

CITY OF PROSPECT HEIGHTS  
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES OF MARCH 9, 2017

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

Attendees: Peter Falcone, Assistant to the City Administrator  
             Amy Sobczak  
             Sam Sobczak, Eagle Scout  
             Dimitrios Stefanis

Absent: Dr. John Kamysz

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, except Dr. Kamysz. However, a quorum was present.

Meeting Minutes of February 16, 2017

The minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission of February 16, 2017. No corrections were noted.

OLD BUSINESS

Update: Work Day Schedules

Heron Pond: Enjoyed a very productive workday recently at Heron Pond, an area of which the Prospect Heights Park District partially owns. Heron Pond is experiencing overgrowth of algae and other plants and soil erosion on its banks, so we are working to resolve these issues. Thirteen volunteers sowed 30 pounds of seed and covered a large portion of the shoreline with erosion control blankets to prevent seed from washing away. We will be plugging the slopes in the spring. Previously, PHPD workers removed the buckthorn from the area.

The next workday will be at the Morava Nature Center where volunteers will remove buckthorn and invasives, burn brush piles, work on the trail and seed.

The following two remaining workdays of the winter season will be at Heron Pond and the Slough.

Status Report: Seed / Greenhouse Program

Of the three Greenhouses we utilize, one is now completely shattered because of the recent high winds. The remaining two Greenhouses are in fair condition and need to be fixed up. We are considering purchasing a new Greenhouse.

When queried, Commissioners learned that Agnes is personally purchasing the third Greenhouse with her own funds because she said it was located on personal property.

We will be propagating newly-potted seed in the Greenhouse during the next two to three weeks. As previously mentioned, we are utilizing three types of experimental stratification environments for seeding: cold, cold/moist and potted and placed outdoors. We have started around 1,000 plugs in the "turkey" pans.

Ed stated that it should be noted that Agnes is utilizing significant funds from her personal account to purchase seed and potting supplies for PHNRC use. Ed felt Agnes should be commended.

#### Library and Park District Programs

##### Prospect Heights Public Library Programs

Nature Speaks: The discussion on climate impacts and the role urban nature plays in helping to adapt by Abigail Derby Lewis, Senior Conservation Ecologist at The Field Museum, has been rescheduled from February 28 to July 11, 2017 due to a personal problem encountered by Abigail.

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.

The Wild Things Conference of February 18, 2017 yielded two potential speakers for the Nature Speaks program: Jerry Wilhelm and Steve Packard. Steve is definitely interested. Rick McAndless is assisting us in connecting with Steve Packard. Mr. Gerould Wilhelm only works with an agency.

Does the PHPL provide an honorarium or stipend for guest speakers? Yes, a stipend in the range of \$125-\$150.

Ed Madden would like to suggest a speaker on tree identification. The speaker provides an entertaining and informative program. Ed will acquire further information and report at our next meeting.

We are always looking for speakers; all suggestions are welcomed.

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

#### NEW BUSINESS

##### City Council Budget Workshop – February 25, 2017

Jill Moskal attended the City Council Budget Workshop on February 25 to represent the PHNRC.

The City Council commented that our budget was reasonable. Our 2017-2018 budget is \$6,510 as Actual plus \$5,000 for the Grant.

PHNRC is currently listed on the accounting books under the Department of Public Works. However, it was decided that PHNRC would have a separate or single code under the Department of Public Works as "Landscaping Supplies." The Grant money is already a separate accounting code and will remain so.

Where our equipment is stored was queried. Peter Falcone has been reviewing our storage options. The City is paying for our equipment, so it is considered City property and as such should be stored in an official city storage space. Proper inventory of our equipment is necessary, too. Peter has a listing, and Jill volunteered to inventory our equipment and supplies and ensure it matches Peter's records.

Agnus noted that a lot of our supplies were either donated or purchased personally by us. All of our loppers were purchased with City funds.

We require storage for the trays and planting pots, but not all of the trays and planting pots were purchase with City funds.

#### Status: Summer Interns and Hiring

We can have two summer interns this year due to the generous donation by a PHNRC volunteer and through funding from the Prospect Heights Park District.

Kathleen Falk has indicated she is unable to decide quickly enough to be fair to us, so she declined. Emma Boehm is still very interested and should be able to decide within a few days whether she will undertake a position at the University of Minnesota.

We will continue to go through the list of applications from last year. All applicants are very qualified and interested, but we realize that a year has passed and they may have commitments in place. If we are unable to secure an intern from this list, we will place an ad on the Chicago Environmental Network.

#### Outcome: Wild Things Conference and PHNRC Presentation of February 18, 2017

Ed reported that PHNRC presented "From Grass Roots to Deep Roots: Small Organizations with Big Ambitions" at the February 18 Wild Things Conference. It went well. We experienced good attendance for our session, and feedback from those in attendance was positive and encouraging. We hope to report similar successes in the future.

Dana said that Karl Humbert, one of our volunteers, mentioned that the Barrington group was in attendance and loved our presentation. Likewise, Agnes recently gave a presentation at the Morton Arboretum on the woodland steward program, and a few people in attendance who had attended the Conference spoke with Agnes afterward, praising our presentation. They were "blown away" with how much we have accomplished in three years.

Ed stated that the Wild Things Conference is the "Who's Who" of the natural resources community and the premiere conference for what we do. The response has been wonderful and a terrific experience. The Conference offered us a good venue to network, and we met a lot of great people. Overall it was a huge success for us given this was our first time have a presence at the Conference. We have placed Prospect Heights on the map!

Our presentation will be restructured as a Power Point document and recorded.

#### ComEd Prairie and Spring Burn

We have contacted Sara Race, Senior Environmental Compliance Specialist for ComEd. The 2016 Fall burn season was so poor that they did not get to burn all the sites they wanted to and are unable to conduct a prescribed burn of the ComEd Prairie site this spring. We are not listed on ComEd's burn list. ComEd was planning to burn 2.5 acres of the eastern portion of the seeded prairie. This could still change; however, currently, a prescribed burn is scheduled for Fall 2017.

The Forest Preserve District has started burning a lot sooner this spring season.

We were planning to put down a lot of seed at the ComEd Prairie, but now can only do focal areas. We can do plugging throughout the summer and fall and mass seeding in the fall.

#### Slough and Spring Burn Date

The Spring Burn Season may be over by April 1; therefore, we have planned a prescribed burn for the Slough on Wednesday, March 15, 2017.

Our burn permit has not yet arrived, pending questions with the EPA. Therefore, if we are unable to burn on March 13, we will strive for the week of March 20, 2017. We prefer March 15. Esa (spelling?) and Rick McAndless will be present and assisting.

We extend sincere appreciation to Peter Falcone for getting us on the City Council Agenda for March 13. If we had to wait for the next scheduled City Council Meeting, we would have missed the window of opportunity to accomplish a prescribed burn. The regular end date for prescribed burns is April 15; however, the weather has been warmer this spring season, so the date has moved up to April 1.

#### Morava Nature Center and Decision on Chipman Bridge Design Drawings

Christina Ferraro was unable to attend our meeting this evening due to a personal obligation. However, for this portion of the meeting, we contacted Christina via phone at 7:27 p.m. so Christina participated via audio.

A copy of the Chipman Bridge Design Drawings was distributed to all Commissioners and shown on the plasma screen for viewing by all attendees.

Through Sam Sobczak's phenomenal efforts, he was able to procure the architectural firm of Chipman Design in Des Plaines to provide the design work for the bridge and engineering services pro bono. Chipman did a site visit and made it a competition between their Junior Architects. Three design solutions were provided us to decide on. This is Sam's Eagle Scout Project, and he has authored it.

Agnes said this project is part of the ComEd Region Green Grant to transform an area into an interactive nature area for children. Building a bridge is meant to connect an upper and lower section where the creek bisects the plot.

Option 1 Design: Offers a bridge between the upland and lower sections with interpretative signage. Two pieces of steel each weighing 600 lbs. will be utilized as the bridge footings, so a crane is required during construction. The rest of the bridge is comprised of wood. The bridge will be brought out as a cavaliere (?). This bridge design offers a place to stand and overlook the area. Stairs down are provided to the lower section of the area.

Thought: Instead of using metal steel beams, use laminated beams. This would weigh less than steel and can be installed with manpower instead of equipment. However, bridge would have to be maintained to offer a useful life.

Option 2 Design: More simplistic. Constructed of wood with two timbers and comes down with stairs. This bridge could be fabricated with material from Home Depot and constructed on-site. Economically, it poses no problem with our budget. The side panels can be varied, but the bridge itself is all wood.

Option 3 Design: Most expensive of the three designs. Two steel beams would be fabricated and custom made. Offers a soft ramp and stairs coming down to the lower area. The stairs are long and shallow.

Design-wise, it is interesting. The expense, however, is the cost of the beam.

Question: How will the bridge be anchored? With solid three to six foot tubes. The depth of the tube depends on the structure utilized and must be placed below the freezing line in the ground.

Regarding access and the ADA, the bridge designs are functional for wheelchairs to access the bridge to enjoy the area. Crossing the bridge to get to the opposite side, however, is limited due to stairs.

Voting:

Sam's favorite is the first Design. Sam likes the overhang and interpretative sign. This bridge, however, is the hardest one to build.

Sam asked how high the beams were in Design 2? This design is the easiest to build, but not the most cost effective.

Sam mildly likes Design 3.

Pete likes the first Design because it integrates well into the current landscape and offers an overhang and interpretative sign. Doesn't turn into a bicycle ramp; 30 feet.

Once the land is restored to natural prairie, the bridge will not really be viewed. Functionally, it will disappear and blend into the landscape.

Pete does not feel it will suffer a wash-out during a flood. It will last longer than a wooden structure and is actually safer in all types of weather.

Ed favors Option 1; nothing is obstructing the flow.

Dana favors Option 1 with Option 2 as his second choice.

Jill favors Option 3 because of the arched bridge, and the height of the bridge will guarantee no wash-out.

Christina likes all three design drawings and is interested in what everyone else thinks.

The decision tonight: What direction do we take? The budget must work. The Scouts are furnishing the labor. Volunteers will also be present. We can accomplish the foundation work.

Can Public Works be present? Christina will check. PHPD can participate in the foundational work.

Procurement of engineering expertise is needed, and we expect they will be willing to donate their time and skill. The cost of required materials can be accomplished through fundraising efforts, but Dana suggested contacting Home Depot.

Christina informally presented this project to the entire PHPD Board. Three members responded and said they liked all three designs, but preference was shown for Option 3 so if the creek water does rise, the bridge has height. However, there is nothing obstructing the water flow and nothing in the water way. We have concern on the cost of the arch for Design Option 3.

We would have preferred cost estimates from Chipman prior to this evening's meeting. However, Chipman is awaiting receipt of our choices for two design options. Chipman will then provide the plan drawings and prices. Dana will then pursue the permit with IDNR, Army Corps of Engineers and the EPA.

Next Steps: We will ask Chipman Design to pursue Option 1 and provide us a variation on the cost of steel vs. laminated wood beams. Option 2 will be by default. What is the cost differential between steel and laminated wood?

Good job, Sam!

#### Donation Giving and Access on PHNRC Website

We thought of creating a Pay Pal Donation Account on the PHNRC website. To proceed, need to set up the functional part with Stephanie. There must be a trigger between our website and the City's website. Peter Falcone will speak with Stephanie about the set up and if there are any issues with our accepting donations. Our request would have to be approved by the City Council.

#### Earth Day Event – Saturday, April 22, 2017

Dana will look at the calendar and see how realistic it is to plan an Earth Day Event at the Slough on Saturday, April 22. Spring wildflowers will have started to show. The Eagle Scouts could be available as guides, and the Scouts could set up a table.

Commissioners were asked to have ideas available at our April meeting.

#### Visitors Comments:

Ed said that the recent PHNRC Journal was superb! It was incredibly well-written and poignant. Many thanks to Dana for his reflections on the Slough.

Dimitrios expressed that Design Option 3 is a romantic bridge. It doesn't take up space and provides the function along with access.

#### OTHER BUSINESS

##### Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission is scheduled for Thursday, April 6, 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 8:05 p.m.

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