

# MONROE COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

**February 18, 2026**

## **In Attendance:**

### **EMC**

At Large - Tom Dooley; EMC Chair  
At Large – Haines Lockhart  
Town of Brighton – David Briden  
Town of Chili – Larry Lazenby  
Town of Gates - Charles Johnson  
Village of Honeoye Falls - Andy Less  
Town of Irondequoit – Alex Ferrente  
Town of Mendon – Jeff Clark  
Town of Ogden – Bill Parkhurst  
Town of Penfield – Cynette Cavaliere  
Town of Riga – Jennifer Balonek  
Town of Rush – Beth Hoak  
MC Legislature Minority – Virginia McIntyre  
MC Legislature Majority – Nazish Jeffery  
Ex Officio Alternate - Steve Olufsen; MC Planning  
& Development  
Ex Officio Alternate – Starr O’Neil; MCDPH

### **Guests**

Ryan Elliott – NYSDEC Great Lakes Program  
Nate Jones – MCDES Sustainability  
Charlie Knauf - Public  
Jacob Kearney – MCSWCD  
Devlin Rosen-Carole – YEMC Chair

## **Meeting location:**

- Monroe County Fleet Center, Building 1 Conference Room  
145 Paul Road, Rochester 14624

## **Call to Order:**

- Meeting was called to order at 4:00pm by Chairman Tom Dooley

## **Introductions:**

- Introductions were made from all present.

## **Review of Minutes:**

- December – Motion to approve by Cynette Cavalier, seconded by Starr O’Neil. Charles Johnson abstained, remainder in favor. Approved.
- January – Motion to approve with changes regarding Attendance (Village, not Town, of Honeoye Falls and WM, not Waste Management for Nicole Simonetti) by Tom Dooley, seconded by Haines Lockhart. All in favor; approved with changes.

## Meeting Topic(s):

### Hundred Acres Nature Park and Reforestation in Response to EAB Ash Tree Decimation

Beth Hoak – Rush Conservation Board and Rush Recreation and Park Association

Jacob Kearney – Monroe County Soil & Water Conservation District (MCSWCD)

- Rush Recreation and Park Association
  - Established in 2018 to protect park land and green space
  - Has small board of directors, but also look at their advisors for their expertise
  - In 2019, entered agreement stewardship agreement to establish the Hundred Acres Nature Park
- Hundred Acres Nature Park
  - Land was given to the Town of Rush by NYS for parkland and recreation, however for many years, the town had leased the land to a farmer for agriculture. In agreement with NYS, land could be lost if not used for original intent for parkland and recreation.
  - Town dedicated the land as the Hundred Acres Nature Park on July 12, 2023; dedication ceremony occurred on September 30, 2023
  - Park Features
    - Genesee River goes the entire length of the west side of the park
    - Rochester and Genesee Valley Railroad Museum and railroad on east side – autumn train rides in fall
    - Previous farmland is being restored to grasslands and pollinator areas
    - Diverse ecological area – grasslands, vernal pools, riparian buffers, forest, have had beaver activity
    - Forest in north portion of park recognized as [Community Forest in the Old Growth Forest Network](#)
  - Trees
    - Worked with MCSWCD through a grant to plant 480 native trees
    - Need to continue replacing trees decimated by pests
    - All work done by volunteers (including a significant number of RIT students), including planting, weeding, maintenance, etc.
    - American Chestnut Experiment
      - This species of tree native to area, but previously decimated by fungus.
      - Planted 35 American chestnuts. Not sure if will survive long term
    - Town of Rush received Tree City status in late 2024/2025.
      - Annual arbor day tree planting
      - Memorial tree plantings for beloved residents
  - All funding for the park is from donations and grants. All work done at the park are done by volunteers
    - Eagle Scouts have done a number of projects including benches, kiosks, and a nursery
    - Host and coordinate nature walks
      - Good bird population for nature walks
      - Bat walk conducted by local Bat Biologist
  - Future
    - Working on further establishing perennial gardens
    - Applying for a grant for eradicating invasive species, such as Canadian thistle

- Monroe County Soil & Water Conservation District
  - Has a large stormwater program and is a part of the Stormwater Coalition
  - Landowner services include free backyard conservation assessments and drainage assistance
  - Envirothon held for H.S. students
  - Conservation Days held for Elementary students
- Invasive species
  - Spotted Lanternfly Monitoring – already detected in Monroe County, but monitoring to try and prevent further spread
  - Japanese Angelica Tree – monitoring and eradication
  - Watercraft Steward Program – look for invasives and educate boaters
- Received grant funding to reforest areas that were decimated by emerald ash borer (note that some areas were 70% ash!).
  - Can only use funds on public land
  - Have already planted 8631 trees and will plant remaining trees this spring, for a total of about 11,500 trees
  - Planting a variety of trees, but not currently replanting any ash
  - Groups receiving funding must agree to a 2-year maintenance agreement
  - Hundred Acre Nature Park and Village of Honeoye Falls have participated in this grant
  - Volunteers and dedicated partners are key to success!
- [MCSWCD Annual Conservation Tree & Shrub Program](#)
  - Established in 1976 as a conservation program for landowners. This is the 50<sup>th</sup> year!
  - Originally only offered 9 spp. of trees, now offer 24 spp. of native or naturalized trees and shrubs
  - Pre-order program, with orders open from Christmas through the first week of March. Certain spp. of trees sell out quickly (dogwood, winterberry).
  - Receive stock through nursery that grows specifically for these types of programs

#### **Committee Reports:**

- **Program and Presentations** – Haines Lockhart
  - March 18<sup>th</sup> EMC meeting will have presentation from the RIT Capstone Team on the RMSC Stormwater Management Project. Thanks to Cynette for helping schedule this talk
  - Potluck is still planned for May 20<sup>th</sup> with short overview of Natural Resources Inventory Application
- **Nominating and Community Liaison** – Tom Dooley and Starr O’Neil for Bill Santos
  - In the middle of a two-year term, so not working on municipal memberships
  - Will be meeting next week to review Liaison list; many contacts are outdated
  - Welcomed newest EMC member, Dr. Nazish Jeffrey of the Monroe County Legislator, fulfilling our last legislator vacancy
- **Natural Resources** – Tom Dooley for Madison Quinn
  - Committee members have received their licenses and have begun compiling feedback
  - Next meeting in March (exact date not yet selected)
- **YEMC** – Starr O’Neil and Devlin Rosen-Carole
  - Leadership elections occurred at January meeting
    - Welcomed Devlin Rosen-Carole from The Harley School as YEMC Chair as well as Asa Smith from Brighton High School as YEMC Vice Chair (absent)

- Secretary elections postponed until March meeting, as neither candidate wanting to be on the ballot were present
- Michael Henry from Climate Solutions Accelerator presented at the January meeting on clean energy jobs

#### **Other Business:**

- At Large Elections for YEMC Leadership
  - As per recently approved Rules of Operation, YEMC Chair and Vice Chair to become At Large Members.
  - Motion to nominate Devlin Rosen-Carole (Chair) and Asa Smith (Vice Chair) by Starr O’Neil, seconded by Charles Johnson. All in favor; approved.
- Discussed potential At Large nomination for Charlie Knauf – Retired from working at MCDPH for 15 years, as well as being the main coordinator of the Rochester Embayment Area of Concern, member of the Fisheries Advisory Board, and being a water quality subject matter expert.
  - Charlie will submit resume, which will then be distributed to EMC members. Expecting to have as agenda item for March EMC meeting
- 2026 Workplan
  - Executive Committee put together 2026 workplan which was distributed to EMC members for comment. Workplan is a framework and timelines are not set in stone. Executive Committee reviews workplan at each committee meeting.
  - No comments from membership – final version will be distributed via email

#### **Monroe County Staff Reports:**

- Yasmin Guevera, MCDES Solid Waste:
  - Beginning of year has been focused on a lot of contract management
  - Food Scraps Program being renewed. Waiting on legislative approval before applications can go out for 2026-2027 school year. Grant is for \$5k, but must have matching funds and an existing recycling program. 5 schools participated in 2025-2026 school year (would need to reapply), but all schools eligible to apply.
- Nate Jones, MCDES Sustainability:
  - Working on CARP. [CARP survey](#) closing at the end of the week (take if you haven’t!). Next public meeting planned for early May. Will have lunchtime zoom and evening in person meeting
  - Working on greenhouse gas inventory update from 2019 to 2024 numbers. No real results available yet.
  - Contracting with consultants on EV grants
    - EV rebate
    - ZEV infrastructure grant – looking to install EV charging stations in 5 county parks
  - More EVs entering Monroe County fleet.
- Steve Olufsen, MC Planning and Development:
  - Hosting bi-annual Land Use Decision Training in May or June. Applications expected to go out mid-March/April
  - Working on SEQR (state) and NEPA (federal) reviews
  - Community Block Group Grant reviews

- Ryan Elliott, NYSDEC, Great Lakes Program: Funding opportunities
  - [New York Great Lakes Basin Small Grants Program](#)
    - Supports stakeholder-driven efforts to restore and revitalize the State's Great Lakes region using ecosystem-based management and is funded through the New York State Environmental Protection Fund, under the authority of the New York Ocean and Great Lakes Ecosystem Conservation Act. New York Sea Grant administers the New York Great Lakes Basin Small Grants Program in partnership with DEC's Great Lakes Program.
    - Interested applicants are encouraged to join upcoming office hours to connect with the program coordinator on **February 26 at 12pm** to learn more about the project requirements and application process. A recording of an informational webinar will be posted to the Small Grant Program website. **Applications are due by March 27, 2026, at 4:30pm.**
  - [Great Lakes Sediment and Nutrient Reduction Program Grant](#)
    - The Great Lakes Commission (GLC) issued a request for proposals (RFP) for projects that will help improve Great Lakes water quality by reducing nutrient loads from agricultural watersheds and eroding shorelines and streams. Indigenous Nations, nonfederal units of government, and incorporated nonprofit organizations are invited to apply for grants for up to \$300,000 through the 2026 Great Lakes Sediment and Nutrient Reduction Program (GLSNRP) grant program.
    - A [webinar](#) for potential applicants will be held on **March 11 at 2pm**. Applications are due by **5pm on April 27**. Final decisions on funded projects are anticipated in summer, with work to begin no later than October 1.
  - [Agricultural Conservation Planning Framework Grant](#)
    - A complementary request for proposals for projects which utilize the Agricultural Conservation Planning Framework (ACPF) to create targeted outreach plans for agricultural conservation practice siting. Eligible Indigenous Nations, nonfederal units of government, and incorporated nonprofit organizations are invited to apply for small grants of up to \$10,000. Selected projects will begin work no later than October 1, for a duration of up to one year. A [webinar](#) for applicants interested in the ACPF small grant opportunity will be held on **March 18 at 2pm**. These proposals are also due by **5pm on April 27**.
- Starr O'Neil, MCDPH:
  - Healthy Neighborhoods Program proposed to be cut in the NYS Budget. Working with NYSACHO and other groups for advocacy to keep funding.
  - Some restaurants recently placarded for closure, as they did not provide required renewal documentation.
  - 2025 Monroe County Directory booklets available – grab one before you leave

#### Privilege of the Floor:

- Charles Johnson, Gates
  - Gates Ecofest is scheduled for 4/25 with repair clinic theme. Being held at YMCA on Elmgrove
  - Gates 150<sup>th</sup>/250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Parade is scheduled for 6/27. Charles is building float. He is looking for donations of used fake flowers or plants for the float
- Andy Less, Honeoye Falls
  - Honeoye Falls Arbor Day Celebration scheduled for 4/25 from 11-4. Will have tree giveaway

- Working with the Town of Mendon and Mendon Library on helping them with their climate action/climate smart community plans
- Kudos to the Natural Resource Committee – the application is pulling together nicely and will meet the need/intention
- Cynette Cavalier, Penfield
  - Penfield Arbor Day Celebration scheduled for 5/2
  - Did anyone else get an invite for tabling at World Water Day in March? No one present received an invite.
- Virginia McIntyre, MC Legislature
  - Gates Farmers Market starts May 17<sup>th</sup>. Will have 10 markets throughout the season. Since 1<sup>st</sup> market is early in season, will have focus on gardening. Does anyone know of anyone wanting to sell plants? Table is free for vendors. Suggestions provided:
    - Amanda's Garden
    - Join FB groups *Rochester Plant Sales* and *Plant Share Rochester* and send out request. Both groups are relatively active

**Adjourn:** Meeting was adjourned at 5:36pm.