Stephenson- Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy
Sarah Gatti- County of Erie
Nadine Chalmers- Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority
Erin Griffis- Niagara River Greenway Commission
Ba Zan Lin- Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo
Jean McKeown - Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo
Colin Perry- Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo

1. Call to Order

Chair Castle called the meeting to order 4:06pm.

2. Roll Call and Remarks

Secretary Sampson took roll call and Chair Castle welcomed designated City of Buffalo representative Deputy Mayor Thomas Baines, Esq. to the Buffalo & Erie County Greenway Committee. The Chair noted that this is the 19th year of this Committee and distributed a map that depicted the numerous projects that were awarded with Greenway funds, resulting in a positive impact to Buffalo and Erie County. The map can be found in the 2025 Annual Report that is posted on the NYPA Relicensing Greenway website.

3. Approval of the December 3, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Chair Castle asked if there were any amendments to the minutes.

Upon motion made by member Kevin Kelly and seconded by member Carol Jasen Sampson the December 3, 2025 meeting minutes were adopted (3-0). Thomas Baines abstained.

4. Public Comment (reserved for agenda items only)

NONE

5. Presentations from applicants seeking Buffalo & Erie County Greenway Committee grant funding
Chair Castle stated that there are eight applications seeking 2026 Greenway grant awards. As always, the Committee will be faced with difficult decisions on the outcome of the 2026 awards. He stated that each applicant will be given seven minutes to present their project followed by Q&A from Committee members. The order of presentations followed the agenda listing.

1) Applicant: Buffalo Lighthouse Association
Project: South Buffalo Lighthouse Roof Replacement
Presenter: Mike Vogel

The Buffalo Lighthouse Association Inc., a not-for-profit corporation formed to preserve the historic lighthouse service structures of Buffalo Harbor and interpret them and the city's rich maritime history for the public, is strategically engaged in fostering the city and region's redevelopment of the waterfront through public-use projects. The twin restorations of the 1833 Buffalo Light and 1903 South Buffalo Light "bookend" the Outer Harbor, adding impetus to redevelopment while continuing the Inner Harbor's heritage theming and adding a needed educational component to the overall project.

The last few years have brought especially damaging gales and blizzards to these sites. Storms have opened multiple holes in the fog signal station roof that has left the main station building exposed to the elements for decades. This is one remaining hurdle to opening the 1903 breakwater light station at the southern border of Buffalo and the Niagara River Greenway to safe public visitation.

The Standing Committee initially awarded \$50,000 in funding in the 2016 cycle, after questions on access, viewability, and location within the Greenway boundaries were answered or settled. Additional awards were made in 2017 (\$129,300), 2019 (\$179,000), 2022 (\$137,800), 2023 (\$247,236), and 2024 (\$105,000) for a total of \$848,336. The original application to the Greenway Commission, attached to the 2016 start-up application and still on file, includes the letters of endorsement from governmental officials. The letter also includes comments by consulting parties and the Association response, all previously reviewed and accepted by the Standing Committee.

The Association occupies the site as the holder of a federal Historic Property Lease. The terms of the standard Historic Property Lease require approval of buildings, fences and other permanent property changes from both the United States Coast Guard and the New York State Historic Preservation Office. In addition, projects such as this, along the 1826 Lighthouse Pier, also requires the approval of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Those approvals have been granted.

The Lighthouse Association is requesting a total of **\$175,000** for **replacement of the station roof**. The total project estimate is \$200,000, which includes \$25,000 in-kind for dock design and installation.

2) Applicant: Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper
Project: Cont. Expansion of Blueway/Greenway Connections Phase 3
Presenter: Jeanne Beiter

Over the past seven years, Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper (BNW) has implemented the Buffalo Blueway through the creation of new and/or upgraded public water access sites along the Buffalo River and Outer Harbor. BNW seeks to continue the expansion of the Blueway beyond the limits of the Buffalo River and City of Buffalo into other Western New York municipalities and rebrand the Buffalo Blueway as the Buffalo Niagara Blueway. With \$10 million in funding from Empire State Development, BNW has leveraged

additional resources over seven years and is now currently in the final stage of implementing the Buffalo Blueway which is providing new and/or upgraded public water access sites along the Buffalo River and Outer Harbor. To date, BNW has completed six Buffalo Blueway sites with three additional Blueway sites planned to be completed by 2027.

In 2024, the Buffalo and Erie County Standing Committee funded BNW \$56,650 to complete an assessment and coordinate with partners to determine a strategic approach for creating the Buffalo Niagara Blueway. In 2025, the Buffalo and Erie County Standing Committee funded BNW \$90,600 to install 15 Blueway Interpretative Signs. These investments established the foundation for a regionally connected Blueway network; however, the installation of interpretive signage alone does not fully formalize these locations as designated public water access sites within the Buffalo Niagara Blueway system.

Funding is now needed to complete this transition by installing Blueway waterfront markers at each of the 15 locations that received interpretive signage in 2025/2026. The waterfront markers are the final physical element required to clearly designate, brand, and unify these sites as part of the Buffalo Niagara Blueway, transforming a collection of individual access points into a cohesive and easily identifiable regional system. These 15 new Blueway sites will then be added to the Buffalo Niagara Blueway website, promoted throughout our social media outlets, thus advancing the expanded network of public water access sites throughout the Niagara River Greenway in a consistent and cohesive manner. The project includes the installation of a waterfront marker designed to enhance wayfinding along the shoreline. The marker will clearly identify this location as a designated point for public access and enjoyment of the water, helping residents and visitors understand where the waterfront can be safely and meaningfully experienced. In addition to improving visibility and navigation, the marker will function as a recognizable landmark that reinforces the waterfront as a connected and accessible part of the community.

Chair Castle inquired with the sign makers located in Pennsylvania, has BNW made any effort to find a local manufacturer. Ms. Beiter responded it's an organization that we have used for many years and we are very comfortable with their process and they know the specs we are looking for.

Ms. McKeown, Community Foundation added that for grantees are required to obtain 3 bids and if you are requesting that you're going sole source justification must be provided. Added clarification from Ms. Beiter, the request is for markers and they are manufactured locally.

BNW is requesting a total of **\$325,494** for **installation of 15 markers to increase visibility at each public water access site**. BNW provided a letter from the Niagara River Greenway Commission finding this project consistent with the Niagara River Greenway Plan.

3) Applicant: Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy
Project: Design & Plans for the Cazenovia Golf Clubhouse
Presenter: Catie Stephenson

The Cazenovia Golf Clubhouse is located within Cazenovia Park, which is part of the Frederick Law Olmsted's historic park system. While not part of Olmsted's original design for the park, golf has been part of the park's recreational offerings since 1929. The nine-hole golf course was added when an additional 80 acres were secured from the Town of West Seneca in 1925. Municipal golf courses provide increased community access to the game across all demographics. Pursuant to BOPC's agreement with the City of

Buffalo, funds raised through golf and other earned revenue opportunities go directly to support the operations and maintenance of Buffalo's Olmsted Parks. In 2025 there were over 10,500 rounds of golf played on the Cazenovia golf course.

The clubhouse is in dire need of rehabilitation. It is not fully functional or ADA accessible and in a state of disrepair, preventing BOPC from capitalizing on its full revenue potential and full community usage. The current facility does not align with BOPC's design guidelines for structures within the Olmsted system. It requires constant care to "hold the building together" – gutters, bathroom facilities, plumbing and electrical issues are just a few of the major areas in dire need of rehabilitation.

The amenities offered by physical structures in the park system are one of the improvements most requested by the public. While the physical presence of the golf course limits public use to that section of the park, a clubhouse that offers amenities to the general public improves access by providing a comfortable and welcoming space to gather and critical amenities like restroom facilities and indoor community gathering space. Access to these in-park amenities significantly enhances the park user experience and increases accessibility for all. This first phase of the long-term project will include an assessment of the building and design and plans for rehabilitation of the current building or design and plans for a new facility.

Chair Castle inquired on design consultant cost and timetable. Ms. Stephenson responded that our organization has gone through some transition, some leadership transition, transition on the capital project management side, and so we want to be really thoughtful to make sure we execute within the timeline we recommend. This is a high priority project for Olmsted.

The Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy is requesting the Buffalo and Erie County Greenway Fund Standing Committee provide **\$126,500** in funding for the **assessment, planning and design, and project administration** of the Cazenovia Golf Clubhouse.

- 4) Applicant: Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy
Project: Restoration of Stairs at Martin Luther King Jr. Park
Presenter: Catie Stephenson

Martin Luther King, Jr. Park (originally called "The Parade" and from 1896 – 1997 was known as Humboldt Park) was designed by Frederick Law Olmsted as part of his connected park system which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. MLK Jr. Park is currently one of the most active parks within the City of Buffalo. The park is activated by community groups who host more than 20 events each year with an estimated attendance of over 40,000. Many of these events are culturally significant and managed by members of the community. It is also activated by park neighbors and city-wide residents that host family events. In 2025, there were nearly 100 shelter rentals with an estimated attendance of 5,000 people.

The Stairs in Martin Luther King, Jr. Park (MLK Jr. Park) have eroded over time to the point that they can no longer be used and have been blocked off from the public for several years. Funding for this project will be used to restore the granite stairs and a connective stone wall. These stairs are an original feature in MLK Jr. Park and serve as a vital connection and access point between trails and recreational amenities on the eastern side of the park and the playgrounds, splash pad, and natural, tree-covered areas on the western side of the park.

The restoration of the stairs will improve access, as the historic granite stairs have been closed for public use for several years and access to both sides of the park is hindered. This project will restore connections for the public and enhance public access. Additionally, having critical park features, such as stairs, in a state of disrepair is a safety hazard and negatively impacts the pride the community can take in the park. The restoration of the stairs at MLK Jr. Park was vetted as a critical project due to the significant deterioration within the last three years.

The Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy is requesting **\$137,000** in funding for the **construction, administration and maintenance** of the MLK Jr. Park Stairs. The project is scheduled to begin Q2 2026 and close out by the end of Q2 2027.

5) Applicant: Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy

Project: South Park Clubhouse Enhancement Project- Phase 2

Presenter: Catie Stephenson

The South Park Clubhouse enhancement project will complete the upgrade of the facility and enhance access to a comfort facility in South Park in the southern portion of the City of Buffalo. The building is currently being utilized as a golf clubhouse and seasonal public restroom facilities. In 2017 the BOPC commissioned a Feasibility Study for the restoration of South Park as an Arboretum. Since this study was conducted, there have been significant changes, such as permanent closure of the South Park ring road and the Botanical Gardens expansion and renovation, that have resulted in the Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy, Inc. reevaluating the future needs of the arboretum and the future and continuing operational needs of the Conservancy.

The BOPC now believes the best solution will be to establish a new arboretum building, which will become the welcome/visitor center as well as house the operational storage needs and serve as a gateway to the arboretum at the Ridge Rd entrance. The BOPC has recently completed a conceptual design for this building and has evaluated timeframe and funding needs. This project is, however, years away due to the many other pressing needs within the Olmsted System; therefore, in the interim the Conservancy will add signage and a display within the current clubhouse to introduce the arboretum to the public.

Currently, the facility is the only publicly accessible building for comfort facilities in South Park. The building was constructed during the WPA era. An upgrade to the restrooms and locker rooms was completed in early 2025, which was funded by a grant from the Buffalo & Erie County Greenway Fund Standing Committee. Unfortunately, shortly after reopening, the building sustained damage from an arson fire and has been closed since. Fortunately, the portion of the building that sustained the majority of fire/water damage was in the great room, which had not been fully renovated in phase 1 of the project. Phase 2 will include reconstruction from fire damage as well as restoration of the interior stone floor, repointing of exterior brickwork, new doors and windows, electrical upgrades, exterior new concrete pad. The building will be ADA accessible. The BOPC envisions expanded community use of the great room portion of the building, which could serve as a community rental opportunity and/or a concession space.

The Buffalo and Erie County Greenway Fund Standing Committee awarded funds in 2022 for the initial design development and in 2024 for Phase 1 of construction.

The Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy is requesting **\$985,000** in funding for the **Phase 2 construction, administration and maintenance** of the South Park Clubhouse Project. The County of Erie may contribute funding for Phase 2; however, the amount has not been determined as of the date of this application. Any County funding will be significantly below the construction estimate for Phase 2 of the project.

6) Applicant: County of Erie

Project: Isle View Enhancement Project Phase 3

Presenter: Sarah Gatti

The Isle View Enhancement Project will focus on the renewal and enhancement of connections to the Shoreline Trail within Isle View Park. It will implement nearly all of the Isle View Park recommendations of the Erie County Parks Master Plan, building on Phase 2 improvements and elevating the Park into a destination along the Shoreline Trail. Phase Three will enhance the Park by resurfacing the asphalt section at the south parking lot and the Park access road, resurfacing connecting trails to the Shoreline Trail throughout the Park, and making miscellaneous landscape improvements, thereby improving vehicular, pedestrian, and bicyclist access.

Isle View Park and the Shoreline Trail are among the most heavily used park-and-trail systems in Western New York, and as connecting features of the Niagara River Greenway, they provide an integral public access ribbon along the Niagara River. The Park, acquired in 1959, needs revitalization and enhancement to meet current usage demands, safety standards, and to enhance the overall user experience. The entire project area is adjacent to a NYS Brownfield Opportunity Area, which contains one of the region's highest concentrations of brownfield and abandoned industrial sites. Revitalization and enhancement of this Park as a recreational amenity for businesses is critical to the redevelopment of River Road. Recent developments like the Riverview Solar Technology Office Park, which includes Amazon, Pine Pharmaceuticals and Fed Ex, are transforming this former industrial corridor into major employment center with nearly 700 employees. Investment in improving Isle View Park will aid in the economic revitalization and redevelopment of the River Road industrial corridor through improvement of the aesthetic appearance of River Road, and by providing an important recreational amenity for businesses in the area.

The Park is owned and operated by the County of Erie. The Project's segment of the Shoreline Trail and Isle View Park are both part of the Erie County Parks System. Both are maintained and operated by the Erie County Department of Parks, Recreation and Forestry. SEQR will be completed during the design phase and is expected to be classified as a Type II action.

Erie County requests funding support in the amount of **\$450,000** for **design and construction of Phase 3 improvements**. Erie County has secured a total of \$3,855,131.56 for past project phases including support from the BECGFSC, the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation and NYS Department of State. Design would begin June 2026 and construction September 2026.

7) Applicant: County of Erie

Project: Two Mile Creek and Sherwood Trail System Revitalization

Presenter: Sarah Gatti

Two Mile Creek Trail and Sherwood Greenway Trail (totaling approximately four miles) are connecting trails to the Niagara River Greenway and Shoreline Trail. The trails provide an integral public access ribbon connecting population centers in the Town and City of Tonawanda to the waterfront and the Shoreline Trail regional multi-use trail system. The multi-use trail improves the regional quality of life by connecting population centers to employment centers and recreational opportunities. Constructed between 1996 and 2010, the trail network is in need of repair and revitalization to maintain a safe surface for users and maintain a high-quality user experience.

The project will design, repair, and resurface the existing trails and associated trail elements and amenities including but not limited to signage, benches, trash receptacles, crosswalks, pedestrian signals, retaining walls, removal/replacement of trees, and enhancement of miscellaneous elements of the Two Mile Creek and Sherwood Greenway Trails. The repair of the trail system is anticipated to be a multi-phased project implemented over three to four years. In this phase, the project engineer at a high level will review and rate the condition of the entire corridor, with the poorest rated section being designed for repair or resurfacing as part of this project. Phase 1 is anticipated to include the segment within Veterans Park in the City of Tonawanda but is subject to the engineer's assessment in design. The Two Mile Creek Trail is part of the Erie County Parks System. The County currently has agreements in place with all landowners in the proposed project area which delineates responsibilities. The County is responsible for capital repairs in all sections of the trail system. The County is currently pursuing letters of support from the municipalities. Upon receiving a reward, the County will coordinate with the specific landowners impacted by the proposed repaving area. Maintenance is performed by the Town and City of Tonawanda based on the location.

Erie County requests funding support in the amount of **\$350,000** for **Phase 1 design and construction of repairs to the Two Mile Creek Trail and Sherwood Greenway Trail**. Erie County is providing a \$75,000 match to the grant and will also pursue a Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation grant in the future.

8) Applicant: Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority

Project: Bicycle & Pedestrian Access to DL&W Station via Shoreline Trail

Presenter: Nadine Chalmers

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Access to DL&W Station project will construct a multi-use trail, entrance and gateway structures, landscaping buffers, lighting, sidewalks, fences, and wayfinding signage along the DL&W trainshed and Buffalo River between Michigan Street, near the intersection with Ohio Street, to the foot of Main Street and South Park Avenue. The project represents a linear segment of approximately 0.4 miles in length. This project will restore free public access to this section of the waterfront and enhance connectivity between the recently completed light rail DL&W Station, the surrounding multi-use trail network, and the Canalside and Cobblestone Districts.

Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA) expects to proceed with construction activities in early 2026 and achieve phased construction completion by early 2028. This project will improve and promote the sustainability of a previously existing trail resource. Under existing conditions, the right-of-way surrounding the NFTA-Metro Rail DL&W Station is narrow, uninviting, and unsafe for pedestrians and bicyclists. However, completion of this project will provide improved accessibility and legibility with a

wider multi-use pathway and the provision of wayfinding features and amenities.

This project also maximizes the impact of investments into the waterfront. This segment of the Shoreline Trail lies at the nexus between downtown, Canalside, Metro-Rail, KeyBank Center, Cobblestone District and the Ohio St corridor connections to the Outer Harbor, Buffalo River public access points, and the Old First Ward. Additionally, completion of this project with the proposed improvements to trail signage and amenities will further boost potential for development in the Cobblestone District, including the second floor of the DL&W trainshed. With concurrent investments in DL&W Station and Shoreline Rehabilitation projects, now is the time to complete these critical updates to a gap in the trail network.

Construction of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Access to DL&W Station project is split into two phases to allow some construction activities to proceed during the Shoreline Rehabilitation construction this summer. Phase I activities will involve relocation of existing catenary poles that extend into the multi-use pathway to remove these obstacles prior to resurfacing and pavement marking treatments. Phase II activities will involve resurfacing, pavement markings, installation of benches, bike parking, plant beds, seating, and wayfinding signage. Phase II activities will utilize BECGFSC funds.

The NFTA requests **\$323,034** from the BECGFSC to **make Phase II capital improvements to support bicycle and pedestrian access to DL&W Station**. The total project cost is \$7,171,525. Matching funds from the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation totaling \$1,933,500 are already in place as are funds totaling \$1 million from FY2022 Transit Infrastructure Grants (Community Project Funding/ Congressionally Directed Spending). NFTA is actively pursuing additional matching funds for the project through the NYSDOT's 2025 Transportation Alternatives Program and will submit an application for Bicycle and Pedestrian Access Improvements to DL&W Station this spring.

6. Other Business

Chair Castle stated that pursuant to the Greenway Committee Protocols, at the first Committee meeting of the CY is the annual designation of Chair, Vice-Chairs and Secretary. Chair Castle conveyed seeking a motion to appoint Dan Castle as Chair, Kevin Kelly and Thomas Baines as Vice-Chairs and Carol Jasen Sampson as Secretary.

Upon motion made by member Thomas Baines and seconded by member Kevin Kelly the annual designation of Chair, Vice-Chairs and Secretary was adopted unanimously (4-0).

Chair Castle turned over the next item to Jean McKeown from the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo to present an overview of the four extension requests without penalty. She presented the following four requests:

1. Buffalo Museum of Science – Tiff Accessible Trail through Q1 2026

2. Buffalo Naval Park – Master Plan through Q3 2026
3. Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy – Wayfinding Phase II through Q4 2026
4. Erie County – Parks Signage Implementation through Q4 2026

Chair Castle requested a motion to approve the project extensions with no penalty to the four grantees.

A motion made by member Thomas Baines and seconded by member Kevin Kelly was adopted unanimously (4-0)

Jean McKeown from the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo further added, directing awarded grantees within Erie County, there is Signage Manual that was approved in 2007 with very specific specifications that must be followed.

7. Next Meeting

Chair Castle announced the next meeting of the Buffalo & Erie County Greenway Fund Standing Committee will be held Friday, March 13, 2026 at 8:30am at the Community Foundation office. At that meeting, the announcement of 2026 Greenway Awards.

8. Adjournment

Chair Castle requested a motion to adjourn.

A motion made by member Thomas Baines and seconded by member Kevin Kelly to adjourn today's meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 5:33 pm (4-0).