

CITY OF PROSPECT HEIGHTS
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 16, 2017

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

Attendees: 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 Regular Meeting of January 12, 2017

The minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission of January 12, 2017 approved. No corrections were noted.

OLD BUSINESS

Update: Workday Schedules

February 12, 2017 – Slough: A lot of work has been accomplished. The smaller Siberian Elms, Norway Maples and other invasive shrubs have been removed. The bonfire was cut short at 10:30 a.m. due to the high winds (40 mph gusts). The brush piles were then set to the side.

Heron Pond: Seeding will be accomplished and erosion blankets will be placed as soon as the ground has thawed.

The remaining winter workdays will be split between Heron Pond, Morava Nature Center and the Slough.

Status Report: Seed / Greenhouse Program

During the first or second week of March, we will start placing seeds in the pots to germinate in the Greenhouses.

Two of the three greenhouses are in good shape. The third Greenhouse is falling apart because of the winds and the fact that it wasn't in good shape to begin with. We do have time to fix it up.

All plantings are segregated; all of the important species are in various experimental stratifying mediums.

Prospect Heights Public Library Programs

February 28, 2017: Abigail Derby Lewis, Senior Conservation Ecologist at The Field Museum, has cancelled her talk due to her husband experiencing a near-fatal accident. Ms. Lewis' presentation on climate impacts and the role urban nature plays in helping to adapt has been rescheduled to July 11, 2017. We have sent her our best wishes.

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 provide his outstanding presentation on Monarch Butterflies.

Agnes, Dana and Terri Campbell have tried to fill the void with a Nature Speaks presentation, but it is not probable.

The Wild Things Conference this Saturday, February 18, offers the potential to secure at least three or four potential speakers for the Nature Speaks Program. Dana automatically thought of Steve Packard and Gerould Wilhelm.

Please view this Conference then as a recruiting event. Therefore, if you are sitting in a session that you feel is interesting, please approach the speaker and ask of their availability. Make sure you have your PHNRC business cards with you.

Prospect Heights Park District Programs

Mary Lou Mellon will miss the second spring Bird Walk scheduled on Saturday, May 27 due to shoulder surgery. Lee Ramsey is seeking to arrange another bird expert. The first spring Bird Walk is scheduled for Saturday, May 13.

This change in schedule is noted in the PHNC Calendar of Events.

Dana has reached out to Chief Al Steffens, again, for a celebrity bird walk, but since he has never responded, we will take this that he is very busy and unable to comply.

NEW BUSINESS

Final PHNRC 2017 Budget

The PHNRC 2017 (final) Budget was submitted to Peter Falcone on January 27, 2017 and will be presented and discussed during the City Council Budget Workshop scheduled on Saturday, February 25, 2017 at 8:30 a.m. in the Council Chambers. This is a worthwhile meeting for PHNRC members to attend. However, Peter cautioned that while he is confident our budget will be discussed, there are no guarantees due to the amount of information presented. The Budget Workshop typically runs four hours.

We reviewed the numbers, again, and noticed there is not a lot of overlap with the Grant money. Therefore, we made an adjustment. We made the numbers more realistic by separating them out and adding a few line items. The rest of the Greenhouse supplies will come out of the Morava Grant money.

We also noted that we are recycling 8,000 planting pots/cups, so we are not repurchasing new ones.

Status: Summer Interns and Hiring

We have the resources to employ two summer interns this year due to the generous donation from one of our volunteers and from receipt of approval by the Prospect Heights Park District.

We reached out to candidates who interviewed last year – Emma Boehm, University of Minnesota and Kathleen Falk, Oberlin College. They both were ecstatic that we contacted them, again, and they are both interested. They mentioned reading the Journal entries by Daniella and feel this is where they want to be.

We explained that they were both so close in the decision-making process last year. Both Emma and Kathleen have tertiary commitments and will know mid-March where they stand.

If we cannot hire either Emma or Kathleen, we will continue to go down the list. We will also place an ad beginning of March on the Chicago Environmental Network and begin interviewing candidates in April. We'll know more by our March meeting and review where we stand at that time.

Wild Things Conference and PHNRC Presentation – February 18, 2017

The Wild Things Conference is this Saturday. The Conference is completely sold out, and 1,700 people are expected to be in attendance.

The roster shows 108 people have signed-up for our session entitled "From Grass Roots to Deep Roots: Small Organizations with Big Ambitions." The bulk of our presentation is focusing on everything we have accomplished in Prospect Heights, working with the City Government, and working with the City residents.

The course description is: The Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission, founded in February 2014, has received two Green Regions grants, started a greenhouse program, created a website, a monthly news journal, documentary videos, a speaking circuit, naturalized resident lawns, managed remnant seed sources, a wetland, a prairie conversion, and an interactive nature preserve for children.

Dana, Agnes, Ed and John are meeting tomorrow evening at Dana's house to rehearse the presentation and make final edits.

Our presenting at the Conference is a great opportunity for us and the City of Prospect Heights. We've learned that the City Council is unaware of our participation and presentation at the Conference. Therefore, we will take pictures and provide a write-up to Peter for placement in e-news and Facebook.

Strategic Directions Meeting – January 12, 2017

Jill transcribed a recording of Agenda Item E of this meeting, which held discussion on the Weir System:

The Strategic Directions Committee reviewed some of the things that should be done through the capital improvement program.

Joe Wade said the issue of a Weir System at Hillcrest Lake began last summer and holds the possibility for a 2017 budget amendment for 2017. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) requires additional engineering studies to be produced with storm water calculations. The engineering cost is \$7,800 to determine if there could be a Weir System.

Joe Wade and Steve met with the IDNR and the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission (PHNRC) last winter, and they were receptive to the issue at the Lake but are concerned that we do not correct one problem only to create another. The cure could be worse than the disease.

We recognize that Hillcrest Lake is a small basin bordered by homes within that drain basin. Therefore, a study was required to determine if a Weir System was allowable. If so, what is the next step? Rough estimates were sought, but it may be a particular Weir System with specific safeguards that is required. There is a large contingency.

A weir is a barrier across a river designed to alter the flow characteristics. In most cases, weirs take the form of a horizontal barrier across the width of a river that pools water behind it while still allowing it to flow steadily over the top.

Chemical management for *Elodea Canadensis* was conducted on part of the Lake last year and another treatment would be conducted this year. This will be part of the recommendation. The treatment is based on the temperature of the water and may be applied either in April or May 2017.

The idea of compensatory storage was raised, if it could be permitted and if so, what are the next steps. A construction drawing or construction estimate? What could be permitted? Compensatory water storage is very expensive.

This is a complex project. A model is not known. A resident suggested building a bridge.

The Weir System is different from the road work planned. To do the road project, you must fill in some of the Lake, which would raise the water in the Lake and redo the embankments. That will initiate the compensatory water storage.

Recommendation: Proceed with the engineering study required by IDNR and which will tell us what could be done.

Summary: The City passed two engineering studies. The compensatory storage issue is separate from the road work. It will be a long time before they start!

Winter Work Projects

Heron Pond: Required work: Seed, erosion blankets and buckthorn brush control.

Morava Nature Center: A huge "Thank you!" to Peter Falcone for his time and assistance. Peter supplied the rest of the information to complete the application for the permit for the bridge. Seventy-five percent (75%) of the information requested does not apply to us. We are not changing hydrology.

Dana had another conversation with the Federal official from AVA. Dana discovered that the State does not have any written regulations except for access to outdoor restrooms in nature areas, so we will defer to the Federal guidelines.

Dana spoke with Peter Berg of the ADA, and Peter provided links, sections and chapters that would apply to this. It is purely voluntary.

There are more exemptions based on topography and roughness of the terrain that would prevent having to fulfill ADA regulations. Since our area for bridge construction is rough and rugged and steep going down, we are exempt from the ADA guidelines. If you had access to one side of the bridge that you could get to easier than the other side, then you have an "access viable exception."

Dana also had another conversation with William Boyd of the IDNR to obtain guidance on where we are with the application and received a shift in attitude and tone. Originally, Dana was told that the IDNR could decide to hand our application to the City, but now learned that the only part the IDNR would hand off is their permitting process. We must also submit our application to the Army Corps of Engineers, the IDNR and the Illinois EPA.

The hold up: the drawings for the bridge. We have scheduled a meeting with Chipman Design to review three basic models of the bridge on Wednesday, March 1, 2017 from 12:30 or 1:00 p.m. Christiana and Sam plan to be present. We will decide the bridge design at the meeting then we can submit the application and the permit.

Slough: We have accomplished a lot of work at the Slough.

The burn season starts March 15, but the Forest Preserves and the Morton Arboretum have already started their spring burns because weather conditions are right. Temperatures have been unseasonably warm.

Our scheduled spring burn of the Slough could be mid-March. We currently have three certified burn members and will split into two groups to cover two sections.

Our permit expired, so we have started the process to obtain a new one.

One of our volunteers has donated walkie talkies, and they will be perfect to use during a burn.

We need to contact Sara Race, Senior Environmental Compliance Specialist for ComEd, and inquire when ComEd is planning a burn this spring at the ComEd Restoration Project (Sherwood Avenue).

Earth Day Activity – April 22, 2017

Dana's vision is to have a week of activities and events leading up to Earth Day, such as having a creek walk one day, a Slough another day, a prairie walk, Doug Taron on Thursday, April 19, an Open House on Friday, and then a big event on Earth Day. Members appreciate Dana's enthusiasm, but thought to limit the activities to Thursday to Saturday. To our knowledge, there is no organized Earth Day City event currently planned.

Ed suggested having an Open House at the Slough on Earth Day and mimic the work we do at our workdays along with having a bonfire and a structured bird walk. We could provide light refreshments and big marshmallows to be roasted over the bonfire.

Having complete a burn in mid-March means fresh, green vegetation will be showing.

Parking would be available on Hillside. We can post signs with directions for parking.

We could provide tours of the area, promotional items and educational material.

We would publicize in the City's e-news, the Library, the Park District and *The Resources Journal*. We could post signs on Route 83 that an event on Saturday will be held in that area.

Members should think about this and come with ideas to the March meeting.

Visitors Comments

Jill mentioned the City's Call for Volunteers for the McDonald Creek Commission, as recently sent via City E-News on February 10, 2017. The City is looking for volunteers to serve on the McDonald Creek Commission to undertake activity and educational work designed to preserve and enhance the environment around McDonald Creek. This Commission would be responsible for providing informational materials on the various aspects of maintaining cleanliness and quality of the Creek and of advising the community of any maintenance responsibilities of those residents who own property that backs to the Creek bank. The Aldermen heading this project are Ward 2 Alderman Larry Rosenthal and Ward 4 Alderman Pat Ludvigsen.

Jill is willing to attend the McDonald Creek Commission meetings to keep the PHNRC informed of their work. However, members felt we should rotate meeting attendance.

Dana felt one of our members should apply to be a formal member of the McDonald Creek Commission. Dana spoke with Larry Rosenthal about PHNRC representation on this Commission and will clarify.

OTHER BUSINESS

Prospect Heights Kids Care

We have partnered with Prospect Heights Kids Care to create Kids Care events that will be based on nature, restoration and education. Meighan Newhouse, co-founder of Prospect Heights Kids Care, said they hope to have two to three activities per year with us and are looking to hold their first event in early June after school lets out for the summer. PHNRC plans to work with Kids Care on a special work date at one of our sites. Education and just plain fun will be highlighted.

Prospect Heights Kids Care is a not-for-profit organization created by Newhouse and her partner, Jeannine Messer Leonard. This not-for-profit, grassroots organization intended to provide unique life learning experiences for children and to provide them with a sense of community. Currently, Kids Care has 30 to 40 children between Grades 2 and 4.

There is a community located on the east side of Prospect Heights where we could also involve the children of these residents with an opportunity to connect with nature and learn. We could conduct a mass planting, including planting a butterfly garden complete with interpretative signs, in Willow Ridge Park, a park located in that area, perhaps two hours on a Saturday. Willow Ridge Park is part of the River Trails Park District.

We could also plan for the kids to help us collect seeds in the fall and then actually plant the seeds in the pots to create the plugs we need for planting of prairie flowers.

City of Prospect Heights Police Department and Chief Al Steffens

Chief Steffens has expressed great admiration to Dana for the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission. Chief Steffens recently asked Dana if there was anything they could do for us. Chief Steffens offered to put aside money in their fiscal budget for our use. Dana then said we could use \$250 for signage (trail markers and signs) around the Slough.

Chief Steffens has become a terrific friend of our program, and his and the PH Police Department continued support has been amazing!

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission will be held at City Hall on Thursday, March 9, 2017 at 7:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business to come before the Commissioners, and the meeting adjourned at 7:57 p.m.

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