

CITY OF PROSPECT HEIGHTS
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 10, 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
Lawrence Rosenthal, Alderman for Ward 2

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 October 20, 2016

The minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission of October 20, 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.

OLD BUSINESS

Update: Work Day Schedules

Seed collection for the year is finished. Seed collection on Wednesday evenings has concluded for the season. The additional evening workday resulted in obtaining an abundance of seed.

Seed Processing will be held from 9:00 a.m. to 12 Noon on our next workday of Sunday, November 20, 2016 followed by a pot luck lunch and Volunteer Appreciation Day.

Our next regularly scheduled workday is Sunday, December 4, 2016. We will spend one to two days more at the Slough and two days at Morava. Our workdays throughout the winter season will concentrate on removal of buckthorn and having a bonfire.

Fall Burn: Status Report

Prescribed burns in the fall are typically held after November 1 and accomplished by the first snow fall. The weather must be perfect. Frost is necessary to prepare the fuel, and expectation of a first frost typically occurs by November 1. However, it has been an unusually warm fall season, so the grasses have not died down but are still growing. We plan conduct a prescribed burn of a portion of the restoration area at the Slough between now and December 15 with the hope the burn can be accomplished by Thanksgiving or by November 24.

We have received approval from the City Council. Peter Falcone is our liaison.

Dana prepared a notification letter and burn map that will be distributed by Peter Falcone to all residents living by the Slough. Peter Falcone also sent a reverse 911 message on November 10, 2016 to those residents in the targeted area. Receipt of the information either by the resident or by the resident's answering machine can be tracked. The reverse 911 call is the most efficient means of communication; however, we also plan to distribute an informational flyer.

We will know 48 hours in advance of the exact day or date of the burn.

Library and Park District Programs

Bird Walks: Two additional Bird Walks will be conducted on Saturday, May 13 and Saturday, May 27, 2017 from 7:30 to 9:30 a.m. by Lee Ramsey, Bird Conservation Network (BCN) Coordinator and Mary Lou Mellon, BCN Past President. This information is available in the Park District Program Brochure.

Dana spoke with Al Steffens, and Mr. Steffens would like to take a pass on conducting a Celebrity Bird Walk. Mr. Steffens is simply uncomfortable with the idea/framework. Therefore, we will continue to conduct the Bird Walk Program with Lee and Mary Lou.

Nature Speaks: January 26, 2017: Kristen DaPra and John McCabe of the Forest Preserves of Cook County will introduce the screening of the just-released documentary of the 100th Anniversary of the Forest Preserves. The program consists of an introduction, playing of the video and followed by a Question & Answer Session.

February 28, 2017: Abigail Derby Lewis, Senior Conservation Ecologist at The Field Museum will be discussing climate impacts and the role urban nature plays in helping to adapt.

April 19, 2017: Doug Taron, Curator of Biology and Vice President of Research and Conservation at the Chicago Academy of Sciences' Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum will return to, once again, provide his outstanding presentation on Monarch Butterflies.

Dana will finish modifications to the web and web pages this weekend along with updated Calendar Events.

Seed Collection Program 2016

We have collected a large amount of seed of which 52 pounds, if not more, has already been processed with another 50 pounds or more to be processed.

We have collaborated with other programs, such as Fermilab, to exchange plugs, seeds and plants depending on what species of plant is needed. The Poplar Creek Prairie Stewards (PCPS) in Hoffman Estates would also like to be a member of this exchange program. However, we should work with the Forest Preserve District in this regard. We can grow plugs for PCPS in exchange for woodland grasses and sedges that we do not have the resources for.

The Prospect Heights Park District has generously donated an antipasti plate and soft drinks for our Seed Processing Day on November 20. To Note: Christina Ferraro will be on vacation and unable to attend.

PCPS is donating the seed processing trays and stands, as well as other items necessary for our use in seed processing. PCPS' Seed Processing Day is November 13.

Agnes and other commissioners will arrive one hour early on November 20 to set up the stands and processing trays so the activity is organized. Agnes will supervise.

Agnes stated we are expecting a big turnout.

Progress Reports from the Work Sites

Morava Nature Preserve

All the plugs that were planted to stabilize the shoreline of McDonald Creek are doing quite well.

Peter and Agnes went on Wednesday to prepare the section of turf grass located on the lower portion near the Library to be naturalized. This area will be ready for seed in the Winter. Also, red flags were placed to denote the walking path.

Debris, such as asphalt, concrete, trash, etc., was dumped by the contractor working for the Park District near the creek. It was our understanding that the client would clean this up, but it is still present. We understand that November 11 is the last day of work for the PHPD crew for the season. However, Christina stated that Dino will manage this.

The wood that was chipped and piled is good.

Agnes has prepared a spreadsheet of seed lists and provided it to Christina with a request to purchase seeds and plugs for this year totaling 30 pounds and amounting to \$5,500. This money will come from the Grant. We will also utilize a portion of the seed we have collected.

Sam Sobczak, an Eagle Scout, wants to work at the Morava Nature Center for his Eagle Scout Project. Sam is interested in the interactive signage and plants, where it would go and how it will look. Sam has contacted an architectural firm in Des Plaines, and they have agreed to do the design work for the bridge and provide engineering services, if required. Further, the architectural firm will provide their services pro bono. The architectural firm also reached out to their 115 employees and asked who was an Eagle Scout. Fifteen (15) employees stepped forward and will provide their support when the project is approved by Sam's Scout Troop.

Once the project is approved, meetings with PHNRC and the architectural firm will commence to review the design work.

Sam also wants to use his Scout Troop as volunteer labor with Sam supervising the work and training the Scouts. Sam wants everyone involved!

Prairie Restoration

The Com Ed Prairie Restoration Site is doing great. Dana has observed people walking around on a continuous basis.

Plugs were planted for Lynn's Prairie. Agnes is in contact with Lynn on a frequent basis, and Lynn is excited about the planning of her prairie site.

ComEd is planning a prescribed burn of 2.5 acres of the eastern portion of this site in the Spring of 2017 at a cost of \$8,000.

Seed will be planted after the spring burn. Planting after a burn results in the best seed-soil contact.

Remnant Prairie

The Remnant Prairie continues to look great! Invasive plant management has resulted in positive changes, which is seen by people and motivating us to do more. Everything has progressed over the years. One pocket of species survived, and we now have 30 specific prairie plants proliferating in the Remnant Prairie.

One of the species is Butterfly Weed. There currently exists four (4) non-populations of Butterfly Weed in our area. Butterfly Weed cannot self-pollinate, so it would be nice to encourage this plant to grow. To do so, we need to bring in a population of this plant. Agnes contacted Ken Schaefer at Oakton Community College, and Ken will procure Butterfly Weed seed for us. We will grow the seed and re-introduce the plant to the prairie. The seed provided is from a genetically local plant form from a different source, which is needed to pollinate.

Peter is doing a lot of work at the Remnant Prairie. Peter has been out at this site for days and days managing eradication of the teasel.

Sedge Meadow

We have not done much recently at the Sedge Meadow, but seed has been collected.

Slough

More and more people are visiting the Slough and regularly using the walking paths.

All of the plants are doing well. We have collected all of the seed from the Slough and are getting ready for a burn.

In reviewing the burn map for the Slough, what is the priority of the three areas indicated to be burn? Is one more important than the other?

The first two at the bottom of the site map are a priority: the woodland area through the woodland into the area of the plantings. We will revisit the other side that was burned last year and burn the central section in the spring. The plantings will not be burned. The hiking path will be a burn break from the road, along with the water.

Tully Park

A Tully Park workday has been scheduled for Saturday morning, November 19, to burn and get rid of buckthorn resprouts. Dana and Peter plan to be present from PHNRC.

NEW BUSINESS

Seed Processing and Volunteer Appreciation Day

Our Seed Processing and Volunteer Appreciation Day will be held Sunday morning, November 20, 2016. We will be utilizing 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.

The Morton Arboretum presents a gold-plated award to their volunteers, so Dana created the PHNRC Volunteer Award: a gold plated pair of loppers with a banner that will state the name of the award and the recipient's name. The gold plated loppers will be showcased at the PHPD, and each year, another PHNRC Volunteer Award recipient's name will be added.

Jill offered to produce a certificate that would accompany the award.

Choosing one volunteer for the award is difficult because PHNRC has many wonderful volunteers who have devoted 100s of hours of their time and energy for our restoration work. Members agreed to communicate via e:mail over the next few days to provide names of award candidates.

Commissioners decided that only PHNRC Volunteers would be considered for the Volunteer Award and not Commissioners. However, Agnes wanted to note that Commissioner Peter Hahn would be a candidate for a Volunteer Award because of the many, many hours and days he has provided, especially working with our summer intern, Daniella. PHNRC is very appreciate of Peter's dedication and selfless efforts and recognizes the time and energy he has consistently spent on restoration projects.

Winter Work Project

Christina Ferraro asked PHNRC (Agnes and Dana, representatives) to assist with Heron Pond located near Carl Court and Walnut Woods in Prospect Heights. A Homeowners Association of five residents around Heron Pond are very concerned about soil erosion.

Members alternately asked: Does the park by Heron Pond and Walnut Woods have a name? It is property owned by the Prospect Heights Park District. What is the history on the pond? What is the depth of the pond? When was it built?

Agnes has aerial photographs and a topographical map of the area. This information shows that the lower lying area was once connected to the Slough and creek.

John Kamysz said that there are fish in the pond. Peter said there is a pipe with a valve.

Agnes said there is evidence that the creek overflows in heavy rain. A berm has been constructed in spots.

Heron Pond has erosion and excess nutrient load. The shoreline needs to be stabilized, and a lot of hanging trees, such as buckthorn and shade trees, need to be removed to allow sunlight in.

Our next regularly scheduled workday of Sunday, December 4 will be spent at Heron Pond. Christina assured us that the residents are thrilled to have our assistance.

The PHPD will provide the finances for purchase of seeds and plugs for the area of Heron Pond. Agnes has made a list of aquatic shoreline plants and provide the list to Christina. The aquatic plants will help to stabilize the shoreline.

Visitors Comments:

Lawrence (Larry) Rosenthal, Alderman for Ward 2 and resides at 453 Williamsburg Lane, stated he had reviewed the entire water resource with the City as a single entity plus he has had conversations regarding the Creek, soil erosion and debris. Larry has also met with the neighbors and residents of that area last month. The Creek is at the east end of Ward 2 and is in particularly poor shape.

At the next City Council Meeting during the agenda item for Elected Officials' Reports, Larry would like to present a proposal to the City Council to reinstate the Committee that existed some years' ago who maintained the function and appearance of the Creek. Larry also felt this reinstated Committee could liaise with the PHNRC for mentoring and assistance.

The residents' main concerns are to clean up the Creek, prevent erosion and plant plantings and the like along the shoreline.

Larry is approaching PHNRC with his idea as information in the interest of transparency. Larry asked if the PHNRC had any objections.

Larry stated that the reputation and prestige of PHNRC is growing. We are viewed as a resource or, more likely, as a human resource. Larry said PHNRC has created an image and projection of Prospect Heights. Therefore, Larry felt that PHNRC had a great story to tell and suggested that the City prepare a story on PHNRC in the spring that would be published in the City's publications and memorialized on the website.

Larry also suggested that a special tab be installed on the City's website to showcase Prospect Heights' natural resources.

Dana stated that the PHNRC's mission is to preserve and protect the natural areas of Prospect Heights, so this request falls under our mission. Therefore, we have no objection.

Agnes said that NWRD exists, and the reinstated Committee could become a vital subgroup with NWRD. NWRD takes care of these types of clean ups in areas that are small and need the work.
City of Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission

OTHER BUSINESS

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission is scheduled for Thursday, January 12, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. at City Hall.

ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business to come before the Commissioners, and the meeting adjourned at 7:54 p.m.

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