CITY OF PROSPECT HEIGHTS
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES OF APRIL 6, 2017

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

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

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 in person, except Dana Sievertsen. Therefore, members voted equally that Dana would participate via phone. A quorum was present.

Meeting Minutes of March 9, 2017

The minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission of March 9, 2017 were noted with no corrections. Therefore, the meeting minutes of March 9, 2017 were approved.

OLD BUSINESS

Update: Work Day Schedules

At the most recent PHNRC workday volunteers distributed 30-plus pounds of seed after the Slough burn in the woodland area and all around the burn area. The seed distributed included grass seed and forbes.

Our area received about 8 hours of steady, drenching rainfall followed by a deluge of rain, which caused flooding in the area, so we are hoping the seed was driven down into the ground. Even if the water rose slowly, the seed would be floating in it and would be near the area where it was planted. Additionally, the seed was treaded over by volunteers distributing the seed, so that action smashed the seed into the mud. However, there is no way to assess.

Most of the flow and current is within the channel. Areas where land is located the water just rises and falls.

The next PHNRC workday will be at Heron Pond. We need to place one more erosion control blanket, seed and seed in the woodland and dry area. Buckthorn removal will occur in the corner area. There is a lot of brush that needs to be burned. However, Heron Pond has a lot of standing water, so we may move the workday to Morava Nature Center if we assess that we cannot accomplish our objective at Heron Pond.

A member asked if there was a connection between Heron Pond and the creek since the flood, which caused the water levels to rise? No. There is also no standing water on Willow Road. The section on Owen Court is mildly under water.

As a Commission, we might want to talk to the City about the MWRD project. Willow Road has not flooded since the pipe was installed. We will approach Joe Wade and either asked to be placed on the next City Council Meeting Agenda or meet with Joe. The MWRD Project is far into the future.

The next PHNRC workday will be our last brush fire and kielbasa roast for the season as we head into spring and summer.

Articles on the Slough prescribed burn of March 21, 2017 appeared in the *Daily Herald* ("Prescribed burn in Prospect Heights aims at prairie health") and the *Journal Topics* ("Volunteers Help Reenergize Sloughs at Prescribed Burn"). Our appreciation to Ed Madden for coordinating the press releases and to John Kamysz for photography.

Notice of our Slough prescribed burn already appeared in the last two City of Prospect Heights e-newsletters. Thank you, Peter Falcone!

Status Report: Seed / Greenhouse Program

Both Greenhouses are full of prairie seedlings. Fifty percent (50%) of the species are germinating. You can see the difference in propagation methods. Some species did require a form of stratification.

The purchase of a third Greenhouse will be soon and then small trays with seed will be placed there.

We will be transplanting the seedlings in one or two weeks. The rarer species of lily and fringe gentian are all growing.

Monica Mueller contacted Agnes. Monica is the new Forest Preserve District of Cook County Regional Ecologist as of December 2017. The FPCC does not have a Greenhouse Program and sometimes outsources their seeds to the Botanic Gardens. FPCC has no internal system of growing plants. Monica would like to view and assess our program, and if it is cost-effective to institute a similar Greenhouse Program by FPCC staff or volunteers. The cost to purchase one plant typically runs $2 to $3.

People in leadership positions, such as Monica's, are reaching out to us for assistance. This is a testimony to Agnes' wherewithal.

Monica will be meeting with Agnes on Wednesday, April 19 at 10:00 a.m. All Commissioners are welcome to attend the meeting. The meeting will begin at Agnes' home on Elmhurst Road, proceed to Dana's house and then the house on Marion Street to review all of PHNRC's propagation methods.

Are the oak trees growing that were planted from seed by Peter? Yes, at least 10 to 12 oak and one black oak; 30 to 40 butterfly milk weed; and hazelnuts are also growing nearby. Can the seedlings be planted? Peter said you must protect them from deer, chipmunks and squirrels wherever we plant them. Peter suggested we wait another year and then plant the trees in larger pots. We can make a workday of planting the trees once they reach 4 to 6 inches in growth. Burr oak and hickory tree seedlings have already been planted.

We have quite a few hazelnuts; maybe half a dozen growing. Peter planted 100 seeds according to recommended planting and growing practices. The hazelnuts were donated from Fermilab natural areas. They are part of the keystone shrub species, which are very valuable to wildlife and are being reintroduced into the area.

Special appreciation was noted to Agnes, Jill and volunteer Karl Humbert for their efforts in digging up native American plum trees for planting along Elmhurst Road. Karl ensured that every single plum tree was planted, which is another indication that Karl is the ultimate volunteer.

A special workday was held on March 28 to plant the plum trees on Hillside. After buckthorn removal, residents heard and saw the traffic on Elmhurst Road. Therefore, we acknowledged their concerns and offered to grow a plum thicket. The plum trees are native and spread to create a dense thicket. It will take a few years, but they grow quickly and will provide beauty plus a natural sound barrier.

Library and Park District Programs

Prospect Heights Public Library Programs

Nature Speaks: 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.

Wild Things Conference (February 18, 2017): Through our attendance at the Wild Things conference, we learned of Stephen Packard, a conservationist and restoration icon plus an absolutely captivating master storyteller. Dana had the chance to speak briefly with Steve Packard, and Steve has expressed interest in being a guest speaker. Our sincere appreciation to Rick McAndless for making the introduction with Stephen Packard possible.

Stephen will provide a presentation on January 23, 2018 on Stewardship and Committees and the impact they have on the environment. It should be a real coo!

Dana also spoke with Dr. Allison Sacerdote-Velat, a curator of herpetology at the Peggy Notebaert Museum. Dr. Sacerdote-Velat is in charge of reptiles and is currently working on a green snake study. Dr. Sacerdote-Velat is a very intelligent speaker and is positioned to speak in November or after January 2018.

A snake habitat is important for the environment, but we currently do not have enough logs for snakes to be sheltered. Snakes are actually gentle, and we do not have any poisonous snakes in the area. Karl has planted rubber mats at the Slough to see if we have green snakes. It's the best way to look for them and for Dr. Sacerdote-Velat to make an adequate assessment.

We have butterfly and frog (Kathy Brady) monitors, but not green snake. Peter spotted a three-foot brown snake by the bridge at the Slough. We should begin the practice of recording and collecting personal sightings (where, what date, weather conditions, etc.) of any snakes.

Dana commented that he has rearranged the PHNRC website and placed the listing of speakers presented to date in our Archives Section. While reviewing the listing, Dana noted that we offered a pretty amazing array of speakers.

Prospect Heights Park District Programs

Two Bird Walks are scheduled for 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.

Currently, PHNRC does not have any ideas for additional or different types of classes for the Spring and Summer.

NEW BUSINESS

City Council Budget Meeting – March 22, 2017

Jill Moskal attended the City Council Budget Meeting of March 22, 2017 to represent the PHNRC.

In attendance were Matthew Dolick, Ald. Ward 5; Stephanie Hannon, Finance Director; Mayor Nick Helmer; Pat Ludvigsen, Ald. Ward 4; Wendy Morgan-Adams, City Clerk; Rich Tibbits, City Treasurer; Joe Wade, City Administrator; and Scott Williamson, Ald. Ward 3.

The City Council must reduce the City's budget by $418,892.

PHNRC budget is located on the City's books under "Public Works, Landscaping, Supplies."

Our budget request is $11,510. The Grant of $5,000 is already in the budget and a separate line item, but PHNRC wanted an additional $6,510 for supplies.

Joe Wade commented that the PHNRC is incredibly active, and this year, they will also take the McDonald Creek work. I was unclear if Mayor Helmer was in agreement with Joe's comment.

Ald Ludvigsen queried if an intern was part of the PHNRC budget. This is the second year that the salary of an intern is donated by a PHNRC Volunteer, and the amount is $5,000. The Revenue accounting code is 011603815 for "Sponsorships and Contributions," and the intern's salary is listed under "Administration." Again, the intern's salary is paid through a donation and is considered Revenue and Expense. The Grant money is separate.

Ald. Ludvigsen thought the Grant was a one-time issue and was unaware it was continuing. The other Grant is a matching grant through ComdEd or the Park District. PHNRC applied, again, for it and received it.

The City Council recommends cutting the PHRNC budget request of $6,510 to $5,500. With the $5,000 Grant Money, the total budget is $10,500. Another recommendation is for PHNRC to receive contributions. Many people are pleased with our work, and we are considered a tremendous help to the community. Mayor Helmer felt holding a fundraiser may be a good idea.

Status: Summer Interns and Hiring

We will review the list of applications from last year and contact those individuals we felt were good candidates. We have contacted George Brigande and Kathy Machata. We interviewed George last year. Kathy is studying for her Bachelor of Arts in Urban Study and is a senior, graduating this year. Kathy is very qualified. Whoever gets back to us first will be considered. If we do not receive a favorable response, we will place an advertisement with the Chicago Environmental Network.

Jeremy Shultz, a Senior student at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, has shown strong interest and has accepted the position of volunteer intern. Jeremy lives by the Slough. Agnes will arrange his start and end dates and put a contract in place.

The intern position is 40 hours a week, 5 days a week for a total of 10 weeks. The start date is whenever the applicant is available. It would be good to stagger the start and end dates of the summer interns. The hourly wage is $11 for a total salary of $5,000. One of the intern positions is funded by the Park District and applicants will go through the PHPD's hiring process.

Slough and Spring Burn Date

Agnes expressed appreciation to all those who assisted and/or attended the Slough Spring Burn on March 21, 2017. Everything went according to plan. No roads had to be shut down. The 911 reverse call was very helpful. We did not receive any panic calls from residents. Residents actually approached us, saying they were excited about the work we are doing at the Slough.

Rick McAndless continues to provide us with outreach services, and we are very appreciative of his availability and expertise.

We are truly appreciative of Peter Falcone's efforts; his leadership is invaluable to us and in keeping everything and everyone informed and calm. We are also very thankful to the City of Prospect Heights Fire and Police Departments for their assistance and consideration.

Some sections of the Slough did not burn well due to lack of fuel, but that is fine. The woodland area burned hardly at all. If we add grasses to the area, they will provide fuel and a better burn. We could also conduct a small 200' burn in the fall.

We are concerned about eradicating the cattails, particularly by the telephone poles. Rick McAndless suggested cutting them down as much as possible before the burn and in the winter when the water is frozen.

Agnes is thinking about the Slough along the trail especially by the bridge. It's hard to cross, but people like to walk that way. Agnes would like to place stepping logs or sliver stones along the wetter parts of the Slough for better footing. However, these may float away during the next flood. We could also place them on the upper, drier portions/areas of the Slough and do a test patch by staking them to the ground.

To Note: A utility line runs across the Slough. It is from the old copper wire technology and is not a live wire. Will the City mandate replacement of these posts? No. It is a right of way, and AT&T has broad jurisdiction over the infrastructure. Maybe Federal law shows it as a protected area or it is designated for that spot, but it poses a challenge. Peter Falcone said it would cost thousands of dollars to have it removed. Peter will check into this and will advise who we may talk to.

Morava Nature Center and Chipman Bridge Design Costs

Dana received an e:mail from Micah, and Micah will be reaching out to Sam directly. We are working with the Engineering Department regarding costs related to our top pick. Micah will advise, and we anticipate hearing from him soon. We must look at what was required for the topography, structural elements and material costs. We will attach this information to our permit application for the bridge and then go before the City Council.

PHNRC seeded a lot of area at Morava Nature Center along with planting plugs and shrubs.

We asked Christina Ferraro about the top of the hill looking like it is a dumping zone with debris and aluminum trash. Christina said it was a random act, and they will remove it. This happens often in all of the parks. A suggestion was made to place a camera for wildlife and perhaps it will catch people in the act.

The top of the hill is utilized by PHPD staff as a chipping area and wood. We asked if they could consider another location., like closer to Elm Street or the new parking lot by the Library. PHPD should consider aesthetic issues, but will work on it.

Donation Giving and Access on PHNRC Website

At our last meeting, we discussed the desire to create a Pay Pal Donation Account on the PHNRC website. To proceed, we felt arranging a meeting with Stephanie for the functional part would be necessary. There must be a trigger between our website and the City's website. Our request would have to be approved by the City Council.

Currently, however, Peter Falcone advised that we may accept donations, but it cannot be through a click (Pay Pal) on our website. It is viewed as an active solicitation of funds and creates a potential for ambiguity with buying influence. The donation of the grant from the volunteer is different because the donation was made to the City. The City pays the intern, not PHNRC.

Bottom Line: We cannot solicit donations. Any donations received by the City must be earmarked for PHNRC. The City is a not-for-profit organization.

During the March 22 City Council Budget Meeting, Mayor Helmer suggested PHNRC hold a fundraiser to acquire funds for our expenses. Peter did not attend this meeting, so he is hearing this for the first time. However, if asked, he would comment and mention the 501(c)3 denotation. Then it would be viewed as a charitable donation. Peter will have to get more information.

We have created a lot of good will, so citizens may be willing to contribute. The good will we have generated also reflects mutual support.

Earth Day Event – Saturday, April 22, 2017

Dana said that PHNRC will not be hosting an activity or event on Earth Day, Saturday, April 22, 2017. There is little time to plan, so it is not practical. We could look to participating in the Prospect Heights Community Day on June 3, 2017, 12 Noon at the Police Station. We will definitely participate in the Block Party on June 24, 2017 and should start planning.

Visitors Comments:

No comments were noted by attendees present.

OTHER BUSINESS

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission is scheduled for Thursday, May 11, 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 8:04 p.m.

Jill E. Moskal, CPS
Recording Secretary

Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission