

**HOST COMMUNITIES
STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, March 15, 2022 – Following NPC Meeting
Via Zoom**

Representatives Present:

Lee Wallace, Supervisor, CHAIRPERSON	Town of Niagara
Mark Laurrie	Niagara Falls City School District
Paul Casseri, Superintendent	Lewiston Porter School District
Lou Paonessa	New York Power Authority
Tom Burgasser, Esq. (via Teleconference)	Niagara County
Scott Hapeman, Esq.	Niagara Wheatfield School District
Steve Broderick, Supervisor	Town of Lewiston
Robert M. Restaino, Mayor, VICE CHAIRPERSON	City of Niagara Falls

Alternates/Guests:

Jackie Siegmann	Town of Niagara
Lori Caso	Tatler – Porter Mansion Restoration
Gary Sidall	The Aquarium of Niag Gorge Discovery

Staff Present:

Mary Melloni, Recording Secretary
Stan Widger, Esq., NPC Counsel, Nixon Peabody

1.0 Call to Order

Chairperson Wallace called the Host Communities Standing Committee meeting to order at 12:41 p.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 December 8, 2021 Meeting

Mr. Laurrie made a motion, seconded by Mr. Paonessa, to approve the meeting minutes of December 8, 2021. Motion passed.

6.0 City of Niagara Falls

**6.1 The Aquarium of Niagara Gorge Discovery Center – Gary Siddall, President/CEO
(Determined Consistent by NRCG on 3/8/2022; Request for \$300,000 in funding to
City of Niagara Falls 3/16/22)**

Mr. Siddall explained that the aquarium has a limited amount of space available, therefore their priority list has been developing the site further and increasing the amount of time visitors can spend at their facility. They were made aware that New York State Parks was moving out of the space they occupied – The Niagara Gorge Discovery Center and the Aquarium was informed that as a partner the NYS Parks was looking for someone to operate the center. Their original intent was that this would be a Delaware North type to include concessions or retail. The Aquarium suggested that they operate it as a public interpretation and education center and NYS Parks responded very well to that. Mr. Siddall stated that the removal of the Robert Moses Parkway has greatly enhanced their real estate. Historically they were very segregated from the rest of the State Park system. Since the removal of the parkway it has positioned them in a way that the Aquarium now situated on the campus which is much more sprawling and it is not segregated or blocked by concrete roadways or bridges.

6.0 City of Niagara Falls

6.1 The Aquarium of Niagara Gorge Discovery Center (Continued...)

The Discovery Center is just a short walk from the aquarium. The interior of building is circular and encased in windows. Due to the nature of landscape outside they will be able to use the building to discuss geological nature of the area. They will make it even more dynamic with living exhibits and use the existing classroom space for various educational programs. They can offer new programs such as sports fishing. The rooftop of the building is currently not accessible to the public as it is covered in solar panels. They want to make it accessible to the public for rentals, weddings, cocktail hours, etc.

Historically that site was geological and they will turn that portion of it over to Great Lakes Wildlife. They will guide them in developing a series of exhibits focusing on Greatlakes and Niagara River region. This project has a \$4.5 million budget and to date they are 64% funded. They are planning to move quickly by breaking ground September after Labor Day and be operational for summer 2024.

Mayor Restaino explained that the Aquarium made a presentation to Niagara Falls City Council and there were questions about the funding being requested. Mayor Restaino requested two things of this board. He will research council minutes to see nature of that resolution. If that resolution supports the dollar amount being presented here, he will let Chairman Wallace know. If that is not the case he is requesting that the HCSC approve the project subject to receiving a set dollar amount by the Niagara Falls City Council. Mr. Widger explained that if the HCSC makes a contingent approval today that there be a specific resolution from the City that indicates the dollar amount has either already been accomplished or if not then the project will return to the HCSC at a future meeting. Mayor Restaino explained that both projects on this agenda were fully supported by the City Council; he only needs to confirm the dollar amounts they were approved for. If the dollar amounts differ from what was presented today the projects will return for a final approval by the HCSC.

Mr. Widger stated that the project meets procedural requirements with the stated exception.

Mr. Laurrie made a motion to approve the Aquarium of Niagara Gorge Discovery Center project with the contingency discussed and outlined by Mayor Restaino. Mr. Broderick seconded the motion.

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 The Tatler – Porter Mansion Restoration Project – Lori Caso, President
(Approved for funding by the City of Niagara Falls in the amount of \$235,000 on
3/1/2022; Determination by NRCG on 3/8/2022)**

Ms. Caso stated that the house is located at 6 4th Street in the City of Niagara Falls. This home has two historic significances. One is that the Porter family owned all the greenway in the City of Niagara Falls, including the Falls and Goat Island. Peter A. Porter bought the land where the home is located from his Aunt Elizabeth in 1874 and from 1874 to 1876 constructed this beautiful Mansion. The other part is the Tatler Club. This is not a private women’s social club because the only reason they exist is to keep lights on at the Porter Mansion. They are open to public for various events and they want new members of this group. The Tatler Club was established in 1925 by Gertrude Porter, married to Augustus Porter...the great great nephew of Peter A. Porter who built the Mansion. In 1925 a women’s club was radical for women to meet like this. It was part of the women’s social movement in Niagara Falls. For connections to the Greenway you can see the Niagara River from the front porch. There is a beautiful retention wall that was built for the mansion by NYS Parks. They are adjacent to the New York State parks. Renovations and Improvements. They do have other funding sources. Ms. Caso met with the head of Erie County Historical and they are helping her group with other grant applications. This is another thing for visitors to do in Niagara Falls. The Porter Mansion is within walking distance of Goat Island; it is right off of the trail on the Greenway; it is within walking distance of most of the hotels in the City. Historic home tours are very popular. By summer they plan on scheduling far more tours.

Mayor Restaino stated that in the packet that Ms. Caso has provided there is a resolution that provides Council support...it does not provide a dollar amount. He will present this to the Council to approve a specific amount and then provide those documents.

Mr. Widger stated that this project meets all procedural requirements with the exception as noted. A motion was made by Mr. Broderick, seconded by Mr. Restaino, to approve the The Tatler – Porter Mansion Restoration project with the exceptions noted.

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.

7.0 Any other Matters

8.0 Next Meeting: June 14, 2022

9.0 Adjournment

A motion was made to adjourn by Mr. Restaino, seconded by Mr. Paonessa. Meeting adjourned at 1:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary P. Melloni

Mary P. Melloni
Recording Secretary