ASYLUM LAKE POLICY AND MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
Minutes
April 13, 2023

Members Present: Pete Strazdas, Chair; Sharon Dever, Vice Chair; Kay Chase, Council Secretary; Tom Sauber, Natural Areas Manager; Tyler Bassett; Mark Frever; Duane Hampton; Lynne Heasley; Steve Kienle; John Kreuzer; David Lemberg; Keith Pung; Silvia Roederer; Tiffany Schriever; Cybelle Shattuck

Members Excused: Todd Barkman, Paul Scott, Mark Weiss

Guests: Mark Kieser, Kieser & Associates; Judy Huxmann

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ZOOM ROLL CALL.

- A quorum of members was present, and Mr. Strazdas called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. EDITING AND ADOPTION OF AGENDA FOR APRIL 13, 2023.

- There were no changes to the Agenda, which was approved by unanimous voice vote.


- Mr. Kieser referred to item “i” under old business, “viscometers” should be “piezometers.” The amended Minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

IV. FINANCIAL REPORT.


- Mr. Sauber advised that there will be an increase in activity for April. There has been a lot of work in the Preserve where the trees fell after the storm in March. There has already been some mowing in the Preserve in April. Tree branches had to be cleared from one of the paths before it could be mowed.
- The motion to receive the Asylum Lake Operations Financial Report was approved by unanimous voice vote.

V. OLD BUSINESS.

a. Project Updates and Project Finances.

i. Storm Water and Research Project.

- Dr. Reeves would like to provide quarterly updates to the Council regarding his research on the stormwater project.
- Mr. Kieser provided an update, and the following information was discussed:
- The City of Kalamazoo will provide samples of each of their road salt blends to Kieser & Associates for use by Dr. Reeves in his experiments. Stormwater samples were collected during a storm in March.
- There will be a pre-bid meeting on April 14th at 10 a.m. in the Drake Rd. parking lot by the Preserve. John Jacobson, the Senior Engineer from Kieser & Associates, will attend that meeting to discuss the stormwater project with the contractors who are interested in submitting bids.
- The contractors will have a deadline of May 15th to submit a bid. Kieser & Associates will have two weeks to review the bids and report back to the Council.
- Dr. Reeves now has the necessary laboratory equipment to do the chloride testing. Mike Foster, Environmental Engineer from Kieser & Associates, continues to interact with Dr. Reeves and his team regarding the chloride research. The purchase orders and invoice processing are in place for this project.
- Mr. Strazdas stated that the WMU Purchasing Department representative, Jackie Michels, would be the only official representative for the university. No one else can provide information at the pre-bid meeting on behalf of the university. Official communication regarding the pre-bid must be in writing. Mr. Sauber will attend the meeting on behalf of the Council.
- The representative from the Purchasing Department will write down all of the technical questions from the vendors, and then meet with representatives from Kieser & Associates to provide answers. Mr. Sauber will answer any questions about parking at the Preserve. Once the pre-bid process is complete and the details are in writing, the bid will be awarded to the qualified contractor with the lowest bid.
- Before the re-bid phase began, WMU requested that Kieser & Associates do the construction oversight on the stormwater project.
- Mr. Kieser stated that the stormwater process that is being developed for Asylum Lake is based on an industrial process that removes chloride from cooling water processes. So far, no one has tried to figure out if that will work in a stormwater treatment setting. Dr. Reeves will do bench scale testing to determine how well the process is working in laboratory conditions.
If the testing is successful in the lab, the next step will be to find out how well the process works out in the field with cold temperatures, snow and other factors.

A graduate student is part of the team working with Dr. Reeves. It was suggested that the graduate student could attend the June ALPMC meeting with Dr. Reeves to provide an update on the stormwater project.

A lot of the stormwater that flows into Asylum Lake has a gritty sediment, which is moved off the roadway with water and that is conveyed into the lake. The goal is to treat the sediment before it gets to the lake.

Most of the phosphorus in the stormwater is attached to the sediment. If the sediment can be captured in the barracuda devices by the road, the sediment and the phosphorus can be removed, and the stormwater can be treated for chloride. The treated stormwater will be infiltrated through soil before it goes into the lake. A number of different pollutants are being addressed. There is a high removal rate for the pollutants in the stormwater.

About 90% to 95% of the sediment will be captured in the barracuda device placed near the bridge and culvert at the west end of the lake. If there is an extraordinarily large rain event, some of the unfiltered water will reach Asylum Lake.

The stormwater system for Asylum Lake will not have the capacity to treat stormwater from land adjacent to the Preserve. Any new development must hold all of its stormwater on the site that is developed.

When the former Kmart building was constructed years ago across the street from the Preserve, it was the accepted standard to discharge stormwater to the nearest body of water and that was Asylum Lake.

Three to four months of the year when there is road salt in the stormwater, alum will be injected into the stormwater about halfway through the treatment process to help eliminate phosphorus. The stormwater will then be filtered through limestone, which is intended to change the pH enough to prevent contaminants from reaching the lake.

Once the stormwater from the roadways is dealt with, a future phase of the treatment process could address what’s already in Asylum Lake. Alum is frequently used for lake management purposes.

The berm that is part of the stormwater treatment system at Asylum Lake will need maintenance in 20 or 30 years. The berm is across one section of the wetland and there are areas where it can be accessed.

The State of Michigan is moving to regulate chloride road salt. Municipalities, WMU and other entities who have stormwater permits will have to take measures to deal with more testing of the stormwater.

When the old Kmart property is redeveloped, stormwater infrastructure will have to be installed to treat the stormwater on site, rather than discharging it into Asylum Lake. Source control of the stormwater is important as well as treating it at the lakes and streams. That process should extend the life of the berm.

The Council would be responsible for the maintenance costs on the barracuda traps that capture the sediment by the road. The City of Kalamazoo will use vactor trucks to clean sediment out of the traps at an estimated cost of a few thousand dollars per year. At some point the barracuda traps will have to be replaced; they should have a longer lifespan than the trench. Maintenance by the City of Kalamazoo will help extend the life of the stormwater system.

Dr. Lemberg inquired if Mr. Kieser or Dr. Reeves could put together a memo to EGLE (the Michigan Department of Environment Great Lakes and Energy) stating what impact the Asylum Lake stormwater project might have on the data EGLE is collecting in their separate project sampling sites in the West Portage Creek watershed.

ii. Land Management Plan Committee/Update on Public Session for Student and Public Review/Comments.

Justin Heslinga, the contractor who helped create the Land Management Plan, has been paid for the work he did. A couple of the Council members suggested minor edits to the Plan. The Plan is a living document and can be updated as necessary.

A suggestion was made to either have the Council formally adopt the Plan or just start using it. Mr. Bassett, supported by Dr. Lemberg, moved to approve the Land Management Plan, with the understanding that it can be amended in the future, as needed. The motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

Mr. Bassett thanked Bonnie Alkema for suggesting that the Council hire a contractor to help update the Land Management Plan. Mr. Bassett recommended doing as many controlled burns as possible in the Preserve; the prairies need to be burned. Each unit should have a controlled burn as frequently as every three years.

Mr. Strazdas suggested creating a budget for the projects the Council wants to do in the Preserve, including the controlled burns and managing the invasive species. The Council will continue to engage contractors to work on those projects. The Council needs to look at the reports and deal with the controlled burns and the invasives on a regular basis. It is not too late this year to do a controlled burn, but it is too late to schedule one.
iii. Ecological Maintenance.
- A decision was made to have Wildtype do the ecological maintenance in the Preserve for consistency.
- Dave Borneman (Dave Borneman, LLC) and Dave Mindell (PlantWise) have both done prescribed burns on the
property. A suggestion was made to have one contractor for the burns and ask them to put the Preserve on their
schedule. A burn costs around $5,000 depending on the size and difficulty of the area to be burned. PlantWise did as
good a job for about half the price. A prescribed burn would be scheduled for just one management area at a time.
- Mr. Strazdas mentioned the cost of the prescribed burn ($5,000) is below the University rules for a mandatory bid.
Furthermore, since the Council did receive bids for this service in the past, awarded it to PlantWise, and they did a very
good job, it is recommended to continue using PlantWise for the next several years and consider offering another bid in
2028.
- Mr. Bassett will ask PlantWise to come up with a burn rotation and reconsider what the burn units are. That information
can be brought back to the Council for review.
- The window of opportunity for a prescribed burn is much shorter in the fall due to the amount of precipitation when the
burn needs to be done.

iv. Sign Committee.
- Ms. Huxmann provided information about the signs for the Preserve, which have been sent to the printer. A proposal
has been made for where the signs are to be located in the Preserve and how many of them will be posted. The signs at
the entrance to the Preserve regarding dog poo will, hopefully, get the owners’ attention.
- There are areas on the unofficial trails where there are piles of poo. Some of the signs stating that pet poop pollutes will
be placed in that area. Signs stating that dogs should be kept on a leash to protect ground-nesting birds will be placed
around the grasslands. Signs will be placed on the waste cans stating that the dog poo in bags should be placed there.
People leave the bags of poo on the trails, etc.

v. Trails Management Committee.
- Mr. Sauber stated that the trails management committee is at a standstill. The spillway is a concern and needs attention
soon.

- Ms. Shattuck suggests inviting representatives from the local bands to the Council meetings. Maybe there could be a
subgroup to have a discussion on what would be mutually beneficial. If the Council approves, she will reach out to the
tribes. If the elders want to participate, they prefer to meet by zoom.
- Mr. Strazdas and Mr. Bassett expressed interest in being on the ad hoc committee. The committee can’t take action, but
they can have a discussion and bring details back to the Council.

VII. NEW BUSINESS.
a. Application for Preserve Use.
- Dr. Lemberg received an application from EGLE. They want to monitor chloride within the West Portage Creek
watershed, and they will be collecting data in the Preserve. He will e-mail EGLE to advise that the application is
approved.
- Mr. Frever will send EGLE a memo to advise what the Council is doing in the Preserve with the stormwater project.
The proposal from EGLE will not impede the stormwater project in the Preserve. The EGLE monitors would not be in
the middle of the lake. They will be on the inflow to the lake.
- Dr. Lemberg, supported by Mr. Frever, moved approval of the EGLE water monitoring project in Asylum Lake
Preserve. The motion carried with a unanimous voice vote. There is a requirement for EGLE to share their
information with the Council. They are working to build TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load) guidelines for the
watershed.
- The second proposal is from Dr. Montgomery at the College of Engineering. He is representing two professors who
want to float an instrument package on a platform in Asylum Lake. Dr. Lemberg wrote back asking what exactly they
are proposing to do in the water. More details are needed before the project can be approved.
Ms. Huxmann suggested having a temporary sign stating what the platform is for, if that project is approved. People might wonder what is floating in the lake.


- PlantWise charged $5,000 for a prescribed burn. It was suggested that the budget for future burns should be increased. It would be advisable to have a controlled burn in two sections of the Preserve. Mr. Strazdas will need to pull money from the Kalamazoo Community Foundation to cover that expense.
- It was estimated that the cost for the burns and work on the invasive species would be approximately $30,0000. That would be part of the budget for the fiscal year that runs from July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024.
- The ecological study update still has $18,000 in the budget. Mr. Sauber reported that he has not received a bill from Orbis for that work.
- The Garlic Mustard pull will not take place this year; there is still $100 in the budget for that item. It appears that something is starting to eat the Garlic Mustard that is growing in the Preserve. Mr. Sauber recommended closing that budget item and putting the money back in the general fund.
- Three hundred dollars has been paid from the budget for the Land Management Plan; that budget item can be closed. The Land Management Plan was written for ten years but should be reviewed in five years.
- There is $1,700 for trails management but there is no recommendation for a specific project at this point. Work needs to be done on the spillway. It can be cleaned out by hand at a cost of approximately $2,000. A separate budget should be created for the spillway.
- Ms. Schriever has a class that could do the water quality testing in the Preserve. The remaining $200 can stay in that budget to cover future expenses.
- The arborist advised that the Buckthorn in the northwest quadrant by Cherry Lane, is expanding and needs to be taken care of; that is part of the ecological management. Wildtype took care of some of the Buckthorn.
- The bobcat, grinder attachment and labor will cost about $1,300. It will take less than a day for the arborist to remove the Buckthorn. He will not go into the forest; that area is not recommended for a burn. The arborist will follow up with an herbicide after he grinds down the Buckthorn.
- Mr. Strazdas suggested a budget of $35,000 for ecological maintenance to cover work on the Buckthorn, the prescribed burns, and the invasive species, including Phragmites.
- The Port O Johns are scheduled to be delivered to the Preserve next week.
- Ms. Huxmann reported that the beaver deceiver is still flowing but it has slowed down. Mr. Sauber will determine if a vecto truck is needed to clean out the beaver deceiver pipe.
- A suggestion was made to have funds for community education. That would be covered under operating costs.

a. Report from ALPA on the open house gathering at the Preserve.

- Mr. Kreuzer reported that Lauri Holmes is spearheading this event; she was not available to attend the April Council meeting.
- The open house is scheduled for May 20th from 12 to 4 p.m. The ALPA (Asylum Lake Preservation Association) members met with Tom Sauber to discuss parking for this event.
- The tent will be 45’ x 30’ and will be located on the north side of Cherry Lane by the entrance to the Preserve. There will be six, 6’ tables, two 8’ tables and a circular table. ALPA has requests for display tables from Citizens’ Climate Lobby, the Kalamazoo Crisis Coalition, the Audubon Society (they would like to provide information about Peregrine Falcons and Monarch butterflies), the Kalamazoo River Watershed Council, ALPA (they will provide membership information) and WMU, Paul MacNellis requested a table for the Stewards of Kleinstuck Preserve and the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy. Wildtype will be providing information about what they are doing in the Preserve. Ms. Holmes is working with Mark Kieser to provide information about the stormwater remediation project. The Dark Skies organization might provide information about what they do, which could relate to the City of Kalamazoo lighting codes.
- Ms. Holmes will approach the Office of Sustainability and the Environmental Studies Program, that information will be at the WMU table.
- If the Drake Road parking lot is full, people will be directed to park along Cherry Lane. There will be a save the date memo to advertise this event to the public. Ms. Chase suggested encouraging people to walk or ride their bikes to the Preserve. Mr. Sauber will put information on Facebook about this event. It will also be on the ALPA webpage.
Mark Hoffman volunteered to lead a group on a tour and provide historical information about the Preserve. Donna Keller volunteered to lead a group through the Preserve and talk about the birds. Mr. Bassett might give a talk about the plants in the Preserve. Maybe someone will volunteer to do a talk about water quality at Asylum Lake.

Mr. Kreuzer will provide an e-mail about this event for the Council to forward to other entities who might be interested in attending.

**a. ALPA statement on proposed zoning.**

- Mr. Kreuzer sent an e-mail to Jennifer Heilman requesting a motion for the Council to consider. The statement that ALPA is providing to the Planning Commission and the City Commission regarding ALPA’s opposition to the zoning changes proposed by the City of Kalamazoo was e-mailed to Council members.
- The zoning changes would affect two adjacent parcels north of the Preserve. They are currently zoned RM15/RS5 and would be changed to the Community Commercial (CC) zoning designation. The zoning change was originally proposed in 2020 but was not approved by the Planning Commission. The zoning changes would affect 1,800 parcels in the city.
- The city is also proposing to remove the Special Use Permit requirement process for car washes within the Community Commercial zoning designation for the entire city. This would be unusual for any municipality.
- They also want to change the intent of the NFP (Natural Features Protection) overlay. The NFP was intended to protect natural features in the City of Kalamazoo. The new language states that the NFP overlay district is intended to support development while protecting natural features in the City of Kalamazoo.
- Ms. Dever stated that the Community Commercial zoning designation is the most intensive zoning designation. The city advised that the changes are an attempt to simplify the zoning code by having only two commercial zoning designations. The other commercial zoning designations would be eliminated. The CC zoning code would allow businesses such as gas stations or car washes on the former Vermeulen property under the category of vehicle services.
- The parcels north of the Preserve (the former Vermeulen property) were proposed as future green space at some point in the past.
- Dr. Lemberg inquired if the Traffic Engineer talked about the traffic on Drake Road and how the traffic backs up past the parcels in question. Is a carwash a viable use for that land if you can’t get onto or out of those parcels due to gridlock?
- Ms. Heasley inquired about the history of including the exemption of car washes from the special use permit process. There are other areas that would be a better place for a car wash.
- Ms. Shattuck inquired as to what the people in the apartments nearby have to say about the proposed rezoning. Mr. Kienle was advised that people who live near one of the other Drive ‘N Shine car washes reported that the lights are on all night at the car wash and there is considerable noise associated with that business.
- Ms. Heasley mentioned that Grand Rapids declined a similar car wash in 2016 because of salt run-off and water quality issues in an area similar to the Preserve. She inquired why the city planners are in favor of having a car wash located adjacent to the Asylum Lake Preserve.
- Ms. Shattuck suggested pointing out to the city that the sewer system doesn’t adequately handle the existing storm water coming from the Costco parking lot across the street. The sewer system would need to be updated if another commercial development is added to that corner and that would be a significant expense for the city and/or for the developer.
- Mr. Kreuzer, supported by Mr. Kienle, moved approval to have the Council send a letter to the Kalamazoo City Planning Commissioners and the Kalamazoo City Commissioners objecting to the proposed zoning changes and changes to the NFP overlay presented to the Planning Commission as it impacts the Asylum Lake Preserve. This objection is in alignment with the Ecological Management Plan and the Declaration of Conservation Restrictions for the Preserve.
- It was suggested that a subcommittee could be set up to write a letter for the Council regarding the proposed zoning changes and send it to the city.
- Mr. Kreuzer advised that there are three public hearings scheduled regarding the zoning changes. The first two meetings will be held in April and the last one will be held in May. The Planning Commission won’t vote on the zoning changes until June or July.
• Mr. Bassett, Ms. Dever, Mr. Kreuzer, Mr. Kienle, and Ms. Heasley volunteered to serve on the subcommittee. Mr. Hampton stated that WMU Vice President Van Der Kley will need to review the letter that the Council is proposing to send.

• Mr. Strazdas suggested that the subcommittee should e-mail a draft of the letter for the Council to review by Tuesday, April 18th. The Council can have two business days for review and comments. The subcommittee can make the updates by Friday, April 21st and then it can be reviewed by Vice President Van Der Kley.

• The intention is to have the final draft approved and sent to the City of Kalamazoo Planning Commission on Monday, April 24th or Tuesday, April 25th. That date will be before the Planning Commission makes their recommendation to the City Commission in early May.

• Dr. Lemberg suggested that the Council could put together a position paper with standards for reducing light and noise pollution around Asylum Lake.

• The motion was amended to state that a subcommittee will be formed to work on a letter from the Council to the City of Kalamazoo Planning Commission stating the Council’s concerns about the proposed changes to the zoning code. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

VII. NEXT ONLINE MEETING.
a. May 11, 2023 @ 7 p.m.
  • Dr. Lemberg will not be available to attend an in-person meeting in May. The consensus among the Council members was that a zoom meeting would be preferable for May 11th.

VIII. COUNCIL/STAFF COMMENTS.
• Mr. Sauber stated that the Neighborhood Activator from the City Planning Department wants to upgrade the bike racks at the Winchell entrance to the Preserve. They have money to pay for the upgrade.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENTS.
• None

X. ADJOURNMENT.
• The meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.