

Present:	Agnes Wojnarski, Chairperson Peter Hahn Ed Madden	Jill E. Moskal, Recording Secretary Dana Sievertsen
Attendees:	Christina Ferraro, Executive Director, Prospect Heights Park District Peter Falcone, Assistant to the City Administrator	
Absent:	Dr. John Kamysz	
NOTE:	Dr. Kamysz attended the City of Prospect Heights Strategic Directions Committee Meeting, which was held at the same time as our meeting, to represent the PHNRC.	

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

Roll Call proceeded. All Commissioners were in attendance, except Dr. Kamysz. However, a quorum was present.

The minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission of November 10, 2016 were approved. No corrections were noted.

Update: Work Day Schedules

The next scheduled volunteer PHNRC workday is this coming Sunday, January 15, 2017 and will be conducted at the Slough. A fresh pile of cut buckthorn needs to be burned and invasive shrubs need to be eradicated. Neighbors thought these shrubs were pretty, but understand that they are invasive. PHNRC will plant native shrubs in their place.

We also hope to work in the little finger area of the Slough, located at the north end, and the whole north shore, to eradicate invasive buckthorn. With the water frozen, we will be able to stand on the ice to accomplish this work.

Small Chinese Elm will also be cut and then dropped in the Slough when the ice melts. Having cut the branches in the water will provide a natural habitat for the turtles, as well as an area for the turtles to bask in the sun while removing the invasive species.

The remaining winter volunteer workdays will be held between Heron Pond, Morava Nature Preserve and the Slough.

Status Report: Seed / Greenhouse Program

PHNRC has collected over 110 lbs. of seed in 2016; a record! PHNRC collected about 50 lbs. of seed in 2015. What an amazing accomplishment!

PHNRC purchased 50 lbs. of seed overall of which 30 lbs. of seed was distributed at Heron Pond and Morava Nature Preserve. Agnes has developed a spreadsheet on the various species of seed and how they will be planted throughout PHNRC project sites. Timelines on species collected, weighed, processed, distributed and funded have been prepared for documentation.

Some of the seed we have obtained is from the Poplar Creek Prairie Stewards (PCPS) and Fermilab.

Agnes has prepared experimental trays especially for special seeds. Seeds need a stratification process, which provides certain conditions for germination. Three types of experimental environments are cold, cold/moist and potted and placed outdoors. All germinated species are documented. The results will provide a historical record.

Information on stratification processes are not readily available, so we are developing the information, and an intern could conduct the study.

At either the end of February or early March 2017, the seedlings will go into the Greenhouse. We currently have two or three usable Greenhouses.

PHNRC has seeded 20 lbs. of seed at the Morava Nature Preserve at our last workday. The seed planted contained 53 species, (i.e., partially shade/open sun, forbes and savannah) and 8 different types of grasses, such as savannah and partial sun grasses.

The seed was planted on the section of turf grass located on the lower portion near the Library. When planting, you want good soil-seed contact, so we rough up the ground with raking before seeding. Have either rain or even an ice storm the day after planting ensure a good seeding.

We have ordered from the Grant money over \$3,000 for seed and plugs.

Library and Park District Programs

Prospect Heights Public Library Programs

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.

Registration for the Nature Speaks Programs can be accomplished on the Library website.

Prospect Heights Park District Programs

Currently, the only PHPD Programs scheduled for the Spring as the two Bird Walks on May 13 and May 27 (Saturdays) conducted by Lee Ramsey, Bird Conservation Network (BCN) Coordinator and Mary Lou Mellon, BCN Past President. The Bird Walks have been very successful, well attended and entertaining.

Registration is required for attending the Bird Walks and can be accomplished on the Park District website.

If PHNRC wants to do any additional or different types of classes for the Spring and Summer then we need to submit proposals to Marcie soon. The PHPD brochure has already been published and distributed; therefore, posting of any additional classes is considered outside of the program.

Discussion ensued on perhaps conducting Slough Walks and Prairie Walks during the summer. This activity would be free of charge.

Dana requested Commissioners that if they had any ideas, please take charge and manage the creation, development and publication of the class. However, Dana offered his assistance with the organization and PR aspects.

Progress Reports from the Work Sites

Heron Pond

The Prospect Heights Park District hired a big crew that removed all the buckthorn. This work was accomplished in one week by the crew where it would have taken PHNRC volunteers over two winters of workdays.

Next, we will seed this area and stabilize the shoreline with aquatic plants and grasses. However, to note. The shoreline may need to be regraded. The slope is fine, but there are areas where there is a sharp drop off. We will focus on the area we can do.

We have purchased erosion control blankets, and the funding was provided by PHPD.

The erosion control blankets will be placed when the ground has thawed from the winter season. Right now, the ground is frozen. We can then seed in the spring and install the plugs in the summer. The erosion control blankets will ensure that our seeding is effective.

The plugs were ordered and purchased by the Park District with their own funds. PHPD ordered aquatic and semi-aquatic plants.

We should install carp fencing, which is three-foot metal posts installed 1.5 feet down with chicken wire. Christina Ferraro will mention this during the next Heron Pond Homeowners Association Meeting in early February. The carp fencing is an aid to ensure our plantings become rooted because they are fragile. Once installed, the carp fencing will be in place from 1.5 to 2.0 years.

Big, large trees have fallen into the creek, causing a damming effect with the water stream. MWRD has been alerted.

Morava Nature Preserve and Chipman Design Meetings

A meeting was held with Chipman Design on December 14, 2016 at the architect's offices. In attendance were Agnes, Dana, Peter and Sam Sobczak, an Eagle Scout with five Chipman Design employees: Rebecca Buchmeier, Hospitality Design Director, was the point person for Chipman, two junior architects, a Senior Partner and a Senior Architect. The purpose of the meeting was to provide initial first steps leading to design resolution.

Dana produced a short Power Point presentation with dimensions to provide a brief overview of PHNRC and the Project. Discussion ensued on next steps for us, what Chipman would do in the meantime and design ideas – fixed bridge, suspension bridge or recycled bridge. Chipman noted that this is a competition within the firm for the junior people. Chipman is also providing their services on a pro bono basis.

Key Questions for the Project are ADA and IDNR compliance, zoning, flood plain concerns, zoning and permitting are being managed by Dana

Dana spoke with and then met with Dan Peterson of the Building Department, and Steve Barez, Engineer to discuss the list of questions from Chipman. Dana was directed to the appropriate Illinois agencies. IDNR permitting can be deferred to the City of Prospect Heights, however, for the permit for the bridge. We receive an application packet, and part of the application involves the plans for the bridge. They will review and decide who will approve the permit.

Springfield Conservation and ADA really have very little in the way of Illinois regulations about hiking trails. The closest thing related to our project is restrooms in an outdoor area. Another category that gives an exemption. Unsustainable structures. Therefore, there is no clear idea on how Illinois Law for ADA would impact our project. This would be under Federal Regulations and will gauge whether we should do something to be able to go forward because it is a hiking trail.

Key consideration: Can you get there from somewhere else? Another way?

Can you enjoy the space elsewhere? Yes.

Should have some answers. Chipman is working on the design plan. The area is in the flood zone and not the flood plain.

Members suggested sharing tasks for this objective, like contacting the ADA.

A site visit was conducted on Wednesday, January 4, 2017 with Rebecca Buchmeier from Chipman and Agnes and Peter from PHNRC.

Dumping of Debris

PHNRC is still concerned about the debris, (i.e., asphalt, concrete, trash, etc.), that was dumped by the creek. We have since learned that Peter Hahn stacked the stones to make the area neat and presentable. However, debris is still present.

Christina suggested that she look at the area together with PHNRC. Christina said the debris is from the reconstruction of the whirlpool and the fill from changing that area was moved from the playground. Christina would like to review the area with PHNRC, and this review will occur on Wednesday, January 18, 2017 at 10:00 a.m.

Carolyn Zuniga (please confirm name) from ComEd's Publicity Department has requested photos with explanations and a progress report on Morava Nature Preserve. This information will be applied to ComEd's Facebook page about their Grant proposals.

Dana provided Carolyn with 60 to 70 photos of volunteers, flora and fauna, before and after photos, etc.

Prairie Restoration

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

Forty to 50 pounds of seed collected at the ComEd Prairie will be used to seed this area after the spring burn. Sarah Reis called to arrange the burn.

Slough

Workday scheduled for January 15, and a burn planned for Spring 2017. Thirty pounds of seed will be planted at the Slough after the spring burn.

For those interested in getting certified, the Chicago Wilderness Burn Crew Training is provided by the Morton Arboretum February 25, March 2 and March 3, 2017. Please visit their website for more details.

Dana said it is amazing to see the number of people enjoying the Slough. At any given time, there are people walking the paths year-round, playing hockey all day, ice skating, etc.

The Daily Herald published John Kamysz's article entitled "Bold and Majestic: American bald eagle makes its way to Prospect Heights' Slough" on January 10, 2017. Ed said this article provided tremendous credibility for our work – it does make a difference – and also provided PHNRC with exposure. Awesome! We could very likely see more volunteers at our spring workdays. Kudos to John!

Tully Park

The neighborhood group is always working on the park. Any seed provided by PHNRC is immediately planted and always warmly received.

A burn will be scheduled soon, and PHNRC will assist with this activity.

NEW BUSINESS

Proposed PHNRC 2017 Budget

Dana distributed a one-page document to attendees detailing proposed PHNRC 2017-2018 expenses. Eighteen line items were shown along with the Grant – General Expense of \$5,000 for a total estimated budget cost of \$10,960. PHNRC is asking for \$5,960, which can be utilized as we wish, in addition to the \$5,000, which amount is restricted. We estimate the cost per plant to be 4.5 cents.

Of this total amount, \$4,000 is PHNRC's request to the City and \$5,000 Matching Grant Money. The budget also spans two years. PHPD passed the resolution in March for 2017, and it will carry-over to 2017-2018.

Peter Falcone strongly recommended that PHNRC devise two separate budgets for each of these amounts to keep the information delineated. Split it up between Operations and the Grant. We must identify what we plan to do with each line item expense. Note: The Greenhouse trays and potting soil are shared between the two purposes.

Our purchased items are procured through the City of Prospect Heights and not by us individually. No sales tax is applied.

Submission of a final budget is due around February 2017.

Dana asked Christina if the Grant Budget is within the total budget. The \$5,000 has never been broken down, but it is for the Morava Project. Loans from that the City matches the Park District. Anything PHPD needs from us for documentation re: Morava grant? No. Want to see how much the budget will cost.

Summer Interns

The Prospect Heights Park District has generously funded an intern for PHNRC and an anonymous donor has provided for a second intern. The education and work accomplished will be phenomenal!

We typically advertise in the Chicago Environmental Network for an intern. However, we have identified qualified candidates from past searches and have vetted their background and experience. Therefore, Commissioners agreed to approach past applicants to see if they are interested and available for this summer.

Dana reviewed the paperwork of which three or four were approachable. Dana will send an e:mail to all Commissioners with candidate impressions and resumes for a general consensus. We will then make an offer and see if they are interested. If not, we will then open the interview process.

Colleges have intern programs in which the colleges give interns college credit and not a wage. Is someone available to find out what colleges might have this possibility?

Regarding pay, the Chicago Environmental Network recommends \$11.00 an hour for a 40-hour work week. McHenry County pays \$9.00 an hour. Commissioners discussed the pay structure between the two interns and agreed to have two paid intern positions at \$11.00 an hour for a 40-hour week for 9.5 weeks for a total pay of \$4,500 per paid intern.

Discussion also ensued on having a second part-time intern position where the intern would earn college credits. We could also stagger intern workdays. Some intern programs begin in May and others begin in June.

Commissioners were asked to think about tasks and duties for the interns this summer. They will be managing the prairie and sedge meadow.

PHNRC 2017 Meeting Schedule

Commissioners previously reviewed the PHNRC 2017 Meeting Schedule. Everyone agreed to keep with the City directive. Therefore, we will not hold a December meeting, unless we have an urgent matter or item to discuss and resolve.

Jill mentioned that she may have a conflict with the February 9, 2017 meeting date and will advise.

Peter Falcone reminded us of the 48-hour rule on submission of meeting agenda for posting. We can also cancel any meeting and reschedule as a Special Meeting.

Morton Arboretum Woodland Stewardship Program Filming

The Morton Arboretum contacted PHNRC with a request to film a PHNRC workday. The film is being produced to promote the Morton Arboretum program (name of program). Although provided with short notice, we proceeded with the filming on Friday, January 6, 2017. Ten people were present.

Agnes attended the two-year Morton Arboretum certificate program (name of program). They are now expanding the program.

MA interviewed Agnes then filmed PHNRC volunteers processing seed. Two other stewards were interviewed. Came about when Agnes spoke at their volunteer night. We will be provided copies of the video.

MA plans to wrap up production by the Wild Things Conference in mid-February.

Wild Things Conference and PHNRC Presentation

The Wild Things Conference will be held at UIC on Saturday, February 18, 2017. PHNRC has been invited to make a presentation. Dana will be presenting "From Grass Roots to Deep Roots" and created an outline, which involves PHNRC history, the course of the two years we have been in existence, programs and Nature Speaks, key projects, what we have accomplished, our success in securing grants and volunteers, support from the City and the Park District, and the partnerships we enjoy with other organizations. We want to share our experience. put Prospect Heights on the map and highlight the City and Park District.

If anyone wants to help develop content, please advise Dana. Ed said he would talk about PR aspects and press releases.

The Wild Things Conference is held every two years to inspire and educate. It is the "Who's Who" of all things nature in Northeastern Illinois.

MacArthur Junior High School Science Class

We have been approached by the MacArthur Junior High School Science Teacher to provide a presentation to 6th Graders (200 students). The presentation will be held on Friday, February 3 from 8:45 – 9:30 a.m. in the Little Theatre and center on invasive and native plants, food web, the interaction of plants and insects and how it all impacts the ecosystem.

This is an opportunity for PHNRC to employ a younger generation.

Agnes related a video series by David Attenborough of Planet Earth from 30 years' ago that Ed is transferring to DVDs. Agnes first saw this series through attendance at the Morton Arboretum's native stewardship certificate program.

Grant Funding Opportunities

Agnes is on the e:mail distribution list from the Morton Arboretum for grant funding opportunities. Agnes recently received one for a five-star urban water grant opportunity \$30,000, submission of an application which would be due end of January 2017. Dana said we have the boiler plate for grant submissions, and he really wants the Somerset Park project to become reality.

Members decided it would be advantageous to apply to grant funding opportunities as they are presented.

Visitors Comments:

Peter Falcone said he is looking for content for the cable channels.

Christina Ferraro said the Park District is soliciting agencies for the next month to institute their master five-year plan. Once finalized, they will open it up to the public for comment. Christina would like the PHNRC to think about the Somerset Park piece of the master plan and the resources towards it. Christina will advise PHNRC by March.

OTHER BUSINESS

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission is scheduled for Thursday, February 9, 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 8:20 p.m.

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