

CITY OF PROSPECT HEIGHTS
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES OF OCTOBER 20, 2016

Present: Agnes Wojnarski, Chairperson Ed Madden
Peter Hahn Jill E. Moskal, Recording Secretary
Dr. John Kamysz Dana Sievertsen

Attendees: Christina Ferraro, Executive Director, Prospect Heights Park District
Peter Falcone, Assistant to the City Administrator

OPENING ITEMS

Call to Order

Agnes Wojnarski, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. CDT.

Roll Call

Roll Call proceeded. All Commissioners were in attendance for Roll Call. A quorum was present.

Meeting Minutes of September 8, 2016

The minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission of September 8, 2016 were approved. No corrections were noted.

Meeting Agenda

Agnes Wojnarski, Chairperson, asked if any additions or modifications were necessary for this evening's meeting agenda. Under "New Business," add agenda item: "Visit to Walnut Woods on October 14, 2016 with Christina Ferraro, Executive Director of the Prospect Heights Park District."

OLD BUSINESS

Update: Work Day Schedules

Currently working at all prairie restoration sites.

The next scheduled PHNRC Workday of October 23 will be conducted at the Remnant Prairie. The next two remaining workdays will be at the Remnant Prairie because there is so much seed to be collected. The plan is for Agnes and Peter to manage herbiciding the teasel, and the rest of the volunteers will be collecting seed.

PHNRC Seed Processing will be conducted the morning of November 20 (Sunday) as the regularly scheduled workday activity. Seed collection yield to date has been twice as much as last year.

Seed collecting evenings the past two Wednesdays were not possible due to weather conditions. Anywhere from five to 15 volunteers have been present with Peter Hahn collecting an abundant source of seeds on his own time. Currently, we are down to only 75 minutes of light on a Wednesday evening, so we need to capitalize on our time and resources.

Agnes and Peter have been herbiciding teasel at the Remnant Prairie on a frequent, consistent basis due to the proliferation of this invasive plant.

Fall Burn

Agnes and Dana have prepared a presentation for the City Council Meeting of Monday evening, October 24, 2016. PHNRC is seeking the Council's approval to proceed with plans to burn a portion of the restoration area at the Slough. We have received approvals from Tim Jones, Chief of the Prospect Heights Fire Department and Christina Ferraro, Executive Director of the Prospect Heights Park District.

An exact date for the burn is currently undetermined pending ideal weather conditions for a burn. Typically, we await the first real hard frost and before the first snowfall of the season. However, the burn will be conducted in November 2016 and typically before Thanksgiving.

Agnes asked the Commissioners if there were any days that worked for members. Dana is open, and Peter can work any day. Agnes said that to be present does not require a Burn License. Additional presence can assist with answering questions by neighbors who live by the Slough and placing informational signs.

Seed Collection

We will be conducting an exchange with Fermilab for seed and plugs pending our lists of species we would like to collect.

PHNRC also traded additional trays of natives for Pagoda Dogwood trees, which are a small tree with fragrant yellowish white flowers. This is a good choice for a naturalized landscape, and small mammals and birds eat the fruit from this tree.

We joined Fermilab on their workday and collected seed. We are also welcomed to do so at any time.

Fermilab also processed our Penstemon for seed, which is a huge help because they have a special mill to accomplish the seed processing. PHNRC will also try to grow out some rare species for FNA as part of the greenhouse program.

Fermilab has a steward program where each steward manages a portion of the Fermilab area of 340 acres. Each steward has their own crew of volunteers and schedule their own workdays. Currently, they have five stewardship areas.

Prospect Heights Public Library/Park District Programs

Classes

Are we conducting any Winter/Spring Classes? We must decide within the next two days so that information can be prepared and placed in the Spring PHPD Brochure. The submission deadline for the PHPD Summer Brochure is January/February 2017.

The Critters in the Creek held by PHNRC and Toads and Frogs were not well received last year. Do we try to schedule them again this coming summer? The Children's Class on Trees was not received well, too.

Dana has spoken with the Bird Conservation Network for 2017 Bird Walks' schedule. The Bird Conservation cannot meet the original timeframe, so Dana will ask them for available dates that are convenient for their schedule. Dana will also contact Chief of Police, Al Steffens, and ask if he can be present for his Celebrity Bird Walk. The Bird Walks are very popular and should be held.

We would still like to schedule something, like a class, in the timeframe of Earth Week 2017. A determination needs to be made soon on whether a class can be held either by PHRNC members or a speaker or to conduct a prairie walk by Isabella Redlinski.

Dana also said that if we are to continue to conduct classes with the PHPD, we should have the information available to meet their PHPD publication deadlines. We struggle to get attendees.

Nature Speaks

Terri Campbell, PHPL Librarian for Adult Programming, has obtained a copy of the documentary entitled "100 Year Anniversary of the Cook County Forest Preserves." We would like to schedule a date for a possible program around this documentary and perhaps conducted by John McCabe and his wife, who are responsible for the volunteers of the Cook County Forest Preserve. They will tag team and provide an introduction to the video followed by a Q&A session. It will be an awesome evening!

We could consider January 26, 2017 as the date, which is exactly one year since the date John gave a presentation on the burn.

February 28, 2017: Abigail Derby-Lewis, Senior Conservation Ecologist at The Field Museum and will provide a presentation on Climate Change – its impact on nature and nature's impact on climate change.

April 19, 2017: A presentation on monarch butterflies by Doug Taron, Chief Curator of the Chicago Academy of Sciences and Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum is planned for April 19, 2017. This date coincides with Earth Week.

Dana is awaiting information from Abby and Doug, and once received, it will be formatted and placed on the PHNRC website. John and Kristen McCabe's page for the Cook County Forest Preserve should be completed, hopefully, by next week Wednesday, October 26, 2016.

Progress Reports from the Work Sites

Morava Nature Preserve

Buckthorn and buckthorn resprouts have been herbicided.

Installed a lot of plugs! The grass plugs are doing well.

Need to choose seeds for planting. Working on this through November 1.

Agnes will contact Taylor Creek Nursery to purchase bare root, which is part of the grade seed that can be seeded in the winter. The bareroot stock would be planted in April, and the plugs can be planted in late Spring.

Prairie Restoration

The Com Ed Prairie Site is looking better all the time. The fall species are showing.

We have planted a lot of plugs for Lynn's Prairie and will get the rest of the plugs in. We have also herbicided.

ComEd plans a burn of the east prairie in the Spring 2017. This planned burn is mentioned in the presentation to the City Council on October 14, 2016.

ComEd has offered to provide us with signage for the ComEd Prairie Restoration Project. Signage is appropriate to designate the site as such. We would also like to recognize what ComEd has contributed for this project. The signage would be placed along the bike path in the Sherwood Section and would be visible from Elmhurst Road. Signage will educate the public.

Remnant Prairie

The Remnant Prairie looks better than last year because of our management of the site.

We eradicated a host of teasel, but there is still a lot of invasives to get rid of. We will be herbiciding this area on Sunday, October 13.

Sedge Meadow

We have not done much recently at the Sedge Meadow, except to install a "No Mow" order.

Everything is basically stable except we have cat tails to eradicate.

Saint Alphonsus Catholic Parish

St. Alphonsus has a natural space along Wheeling Road in front of the church property. A wealth of burr reed was found.

On the south edge of the church property, there is a large patch of invasive Phragmites.

Also, there exists a stretch of native plants in the back that can well be a prairie restoration project on its own, which would also be a great education for children.

Peter stated that the church property also has a mini-arboretum present with a variety of tree species, which are labelled.

Slough

We are still working on the trail markers for the prairie area at the Slough.

Tully Park

PHNRC has not visited Tully Park recently. Therefore, Agnes asked Jill for her assessment. Jill subsequently received information from Wendy Dewar, who has managed prairie plantings and workdays for the Tully Park neighborhood effort.

Per Wendy, it is her best estimate that 4,500 plugs, seeds for sedges and grasses in the creek have been planted this season. Also, seeds planted in the shade - False Solomon's Seal and Wild Onions - were also accomplished.

During the summer, White Snake Root, a few Asters (not all), Goldenrod, Blue Lobelia, Bellflower, Monkeyflower, Swamp Milkweed, Monarda, Tall Coreopsis and Brown-Eyed Susans were blooming. Still blooming are the Lobelia, Bellflower, Coreopsis and Brown-Eyed Susans.

We planted Purple Coneflower, Columbine, Marsh Blazing Star, Little Bluestem and others that have not been noted but did bloom this year.

The grasses planted were silky rye, Canadian rye, inland oats, switch grass and side oats grama. Everything took well, and most have gone to seed. A fair amount of tall ironweed (sunny and wet areas) were also planted and are doing well. We are unsure if these plants flower, but if they do, ours did not flower this year.

Mountain mint and hairy wood mint plants did well. Wild Quinine and Wild Bergamot did not do well. We are uncertain if they still exist as the critters did take a toll on some of our plants. We are hopeful the plant roots survived and will show plants next spring.

Problems encountered were crabgrass, and after they were herbicided, the creeping Charlie moved in. We also had a bumper crop of poison ivy despite Wendy spraying for it three times!

The trees planted were oaks and hickory donated by Peter Hahn are doing well. The choke cherry and elderberry are also doing well. The trees that fell missed them by millimeters (thank goodness!).

The wild plums that we transplanted, unfortunately, are not doing well. The wild plums located near Dick & June Wolf's house (south) are mostly expired. The ones by Ms. Dee Munroe's fence (north) are about 75% "alive." Therefore, we need to do some digging for those as they make a nice low screen in place of the buckthorn.

Just recently, a Tully Park volunteer crew cut up the three fallen trees (parts of the trees) and placed the brush on an additional burn pile so that the area would be cleared for seeding.

A Tully Park workday has been scheduled for Saturday morning, November 19, to burn and get rid of some invasives. Wendy spoke with Dana about scheduling this workday re: burn activity.

NEW BUSINESS

Seed Processing and Volunteer Appreciation Day

Our Seed Processing and Volunteer Appreciation Day will be held one week after the Poplar Creek Prairie Stewards (PCPS) Seed Processing Day on Sunday morning, November 20, 2016. We will be borrowing some of PCPS's equipment. Seed Processing will be held during the regularly scheduled PHNRC workday of November 20 in the morning followed by lunch and the Volunteer Appreciation award recognition.

The location will be the (heated) garage of Agnes' new home.

Members discussed the criteria to recognize the PHNRC Volunteer of the Year Award, particularly volunteer hours, and the type of award to present to the Volunteer of the Year. Golden Loppers were thought to be ideal.

Further discussion on this workday and activity will be held at our November 10 PHNRC Meeting.

Walnut Woods

Christina Ferraro asked PHNRC (Agnes and Dana, representatives) to give her advice on the pond by Walnut Woods. A Homeowners Association exists for this area, but the Prospect Heights Park District has a vote and own half of the pond and property.

The Homeowners Association has asked PHPD to produce funds to dredge the pond and build sea walls all around to stabilize it from eroding further, as well as preventing it from getting shallower and greener. Therefore, Christina asked for PHNRC's opinion. Christina, Agnes and Dana visited Walnut Woods on Friday, October 14, 2016.

Dredging and building a sea wall are not the best ideas and are also a huge expense.

PHNRC recommendations: Currently, the area is isolated. It is a nice park setting; natural and peaceful. However, a sign should be posted to note that this is Prospect Heights Park District Property. The pond has erosion occurring on both sides.

The shoreline should be stabilized in a natural way by removing the buckthorn and weedy trees. Native plants should be planted in their stead. Make the north side (Karl Court) much healthier. Build another bridge that can be utilized.

Dana worked very late one evening and produced photoshop images to show what it could really look like!

John has frequently visited Walnut Woods and has seen an owl's nest; turtles are abundant; and the wood ducks used to nest in this area.

PHNRC is willing to help PHPD with this area. We would also involve the residents that live in this area. It would bring the neighbors together in a common effort, build a sense of community, encourage leadership, develop the local effort and increase awareness.

Visitors Comments:

Christina Ferraro expressed appreciation to PHNRC for their support.

OTHER BUSINESS

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission is scheduled for Thursday, November 10, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. at City Hall.

ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business to come before the Commissioners, and the meeting adjourned at 7:44 p.m.

Jill E. Moskal, CPS
Recording Secretary
Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission