ASYLUM LAKE POLICY AND MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
Minutes
April 8, 2021

Members Present: Duane Hampton, Chair; Steve Kohler, Vice Chair; Kay Chase, Council Secretary; Tom Sauber, Natural Areas Manager; Bonnie Alkema; Tyler Bassett; Sharon Dever; Lauri Holmes; Mark Frever; Dave Lemberg; James Penner; Cybele Shattuck; Pete Strazdas

Members Excused: Marnie Twynham, John Kreuzer, Paul Scott

Guests: Judy Huxmann

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ZOOM ROLL CALL.
   • A quorum of members was present, and the meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

II. EDITING AND ADOPTION OF AGENDA FOR APRIL 8, 2020.
   • There were no changes to the Agenda, which was approved by unanimous voice vote.

III. EDITING AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM MARCH.
   • There were no changes to the Minutes, which were approved by unanimous voice vote.

IV. UPDATE BY MARK KIESER ON STORMWATER TREATMENT PLAN.
   • Mr. Kieser provided the following update on Phase I of the stormwater project for the Asylum Lake Preserve:
     • The 60% design plans were completed. The design will proceed to 95% completion. Kieser & Associates is working on the hydraulic design conditions.
     • Representatives from the Council will meet on-site with the EGLE permit staff on April 16th. The next step is to meet with the City of Kalamazoo engineering staff.
     • The permit will be submitted in May. Baseline monitoring of the water quality has already started.
     • The existing piping was designed to take a lot of the storm water off Stadium Dr., Drake Rd. and the former K-Mart parking lot. The MDOT routed some of the storm water from Stadium Dr. out to the U.S. 131 interchange, but some of that storm water cycles back toward Asylum Lake.
     • Kieser & Associates is in the process of making sure the pipes are the right size and looking at other details of the project. They spoke with the Storm Water Committee about connecting with representatives from the EGLE before the permit is submitted. A permit is required for the portion of the project that goes through the wetland in the northwest corner of Asylum Lake.
     • The Storm Water Committee decided to have Kieser & Associates contact the EGLE representatives; they are available for a meeting at the Preserve on the afternoon of April 16th. The EGLE staff will walk the site to make sure they understand what is proposed before they receive the permit. They have 90 days to review the permit. The intention is to have the proposed storm water system constructed this year.
     • Kieser & Associates will meet with the City of Kalamazoo Engineering staff after the meeting with the EGLE representatives. The proposed storm water system will be tying into the existing City of Kalamazoo storm water infrastructure. Approval is needed from the City of Kalamazoo for this project.
     • Kieser & Associates will prepare the permit and submit it to the State of Michigan for review.
     • Kieser & Associates did storm water monitoring last winter and spring. They want to make sure this project has significant benefits to the storm water. They will have data regarding the lake conditions before the storm water system is installed, and they will do another year or two monitoring after the new system is installed.
     • Work will continue on the design and permitting through the end of May. The project will be bid out in June or July of this year, before the permit is issued. They should know by August if the permit will be issued.
     • The Council will need to approve the contractor recommended by Kieser & Associates.
     • Construction would begin in August or September, during the dry part of the year, to minimize erosion issues. Rye grass will be planted in exposed areas to provide protection from run-off.
     • The Council provided authorization at the last meeting for Kieser & Associates to proceed with on-going lake monitoring, which has begun.
     • Last spring, there was a lot of sediment in the storm water from the north. Most of the sediment had attached phosphorus. Data will be taken from the Lake in April, June, September and January.
• Staff from Kieser & Associates were in the Preserve in April looking at the lake. They took samples for water quality and sediment.

• A dissolved oxygen temperature graph was presented. The lake is 12 degrees Celsius at the surface already and the lake is starting to stratify. In April of 2006, the surface temperature of the lake was seven degrees Celsius. The triangles on the graph represent dissolved oxygen.

• When a lake stratifies, the oxygen in the bottom of the lake is depleted by bacteria. Mr. Kieser stated that this is the most severe anoxia he has seen in about 40 years. The concentrations of chlorides in the storm water are three or four times higher than usual. It is expected that these concentrations will decrease later in the year.

• The sediment samples that were taken show threads of dark blue green algae from the bottom/middle of the lake. The algae will come bubbling up to the surface of the lake in July and August.

• The oil sheen in the bowl was substantial after the water sample was washed out of the bowl. This is a baseline sample, but what will the water look like 10 years from now? Sediment will be one of the biggest remaining issues in the lake. We need to understand what’s happening in the lake now as these investments are being made so we can see the improvements in the future.

• Mr. Strazdas commented that the proposed project is transformational. He inquired if there is an opportunity for a graduate student or two to document this project and also layer in data provided by Kieser & Associates. Would it also be possible to repurpose the data and provide a future presentation about what was done and how it was done? This is a historical moment to be documented for the future.

• Mr. Bassett inquired as to the time frame for seeing the benefits from the storm water project. Mr. Kieser referred to a gentleman named Wally Fusilier who had water quality data from 15 to 20 years ago for 200 to 300 lakes in Michigan. At some point, it would be helpful to incorporate that data with the current data that is being compiled.

• The State of Michigan recently re-funded their clean lakes management program, which was devoid of funding for a couple of years. This program provides funding for the State to provide water samples that will help build the database. It is important to make sure the database is set up so it is easy to add to in the future.

• Mr. Kohler assembled all of the data that he is aware of that has been collected on Asylum Lake since 1970. The lake turns over frequently, but it might take 150 years to remove phosphorus from the sediment in the lake. You won’t see a big difference in three or four years, unless other interventions are done to remove phosphorus from the sediments.

• Mr. Kieser concurred and advised that a study was done in 2006 regarding the phosphorus. There was 100 pounds per year coming into Asylum Lake; one pound per year was being transmitted to little Asylum Lake. Asylum Lake has essentially been a big storm water retention pond.

• Kieser & Associates will be doing an alum (aluminum sulfate) dosing project in Norton Shores at Mona Lake. Alum is added to the water column to remove concentrations of phosphorus in the water. The idea is to lock the phosphorus back into the sediment. When there is a sharp temperature break and the lake turns over, phosphorus is released into the lake and that causes a blue green algal bloom. This creates a situation that requires people to stay off the lake.

• The alum treatment will lock the phosphorus in the sediments for ten to twenty years. The amount of phosphorus coming into Mona Lake at this point is low, most of the accumulation occurred in the past. The proposed storm water project for Asylum Lake is the first part of the equation, which is stopping the phosphorus from coming into the lake. The next step will be to look at what else can be done.

• Ms. Alkema inquired if dredging of the lake is ever done to take out the sediment. Mr. Kieser advised that dredging is done only if sediment is causing navigational impairment or if there are toxic materials. The PCBs are still in Lake Allegan sediments; eventually the lake will need to be drained and either dredged or excavated. Dredging is very expensive, and the PCBs in the sediment would make it difficult to relocate.

• The alum dosing is done with a liquid solution. They use a boom, which is GPS controlled and is a couple feet under the surface of the lake. They will target about 150 acres of the 600-acre lake. Mona Lake is narrow on the lower half; the sediment accumulates in the big, open areas. The alum dose is estimated to cost $140,000 over three years.

• The intent of the alum is to lock up the phosphorus for a long period of time. Mona Lake flushes quicker than Asylum Lake and it would take decades before there is equilibrium. There will be shifts in the system and you will see a break in the cycle for blue green algae. You deal with external sources of pollution first, and then look at internal sources.
Fishing or swimming anywhere around the storm water discharge is probably not a good idea. The mercury level is consistent with what we see in all of the lakes. Whatever restrictions the state would probably apply to Asylum Lake. The database will provide some information on the best way to assess concerns.

Mr. Hampton mentioned that U.S 131 was constructed in 1963 and Stadium Drive was widened to five lanes shortly thereafter. Storm water flowed to the low point, which was Asylum Lake.

Ms. Holmes commented that it would be great if this valuable information regarding the lake was available to people who want to help undertake the rehab process. Mr. Bassett stated that the DNR and the EGLE have that information, but it is not filtered through anything that would make it easier to absorb. There might be spreadsheets available to look at on the website.

Mr. Strazdas suggested putting the information in an education package. The EGLE does have a lot of information on lake issues. The lake governing body needs to figure out who will deal with the fees. Ms. Holmes suggested the possibility of having a citizens group to help with water quality issues.

Mr. Bassett mentioned that groups such as Ducks Unlimited might be the best go-betweens. They are driven by people’s desire to eat what they shoot etc., but that hinges on conservation in the broad sense. Those groups care about water quality. A lot of what was discussed is happening through other channels.

Mr. Kohler has an Excel spreadsheet with water quality data for Asylum Lake. He can provide that information to be posted on the Asylum Lake website. People would probably be more interested in looking at the graphs than the spreadsheet.

Discussion followed regarding to the possibility of finding an intern from the environmental studies program to help with this type of project. It would be helpful to have someone pull together a library of all the research that has been done on the Preserve, not just the lake, and catalog it in one place. Researchers could share what they have been working on.

Someone could approach the department heads about this project, and when a student comes along who is interested, the project can proceed. The intern who had been helping with data for the Preserve came from the geography department.

Mr. Strazdas suggested offering a stipend of several thousand dollars for someone to work on this project rather than waiting for someone to express an interest. Mr. Lemberg suggested putting the word out through Kathleen Baker, she teaches advanced GIS courses.

The Council members were agreeable with putting resources into this project. The Council allocated $17,000 for an ecological study. There are already resources that are part of the 2021 and 2022 budget. Mr. Hampton suggested using $2,500 of that budget and finding out if one of Ms. Baker’s students might be interested.

Discussion continued as to whether or not this would be a GIS project. The main, time-consuming process is pulling the information together and organizing it. Mr. Hampton will put this subject on the next agenda. He will also reach out to Kathleen Baker to see if she knows someone who might be interested.

This project should proceed sooner rather than later because people with the necessary skills won’t be available later.

V. OLD BUSINESS.

a. Preserving the Preserve. Signs, parking lots, bike racks, needed maintenance by spillway, boom boxes, shadow boxes, ALPA website and new ALPA Earth Day video.

Ms. Holmes stated that the ALPA is making a video for Earth Day featuring the Preserve. The video will emphasize that the Preserve is fragile and needs to be taken care of. The ALPA has a volunteer webmaster who created their website. Ms. Holmes gave kudos to Ms. Huxmann for making the shadow boxes available in the Preserve.

Someone was playing music on the south side of the lake, but it wasn’t extremely loud. A group of guys were snowboarding around the north side of the lake, and they had a boom box. There was also a group of guys playing hockey and they had a boom box booming. Most people use ear buds rather than boom boxes. Noise pollution is not usually an issue at the Preserve.

Mr. Bassett commented that aural noise is obnoxious when you are in nature but, in some cases, it can just be ignored. He also mentioned the density of weird survival stick structures at Asylum Lake. People are trampling things, but there might not be a way to stop it. Hammocking is popular and it leads to more trampling. These things are annoying and detract from the purpose of the preserve.
It might be helpful to talk to people in a non-confrontational way about issues in the Preserve, such as the need to be careful and not trample things. People using the Preserve might not be aware they are causing problems.

Ms. Holmes commented about the new signage, which could be used to educate people about the need to be respectful.

Ms. Huxmann observed cars parked on both sides of the driveway by the Parkview lot. They were also parked next to the bike path but not on it. Cars were parked along the street and on the grass. Visibility was limited and it was difficult to see traffic on Parkview. She inquired if a barrier could be put up beside the road to keep people from driving on the grass and blocking the view of traffic. She was almost involved in a car accident while leaving the Preserve. Mr. Sauber stated that the City of Kalamazoo would not approve of barriers by the road.

Public Safety should be contacted if people are parking on the south side of Parkview. There is an ordinance against parking on Parkview and they will ticket people.

d. Successful prairie and forest burns on Friday April 2, by Dave Mindell for only $3,050.

- Mr. Sauber suggested looking at the Buckthorn in the northwest corner of the prairie, it needs to be removed. Mr. Bassett stated that Mr. Schneider’s team got into a small portion of the Buckthorn, but there is more of it that needs to be dealt with. There are also issues with Crab Apple Trees and Box Elder Trees. Where there is not a lot of understory to provide fuel, the burn was not as successful.

c. The financial report.

- Mr. Strazdas referred to tab 2 of the report. There are over $300,000 of projects on the books or added to the books. Tab 1 shows the actual expenses by month. There was a question as to what the Council could afford. He called the Kalamazoo Community Foundation and confirmed that the exact amount, as of Feb 28th, available to the Council is $2,849,530.76. The Council has more than $400,000 to spend.

- The next fiscal year requires a $340,000 pull, and that request has been made to the Kalamazoo Community Foundation. The first tab of the ledger will show that money when it does come in. The funds with the Foundation are down to around 2.5 million. On July 1st, the Council will start with a new ledger for the next fiscal year.

- Mr. Frever referred to tab 2 of the report. The accounting department will provide a budget analysis in a few days. There will be new numbers to talk about at the next meeting. He has an up-to-date accounting through the glow system. Next month the Council will see an adjustment of $16,490 for the standing work order for landscape maintenance. He is still working on adjustments that were necessary due to the pandemic.

- Mr. Bassett stated that the 1st tab should refer to Plantwise not Dave Borneman. The Management Plan Subcommittee is a one-time committee assembled to revise the Management Plan. It is essentially the same people who are on the Ecological Management Subcommittee. The Ecological Management Committee should be tasked with monitoring those details. Mr. Frever will review the details and make sure these tasks are assigned to the committees.

- Mr. Strazdas referred to tab 2 and inquired if the amounts were voted on. Mr. Sauber or Mr. Frever should be using the procurement card. There should be two Co-Chairs (Pete, Tom or Mark) for projects or initiatives. If any Council member needs an update, he/she can talk to any of those three individuals. The co-chairs can provide a status report when the Council meets.

- Mr. Hampton will send tab 2 of the spreadsheet for review. Mr. Frever will have that information and serve as the Co-Chair. Mr. Frever would like to know who is assigned to each budget item from the Council. It would be nice to have that information in this format.

- If there are any questions about the burn, the Council members can contact Mr. Sauber or Mr. MacNellis.

d. ALPA garlic mustard pull plan: Saturday, May 1 & 8.

- Ms. Holmes announced that there will be two work sessions each day for the Garlic Mustard pull, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Additional information will be provided in the near future. Volunteers will register for the Garlic Mustard pull through the ALPA website. There will be a form to fill out but it isn’t ready yet. They need to know who is coming and limit groups to 40 people. People who register will be provided with more specific information.
The ALPA would like to see all of the Council members helping with the Garlic Mustard pull. An e-mail will be sent to the ALPA members, the Council and to individuals on another e-mail list. Hopefully, people will hear about this event in the next week or so and come out to help.

e. ODWNA WALK nature route, the Winchell – Asylum Lake – Kleinstuck trail:
Kalamazoo will not build crosswalk at Wellington and Parkview, derailing the plan of where the trail will end. ALPA statement. Does the ALPMC want to voice an opinion on this issue?

- The City of Kalamazoo approved some portions of this plan, but they did not approve the crosswalk, and the ALPA is concerned about that. Mr. Hampton inquired if the Council would like to voice an opinion about this situation. Mr. Hampton was selected to represent the Council and Ms. Holmes was selected as the ALPA representative to this ad hoc committee.
- A suggestion was made to Diana Morton-Thompson to have an entrance in the Parkwyn area. The ALPA board did not recommend that option because it would go across private property, and it goes down a hill, which is subject to erosion. The discussion is back with the WALK committee.
- It might be possible to have an entrance to the nature trail on Winchell. There is a small bike rack at the Winchell entrance to the Preserve.
- The ALPA is communicating with the ODWNA to advise that they are not in favor of the Parkwyn entrance. Sherry Sims suggested bringing the walk group to the north side of Parkview earlier and it would terminate at the Parkview entrance to the Preserve.
- The role of Ms. Holmes and Mr. Hampton with the WALK nature trail group is ambiguous. It is uncertain at this point if they are on the committee or just advisors. Mr. Hampton suggested that the details of the proposed trail should be discussed between members of the ODWNA and the City of Kalamazoo.

V. PROJECT/SPECIAL COMMITTEE REPORTS.

a. Application for Preserve use: Hydrogeology field course. How should we tell visitors that they must apply to use the Preserve?

- Mr. Kohler stated that the subcommittee is recommending approval of this application. It is a long-term commitment made before the Council existed. Mr. Strazdas, supported by Mr. Kohler, moved approval of the application, which was approved by unanimous vote.
- Mr. Bassett has been in contact with Mr. Sauber regarding the port-o-potty. He questioned if it can be used on-site and if Covid is an issue. Mr. Sauber will follow up with that question. His staff will take care of the mowing. The department will be charged for the mowing.
- Discussion followed regarding the port-o-potty, which did not seem like a potential threat to the spread of Covid. ALPA would like to have a port-o-potty in the Preserve during the Garlic Mustard pull; Mr. Sauber will follow up with that request.
- According to a recent update issued by the CDC for commercial buildings, Covid is spread more through the air rather than by touch, so the port-o-potty should be safe. It would be preferable to have one available for use in the Preserve.

b. Management plan update/ecological services, etc.

- Mr. Bassett advised that the last three meetings of the Management Plan Subcommittee were cancelled for various reasons. There will not likely be much progress on the Management Plan until fall.
- The RFP for the updated sampling is 90% done. There will be language in the RFP regarding expectations for the contractor. The RFP is not required to be on letterhead.
- Mr. Bassett worked for Native Connections in 2009 when they did an ecological assessment of Asylum Lake Preserve. The intention is to have a contractor repeat the plot sampling that was done. The map in the report shows where the plots were sampled in the forest, the prairie savannah and the meadow and marsh next to the lake.
- This RFP is for a contractor to repeat what was done in 2009. The contractor would need to do a side-by-side comparison and show a summary of what has changed, such as species diversity per meter squared, changes to the composition of species and, particularly in the forest, we want to see the changes in mid-story or under-story density. There will be a major difference because Wildtype has removed things.
VI. NEW BUSINESS.

a. ALPA – marking Falk & Klein memorial trees; proposal to organize & plant native evergreens along Drake this fall to be sound barrier.

- Approval was granted at the last Council meeting to plant a tree in memory of Pat Klein. Ms. Holmes inquired as to who was put in charge of following through with the memorial tree. Mr. Sauber can have someone order the tree and plant it; Ms. Holmes volunteered to work with Mr. Sauber on this project. Mr. Bassett volunteered to suggest a species of tree to plant.
- The ALPA thought there should be some acknowledgement, such as a plaque, to indicate who the tree is for. Mr. Frever advised that no plaques or signs are allowed on memorial trees, according to the form. The Council would need to revisit the form and vote on changing it if they want a plaque installed. This could open up a pandora’s box of issues.
- Mr. Bassett suggested the possibility of having a QR code. People the Council wants to memorialize are going to keep passing away. Maybe information about the memorial trees could be added to the Asylum Lake website.
- Mr. Strazdas stated that the main campus has a variety of ways for naming memorial trees. He suggested getting the tree in the ground as soon as possible since this is the best time of year to do that. There could be follow-up to find out what the university wants to do about this in the future. Best practices are being reviewed, maybe Mr. Frever could share how people are being memorialized with trees.
- The ALPA also discussed planting evergreens along Drake Road as a barrier from light and sound coming from BTR2. The trees would also be a barrier from the road noise as traffic gets heavier, and as protection from the corner of Parkview and Drake.
- Mr. Bassett mentioned that the proposed trees would be ecologically inappropriate, but this is a function of landscape, it’s not a pristine ecosystem. He questioned what would be the best way to mitigate light and sound pollution. Aesthetically, evergreens along Drake would not be good, but if they are beneficial in other ways, he would support having them. Mr. Sauber mentioned that salt from the road would turn the evergreens brown.

• The RFP will be specific as to what the Council would like to see. Mr. MacNellis is on the sub-committee and should receive a copy of the RFP to review. The RFP needs to go out soon and is a priority. It will cost over $5,000; the Council set aside $17,000 for this project. The contractor who did the updated plant inventory was consulted about the RFP, which will include nine plots.
• Mr. Strazdas suggested having members of the Council review the RFP then forward it to Mr. Sauber; he will work with the Purchasing Agent. The RFP will go through the Purchasing Department and then back to Mr. Sauber and to the Council for review. The Council would authorize the purchase, and then it would go back to the Purchasing Department.
• Mr. Bassett will provide Mr. Sauber with the RFP and the name/e-mail of who it needs to go to. Mr. Kohler also volunteered to review the RFP.

c. Signage Committee.

- Ms. Huxmann inquired as to how visitors should apply to use the Preserve. The posts still need to be installed so the trails can be marked. Also, there are lost items that end up by the big signs by the entrances. There could be an area on the back of the new signs for information that wasn’t included on the welcome sign regarding applications to use the Preserve. Mr. Hampton suggested proposing some language and running it by the Council.
- Discussion followed as to whether or not large groups are allowed in the Preserve. Mr. Strazdas stated that Asylum Lake has policies and applications. He suggested that people could read the policies and, if they want to use the Preserve, they can fill out an application. Yoga is not an authorized use of the Preserve. The applications are not an invitation to use the Preserve, but you can fill out an application if you want to.
- Ms. Dever commented that the application might make it look like more things would be an accepted use of the Preserve. People might think they are allowed to do things if they see an application. Mr. Hampton suggested looking at the website and coming up with proposed language for the back of the sign. It might be possible to mimic the existing language.

d. The trails Committee: OCBA first phase of trail improvements: grant application for shovel-ready trail proposals – who’s doing this?.

- There were no updates from the Trails Subcommittee.
The following comments were made: What would a row of pine trees do to the terrestrial wildlife? The proposed evergreens would replace some of the trees that are being removed across the road. The trees are beneficial for birds to rest (ground birds versus raptors). Raptors have an advantage if there is a perch. It feels like the Preserve is vulnerable and needs to be protected in some way but other factors are important.

b. Kieser discussion next week with EGLE at the Preserve.
   - The goal of this discussion is to prepare the way for approving the permits for the storm water project. The subcommittee should have a few people there to show community support. It was suggested that Mr. Kreuzer and Mr. Bovid should be there. It would be helpful if the group that meets on-site could advocate for EGLE to approve the permit.

VII. NEXT ONLINE MEETING - June 10 or May 13?
   - The Council members were in favor of having the next meeting on June 10th.
   - The Council members should vote on the RFP by e-mail before the June meeting.

VIII. COUNCIL/STAFF COMMENTS.
   - None

IX. PUBLIC COMMENTS.
   - None

X. ADJOURNMENT.
   - The meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.