

ASYLUM LAKE POLICY AND MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Minutes

October 9, 2025

Members Present: Pete Strazdas, Chair; Cybelle Shattuck, Council Secretary; Tom Sauber, Natural Areas Manager; Christopher Bovid; Jay Emerson; Mark Frever; Lynne Heasley; Steve Kienle; John Kreuzer; Matt Reeves; Chad Stirrett; Keith Pung; Mike Weis

Members Excused: Dave DeBack, David Lemberg; Tiffany Schriever; Mark Weiss

Guests: Kay Chase, Judy Huxmann; Paul MacNellis

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL.

- There was a quorum of members present, and Mr. Strazdas called the meeting to order at 7 p.m.

II. EDITING AND ADOPTION OF AGENDA FOR OCTOBER 9, 2025.

- There were no changes to the Agenda.
- **Mr. Bovid, supported by Mr. Kienle, moved approval of the agenda as submitted. The motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.**

III. EDITING AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM SEPTEMBER 11, 2025.

- A request was made to add Chad Stirrett under members present.
- **Mr. Bovid, supported by Mr. Kienle, moved approval of the Minutes as amended. The motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.**

IV. FINANCIAL REPORT.

a. Asylum Lake Operations Financial Report.

- Mr. Frever stated that the remaining money from the stormwater research project (\$20,663) was moved back to the 23 fund (general fund for the Council) and is available for use by the Council. A 23 fund is not an academic account and can be carried over for future use.
- There was a request at the September meeting for a breakdown of the expenses for landscape services (\$7,798). Mr. Frever stated that those costs were for rebuilding the spillway area. The work order for that project would show the itemized costs.
- The itemized costs for the work Paul MacNellis did in the Preserve are not on the financial report; Mr. Frever has that information.

b. Approve Payment for Paul MacNellis' Services.

- Mr. MacNellis submitted an invoice for payment of his consulting services through the month of May and that has been paid. He will submit another invoice for work that he did after the month of May.

V. OLD BUSINESS.

a. Project Updates and Project Finances.

i. Storm Water and Research Project .

- Dr. Reeves needs to talk with Mark Frever about a budget for chemicals for the next part of the stormwater research project. The research team has a permit from the Michigan Department of EGLE (Environment, Great Lakes and Energy) to test stormwater during four stormwater runoff events. The Council would like to continue to collect data.
- The research team needs to test the efficacy of the stormwater treatment system and there are costs associated with that for personnel and chemicals. Calcium Hydroxide (oxyhydroxide) and sodium aluminate are the two precipitants that will be used to remove contaminants from the stormwater.
- Sensors and probes would be used out in the field to collect data. A commercial lab would be utilized to have the chloride concentrations validated.

- Testing could be done on four separate stormwater events to determine the concentration of chloride in the stormwater. Or, maybe one of the tests could be done on water that is pumped from Asylum Lake.
- It is unclear at this time if the money that is available is enough to fully fund research on four stormwater events. The Council could allocate more funding if necessary. The chemicals are available for the research.
- If there is enough money available, maybe a graduate student or an undergraduate student could be hired to help with the research. Dr. Heasley will ask if there are honor students in the Freshwater Program who might be interested in helping the research team.
- Dr. Reeves will talk with Mark Kieser about what the research team will need to continue the research and provide a proposal to the Council at the November meeting. The Council usually does not meet in December. The Council could take an e-mail vote if needed.

ii. Sign Committee.

- No report.

iii. Update on Other Projects Approved.

b. Council Discussion on Indigenous Peoples.

- The subcommittee meeting was postponed until next month. The subcommittee has been reaching out to students and getting some ideas for creating signage about Indigenous communities and the land, which would need to be funded.

c. Lake Water Level Update.

- Mr. Sauber reported that the water has been flowing through the pipes. His staff is waiting for the right weather conditions so they can install the beaver deceiver and replace the metal cage. This work needs to be done before the weather freezes.

VI. NEW BUSINESS.

a. Application for Preserve Use.

- A third grade class from Mattawan would like to use the Preserve in October. Mr. Lemberg was not available to provide further details, however, Mr. Frever indicated that there would be about 100 students.

b. Strategic Plan Review.

- Mr. Kienle proposed that the Council conduct a review of the management plan for the Preserve to assess whether any changes need to be made to the plan that was completed two years ago. He agreed to lead a review process, however, he asked for assistance because does not have enough environmental background to do the review by himself.
- Mr. Strazdas suggested that an ad hoc committee could be formed to work on the review. Mike Weis and John Kreuzer volunteered to be on the committee. Paul MacNellis will also be part of the committee.
- The committee should meet before November 15th, Mr. MacNellis' last day, and determine the following: What in the Management Plan has been accomplished so far? Who will be Paul MacNellis's successor to oversee the Management Plan? What will Mr. MacNellis' successor work on, as outlined in the Plan?
- Mr. Sauber offered to join the committee also. It was suggested that he might be Mr. MacNellis' successor.
- **Mr. Bovid, supported by Ms. Shattuck, moved to form a subcommittee to review the Management Plan for the Asylum Lake Preserve, identify which items in the Plan have been completed, determine which goals in the Plan to focus on next and have a discussion about who should be Paul MacNellis' successor. Steve Kienle, Mike Weis, John Kreuzer, Paul MacNellis and Tom Sauber will be on the subcommittee. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

c. Council Response to the Stadium and Drake Rezoning Application.

- Mr. Kreuzer referred to the letter the Council sent a couple of years ago about the proposed rezoning of the former Vermeulen property at the southeast corner of Stadium Dr. and Drake Rd., adjacent to the Preserve.

He provided copies of the original letter from the Council and the current application from the Miller Johnson law firm.

- The rezoning request is on the November 6th agenda for the City of Kalamazoo Planning Commission. The letter from the Council needs to be submitted to the Planning Commission and the City Commission before that meeting.
- The former Vermeulen property was originally three parcels which have now been combined into one parcel.
- The reference in the letter to the stormwater treatment system in the Preserve might sound like it will protect the Preserve from an adjacent development but that is not the case. The intention was to state that the Council has invested financial resources to improve the lake. Mark Kieser previously indicated that if the stormwater increases beyond the current amount because of new development, it would exceed the capacity of the filtration system that was installed.
- It was suggested that there could be a statement in the letter advising that a commercial development by the lake would increase traffic and pollutants going into the stormwater system and into the lake. The following wording was suggested: Increased amounts of impervious surface changing stormwater run-off patterns and increasing traffic could overwhelm the current stormwater filtration system at Asylum Lake.
- There is some wording in the City of Kalamazoo Ordinance which states that new developments must retain stormwater on site. It was mentioned that the stormwater would only be retained on site for 24 hours and then it would trickle down and could run onto an adjacent property.
- Another concern with stormwater run-off is that it doesn't just originate with parking lots but also streets and other paved surfaces. Areas are flooding that haven't flooded before. A new development might change the flow of stormwater, which might flow directly into the lake and not into the treatment system.
- **Mr. Bovid, supported by Mr. Emerson, moved to add the following sentence at the end of the third paragraph of the letter. "This rezoning and subsequent commercial development will cause changes to stormwater run-off and traffic that may exceed the design standards and capacity of the Asylum Lake stormwater treatment system." The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.**
- Some organizations are having their Chairperson or President attend the Planning Commission meeting and City Commission meeting to read their letter into the record. There is concern that some of the Commissioners might not read information that is presented to them in writing.
- Mr. Strazdas offered to attend the Commission meetings and read the letter from the Council into the record. If he is not available, he will reach out to the Council to find someone else who can attend those meetings and read the letter.
- The proposed letter will need to be approved by the WMU Vice President of Business and Finance, Jan Van Der Kley, before it can be forwarded to the City of Kalamazoo Planning Commission and City Commission.

VII. NEXT MEETING.

- The next Council meeting is scheduled for November 13, 2025 at 7 p.m. in the same location.
- Potential agenda items for the November meeting are as follows: 1. Financial proposal for the stormwater research project. 2. Financial proposal regarding Indigenous peoples. 3. Report from the subcommittee regarding the management plan for the Preserve.

VIII. COUNCIL/STAFF COMMENTS.

- Mr. MacNellis stated the burn plan includes prairie burns for the P2 area of the Preserve every year for the next three years. The Phragmites is an issue in that area.
- Mid-fall burns usually knock back the big grasses and the following year the Forbes have a chance to grow. That area needs a prescribed burn and herbicide and possibly a second burn and more herbicide.
- There are about four or five acres in the P2 area that have low growing Big Bluestem. After the burn, the area will be drill seeded with prairie mix to get more Forbes growing. This is a modification of the original burn plan.
- A burn was done in the F4 and F5 areas of the Preserve. Wildtype has an herbicide application for invasive species in these two forested areas. There was a last minute change and the F8 area was also burned. A

forest mix of seed will be added to augment what is already there, based on information provided by the ALPA (Asylum Lake Preservation) members. The F8 area is down to bare soil and ready to be seeded.

- Mr. MacNellis will get eight trees from Wildtype. The trees will be planted on October 22nd. There will be three White Oaks, three Burr Oaks and two Chinquapin Oaks. Chinquapin Oaks are not native to Michigan, but they have the highest carbon sequestration rate of any of the Oak trees and are suitable for this ecosystem as climate conditions change. Small areas around the new trees will be seeded with forest wildflowers.
- In the northeast corner of Section C8 there are Ladies Tresses Orchids. They are not a protected species but they are rare. They were found in BTR2 (Business Technology & Research Park) along US 131 when that development was started. The university changed the boundaries of the development to protect those plants.
- Jimmy Lane with the ALPA group found the Ladies Tresses Orchids. He has also been identifying trees that could be removed. He found over 100 wild Cherry trees. They can be injected and removed to provide more dappled sunlight for that area. The Burr Oak Trees will be planted in the most open areas with the most sunlight.
- Mr. Sauber contacted the person who wanted to post suicide prevention posters in the Preserve to let her know the Council was not in favor of having the posters in the Preserve.
- Subcommittees will need to provide financial proposals to the Council a week before the November meeting.
- The Council does not meet in December. Mr. Strazdas will not be available to attend the January Council meeting. If something comes up that requires a discussion, the Council can meet in January if necessary. If there is no meeting in January, the next meeting will be held on February 12, 2026.
- Ms. Huxmann announced that the ALPA is hosting an informational meeting at the downtown library in the Van Deusen Room on October 23rd from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. to discuss the rezoning request for the former Vermeulen property.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENTS.

- Ms. Chase commented that the current rezoning application to the City of Kalamazoo talks about how the rezoning of the former Vermeulen property conforms to the City of Kalamazoo's 2025 Master Plan. The applicant has no specific proposal at this time, he just wants to rezone the property.
- The City of Kalamazoo Master Plan states that any land along major roads could be commercial zoning. That does not guarantee the rezoning will happen.
- The City of Kalamazoo is working on their 2035 Imagine Kalamazoo Master Plan. The land use was changed in the 2025 Imagine Kalamazoo Master Plan. Land use and zoning are not the same thing.
- There is concern that if the land is rezoned for commercial use, the owner could sell it to someone else and then what could happen with the property?
- It is unclear at this point as to how the City of Kalamazoo staff might feel about the proposed rezoning.

X. ADJOURNMENT.

- The meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.