

**HOST COMMUNITIES
STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, September 24, 2025 - 10:30 a.m.
Samuel M Ferraro Center
6311 Inducon Corporate Drive
Sanborn, NY**

Representatives Present:

Sylvia Virtuoso, Supervisor	Town of Niagara
Angelo Massaro, Esq.	Niagara Falls City School District
Paul Casseri, Superintendent	Lewiston Porter School District
Lou Paonessa	New York Power Authority
Rebecca Wydysh	Niagara County
Scott Hapeman, Esq.	Niagara Wheatfield School District
Robert Morreale	Town of Lewiston
Robert M. Restaino, Mayor, CHAIRPERSON	City of Niagara Falls

Alternates/Guests:

Christine Rath	Village of Youngstown
Shana DiCamillo	Village of Youngstown
David Conti	NT Botanical Gardens Organization
Thomas Burgasser, Esq.	Niagara County

Staff Present:

Mary Melloni, Secretary
Mark Gabriele, Esq.

1.0 Call to Order

Chairperson Restaino called the Host Communities Standing Committee meeting to order at 10:46 a.m.

2.0 Roll Call

Ms. Melloni called the roll.

3.0 Pledge of Allegiance

4.0 Introductions

5.0 Approval of Meeting Minutes of May 21, 2025 Meeting

Mr. Hapeman made a motion, seconded by Ms. Virtuoso, to approve the meeting minutes of May 21, 2025. Motion carried.

6.0 Niagara County

6.1 Lower Niagara Recreational Trail – Christine Rath, Grant Writer

(Consultation by NRGCC on 5/14/2025; Approved for funding in the amount of \$240,993 by Niagara County Legislature on 6/17/2025)

Ms. Rath stated that she is a resident of the Village of Youngstown, a retired engineer and she volunteers with the Village as a grant writer and assists in fundraising to help with recreation. The presentation is focusing on the portion of the Lower Niagara Recreation Trail that is in the Village of Youngstown.

6.0 Niagara County

6.1 Lower Niagara Recreational Trail (Continued)

The project includes a bike trail connecting communities, not only to the waterfront but recreation areas/activities and greenspaces. It also includes integrating it into nature, cultural aspects and economic growth. The trail consists of a path that would run from Youngstown Estates which is the southernmost border of the Village of Youngstown and it will run up to Veterans Park and up to and through the Village to Fort Niagara State Park. The ultimate vision of the trail is to connect down to Joseph Davis State Park, therefore connecting the two State parks. Joseph Davis has had a lot of updates this year and this trail will allow the public to safely access the park. The proposal to the Host Community is a request for \$240,993. The Village of Youngstown will contribute \$180,000 and Friends of Youngstown will be contributing \$9,500. The guided bike trail will have all the signage along the path and roadways. They will leverage the historical elements of the Village. This also includes new bathroom facilities in Falkner Park.

It allows transforming the old Niagara Railway into a usable space.

Chairperson Restaino stated the entire project is 2.6 miles; he asked how much this portion of the project is. Ms. Rath stated that it is just over a mile.

Mr. Paonessa asked why the 12-foot-wide path was narrowed to 8 feet on turns. Ms. Rath stated that it was done to be more consistent within the park, but it is something they can look at.

Mr. Hapeman made a motion, seconded by Mr. Casseri, to approve funding in the amount of \$240,993 for the Lower Niagara Recreational Trail.

A roll call vote was taken.

<i>Town of Lewiston</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Town of Niagara</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Lewiston Porter</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>City of Niagara Falls</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Niagara-Wheatfield</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Niagara County</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>New York Power Authority</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Niagara Falls Schools</i>	<i>Yes</i>

The resolution was thereupon approved.

6.2 North Tonawanda Botanical Garden Entrance & Boat Launch Access – *David Conti, President, NT Botanical Gardens Organization* *(Consultation by NRCG on 9/10/2025; Approved for funding in the amount of \$98,000 by Niagara County Legislature on 6/17/2025.*

Mr. Conti explained that there is an 11-acre site in North Tonawanda, known as the Tonawanda Creek Watershed, that needs attention. He stated that the NT Botanical Garden Organization entered into a contract with the City of North Tonawanda back in 2018 to manage the restoration and development of the Botanical Garden. The site development 2020 Master Plan includes the renovation of the entrance and boat launch access. They are looking to restore natural habitat, providing a place for pollinators and wildlife to be comfortable. There are about 8 renovations currently underway.

6.2 North Tonawanda Botanical Garden Entrance & Boat Launch Access

This project will redesign the entrance for entering and exiting the park with a monument-style wayfinding sign to identify this public access. It will increase access to the waterfront by directing boaters to the rebuilt boat ramp and new kayak launch. They are requesting \$98,000 in greenway funding to move forward with this project.

Ms. Virtuoso made a motion, seconded by Ms. Wydysh, to approve funding in the amount of \$98,000 for the NT Botanical Garden Entrance & Boat Launch Access

A roll call vote was taken.

<i>Town of Lewiston</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Town of Niagara</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Lewiston Porter</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>City of Niagara Falls</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Niagara-Wheatfield</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Niagara County</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>New York Power Authority</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Niagara Falls Schools</i>	<i>Yes</i>

The resolution was thereupon approved.

9.0 Any other Matters

10.0 Next Meeting: Wednesday, November 19, 2025

11.0 Adjournment

A motion was made to adjourn by Mr. Burgasser, seconded by Mr. Hapeman. Meeting adjourned at 11:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary P. Melloni
Recording Secretary