

CITY OF PROSPECT HEIGHTS
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES OF MAY 11, 2017

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

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

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, and a quorum was present.

Meeting Minutes of April 6, 2017

The minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission of April 6, 2017 were noted with no corrections. Therefore, the meeting minutes of April 6, 2017 were approved.

OLD BUSINESS

Update: Work Day Schedules

Much work needs to be accomplished at all our project sites. Our project sites are also looking very beautiful, especially around the Slough. Native plants held back in the seed bed are now blooming along with dozens of Michigan Lilies and Wild Geraniums. Agnes mentioned that Peter is assisting with herbiciding as invasive plant species need to be controlled so that they do not become dominant. Peter now works full-time, but comes out to help on his days off, which is making a huge difference.

The next few PHNRC Volunteer Workdays involve plugging plants, planting, invasive control and pulling garlic mustard. Plugging plants involves using the augur to plant seedlings in the plug trays, and transplanting involves taking the seedlings out of the germination trays and placing them in the ground. We have two interns this summer and have one or two more people to add to our volunteer base at every work day.

Status Report: Seed / Greenhouse Program

PHNRC is growing plugs for the Poplar Creek Prairie Stewards (PCPS) and Fermilab. Many have grown. We have 15,804 plants that we transplanted into trays. The Greenhouses are full!

Some of the plants we have managed for Poplar Creek Prairie Stewards and Fermilab. We acquired about 20 pounds of seed, and in exchange planted for our associate.

We have a new folding Greenhouse (20' x 12'), which is good for a period of six to eight weeks because there is still a chance of frost, and the Greenhouse allows the plants to grow at a faster rate.

The meeting with Monica Mueller, the Forest Preserve District of Cook County Regional Ecologist, on April 19, 2017 went well. Monica said it was a wonderful, educational experience to view and assess our Greenhouse Program. Monica likes everything we are accomplishing.

Monica will run the numbers, but is unsure she has the number of volunteers to make a Greenhouse Program cost effective. The Program requires a full-time watch, watering, planting, volunteer management, etc. They currently utilize the Botanic Gardens to grow their plants.

Agnes said we had experimental trays of silica sand medium, cold stratification and outside. By far the best way to germinate a seed is leaving them outside. There is nothing like Mother Nature! Next spring, we will place trays outdoors for the winter and in February/early March, we will bring the trays into the Greenhouse. The germinate rate is 90 to 100% across all species; once in the silica sand medium, we experience higher rates. What worked well this year will be done for next year.

Poplar Creek Prairie Stewards (PCPS) Special Workday – April 26, 2017

The special workday with PCPS was very nice. We are growing some of their plants for them in our Greenhouse, so 13 PCPS volunteers were present for a special workday with us to transplant seedlings into pots. Six PHNRC Volunteers were present. We filled half of the Greenhouse with the product of our workday = 8,000 plants.

Peter herbicided because he is licensed. Agnes said that Peter has done so much, and Peter works at our sites on every one of his days off.

Library and Park District Programs

Prospect Heights Public Library Programs

Nature Speaks: July 10, 2017: Dr. Abigail Derby-Lewis, Senior Conservation Ecologist and Senior Program Member of the Chicago Region at The Field Museum of Natural History will speak on "Building Resilient Communities in a Changing Climate: Why urban nature (really) matters."

Dr. Derby-Lewis works in the Keller Science Action Center, a division dedicated to translating museum science into lasting results for conservation and cultural understanding. Her work focuses on landscape conservation planning throughout the Midwest and on climate change adaptation for urban natural areas, working closely with natural resource managers at the federal, state and local levels to develop place-based adaption strategies.

Abigail is an avid climate communicator and promotes the climate conversation through speaking engagements and community engagement efforts.

September 1 - 7, 2017: Didier Nolet has a show at the Library of his paintings of the Slough. In conjunction with this show, on September 19, 2017, PHNRC Commissioners will provide a presentation entitled "Slough 101." Our presentation will focus on the Slough, its history, where we are and where we started, work accomplished to date, some of the problems and successes, our intentions for further plantings, and a question and answer session. Dana has started collecting materials and historical photos and will lay out a rough draft of the presentation. Members will be discussing preparation of this presentation and who can speak. Additionally, members spoke of getting a group photo of all of us who are part of the presentation.

November 30, 2017: Rachel Goad, Manager of Plants of Concern, headquartered at the Chicago Botanic Gardens, will present "Botanical Citizen Science, Its Impacts and How to Get Involved." A host of threats face native plants, including habitat loss, invasive species and climate change. Data is needed to adequately track plant response to these threats and to help determine appropriate conservation actions. Rachel's presentation will look at how botanical citizen science programs engage non-professional volunteers in collecting needed data. The presentation will also discuss the Plants of Concern and Project BudBurst programs, their relevance in a changing climate, and how people can get involved.

January 23, 2018: Master storyteller and restoration/conservation icon, Steven Packard, joins PHNRC for an evening of intimate conversation on how Stewardship is marking a difference in rescuing species and plant communities. There is less than 7/100ths of 1% of original nature left in Illinois. Dedicated scientists, advocates and volunteers belatedly created conservation institutions here that are now world models and are rescuing species and communities from the edge of extinction to thriving recovery. Mr. Packard's talk will take a close look at these institutions and community efforts and the difference they are making.

April 19, 2018: Allison Sacerdote-Velat, a curator of herpetology at the Peggy Notebaert Museum, will be presenting her important research on the green snake. More details are forthcoming.

Jill suggested placing an article in the Daily Herald on the Nature Speaks' Programs one week in advance of the scheduled date to generate interest and participation.

Prospect Heights Park District Programs

The first Bird Walk of the Spring season is scheduled for this Saturday, May 13, 2017 at 7:30 a.m. conducted by Mary Lou Mellon and Lee Ramsey of the Bird Conservation Network (BCN). They really know their birds and have a spotting scope. There are a tremendous amount of birds, and the migration just keeps getting better.

Recent Website Renovations

Dana recently renovated the PHNRC website where he created a separate page for Nature Speaks and a link to view past speakers. We've been very fortunate to have offered the public a wealth of informative and dynamic speakers.

Dana has also placed a Video Gallery link on the Home Page. The Morton Arboretum's "Woodland Stewardship Program" is shown, and coming soon will be the prairie restoration video and prescribed burn. Dana removed the link to the prescribed burn page, but left the page in the background. We can activate the link whenever we need it.

Also on our Home Page is a link to PHNRC Presentations. Currently, the Presentations listed are: The PHNRC Project Accounting 2016, our presentation to the City Council in July 2016; the PHNRC plan for restoration of the Slough; the Hey and Associates report on the Prospect Heights Wetlands; the PHNRC plan for implementing the Hey Report Recommendations, Somerset Park Design Proposal by Sean McMillion, and PHNRC Wild Things Presentation.

All Publications and Calendar are current.

A menu item for current "Projects" has been added, and Dana is working on completing information on each of our projects.

Ed suggested we also have a menu item for "In the News" and provide a link to the various newspaper articles, even if they are only .pdf copies. Ed will put this together.

NEW BUSINESS

Status: Summer Interns and Hiring

PHNRC has hired two summer interns – Jeremy Shultz, who lives in Prospect Heights by the Slough, and Aaron Phalin. Jeremy will start on Monday, May 13, 2017. Aaron will start on Monday, June 12 and can work into September.

Duties for the interns: Aaron will be herbiciding, and Jeremy will be conducting plant identification to keep our records current. It is not feasible for Jeremy to obtain an herbicide license, but more beneficial for him to participate in the formal training with the Cook County Forest Preserve District.

Our fire did not carry through very well at the Slough, so there are plenty of buckthorn resprouts that need to be herbicided. Jeremy will manage. We put down a lot of grasses right after the burn so we will have more fuel for the next prescribed burn.

Agnes said if Commissioners have time during the week to support either or both summer interns, your time is appreciated. The summer interns will work Monday to Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

PHNRC was in receipt of an excellent applicant list with many young people still available and still interested in working with us.

We conducted the interview of Aaron Phalin via Skype, and his interview was outstanding. In the two years that Dana has conducted these interviews, it was his opinion that Aaron is the best prospect PHNRC has ever had. Aaron's baseline knowledge is very high, he has a ton of field experience, is intellectually curious and has a well-defined thought process. Aaron worked last summer with the Tall Grass Prairie and has an Herbicide License. Aaron also manages Lawrence University's sustainable vegetable garden and researched and changed his school's composting program by using micro-organisms, utilizing the school's cafeteria as a local source. Aaron mentioned wanting to see the Lily.

Agnes and Dana requested other Commissioners that if they have time during the week to please come out and spend an hour or two with the interns for support and education. The interns work Monday through Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Agnes is with them for two hours in the morning.

Our sincere appreciation to Christina Ferraro for allowing us to utilize the PHPD headquarters for the interviews and for also participating in and providing her feedback of the candidate interviews.

Morava Nature Center and Chipman Bridge Design Costs

PHNRC received the engineering estimates for construction of the bridge design we chose. The engineering firm would have to place a foundation of piers for the bridge on both sides of the creek. The foundation includes the structural steel required for the span. Materials alone would cost \$17,000. The total best guess cost of materials and labor is \$40,000, which is cost-prohibitive. Our second bridge design cost is between \$25,000 and \$30,000. Dana told Chipman we will have our Board Meeting and talk about alternatives and options.

We next spoke with Christina Ferraro. A resident on the North end of the Nature Center has an earthen bridge, and he is interested in us renovating the bridge for him in lieu of an easement to be used in conjunction with the program. However, if we receive an easement, but the current owner sells the property, the next owner may not want to do it. In the meantime, there are problems with the culvert, and the bridge was collapsing, so the current resident pulled it all apart.

Next, Commissioners discussed the probability of a suspension bridge. It would be constructed with four posts at angles that oppose each other on both sides of the creek and two cables running in-between. The piers have to be 15 feet deep with 16" sonitudes. Quite a lot of work. The trick is getting a contractor down to the area to install the piers.

Sam crafted a letter to send to Chipman, stating our sincere appreciation for their generosity in time, interest and support, but we are unable to proceed with the project. However, would Chipman be willing to run the possibility of a suspension bridge by the Engineering firm? We are waiting to hear back from them.

A suspension bridge could be built by the Scouts with cables, loops and our expertise. It could be done, but there remains the cost of having the four posts installed.

If none of these ideas come to fruition, Sam will change his Eagle Scout Project and create the interpretative signage on the trails.

Lastly, Chipman sent Dana a link to a company that takes apart old bridges, restores them and installs them. We still have the pier problem, however, which is impractical and costs so much money! Let's not give up on the idea.

Prospect Heights Community Day

PHNRC will be participating in Prospect Heights Community Day on Saturday, June 3, 2017 from 9:00 a.m. to 12 Noon at the Fire and Police Stations. We are refurbishing our presentation board and will provide coupons for prairie or native plants. We do not have seed packets. Jill volunteered to manage the table for the day.

Kids' Work Days – Prospect Heights Kids' Care and MacArthur Junior High School Science Class

Prospect Heights Kids' Care was created by two Prospect Heights' residents (women) to seek volunteer opportunities for children that have an educational component and have a duration of three hours. We have arranged a preliminary date with this organization for Sunday, June 25, 2017. We would choose one area of a project near the creek and plug the shoreline. It is a nice open area and planting would be easy work.

After our presentation to the 5th Grade Science Class at MacArthur Junior High, the class is now looking for something they kids could do. We can have the students stabilize the shoreline at the Slough by planting short rushes. The students are only available for one hour. PHNRC will pre-drill holes for the short rushes, and we will finish up after them. We will then conduct a walk, walking path, green frogs, so the students may see what results their efforts will bring.

PHPD Block Party

PHNRC will participate in the Prospect Heights Park District Block Party on Saturday, June 24, 2017. We will have the same information sheet as last year and have actual plants the resprout. At the June PHNRC Meeting, members will discuss timing and design of our table.

Resident Intrusion into PHNRC Projects

At the ComEd Seeded Prairie and immediately behind Lynn's house, we put in a tremendous amount of effort in planting 1,000 plants. Recently, someone mowed an area about 75 yards long and randomly cut an "O" shape in what we planted. Dana provided a Power Point presentation with photos of the destruction.

The plugs are mostly intact. However, this is a huge set back, and our project took a hit. The actual prairie has lost 16 to 17 feet of what was planted, not to mention the loss in volunteer hours to plant, weed, and brush control. It is a total shame.

Also, a resident on the corner keeps extending his yard by directing his mower into the Seeded Prairie. There is a 15 feet easement that he has claimed as is. Also, someone herbicided the dandelions, which caused damage to the native plants.

We have instances of this section of prairie in photos.

PHNRC talked at length with Christina, and ordinances are in place to prevent this. How do we incorporate this information? Send a letter to residents that live near our projects and inform them of the ordinances and fines for violation. Include an educational component. There can be consequences. It is a multi-prong attack. Put signage out at the project sites. Reference the fact that there are ordinances and violators will be fined. Say this in a way that is not off-putting is a fine line to tread.

The ultimate question: How do we want to go about presenting this information? We could place a QR code to enable the public to look directly at the ordinance from their iPhone. It is important to have a reference to the ordinance. Puts it in front of you.

The intention is to place this on our website and create another page. It will take you to the QR Code and our web page. The ordinances are listed on the Park District website. For more information, link to the actual ordinance.

Approval for Purchasing Signage

What permission do we need from the City and Park District to proceed?

When we get it to a final version, do we need to have it approved by the PHPD and City? Yes. We need it generic and endemic to our organization.

We will meet with Christina, put recommendations together and go back. Two trail markers and one sign from the City and remaining signs from the Park District.

The Morava, Slough and Prairie Trail Signs are post driven into the ground (5 inches wide, 8 inches high on a three-foot pole) that will identify the trail. The sign will have a GPS marker to our map on our website. In small print, list our website address.

Members also discussed having signs that state "Do Not Mow, Restoration in Progress." The signs would be attached to a prefabricated post and would be 3 feet tall.

Members discussed how many signs and where to place the signs at our restoration sites. We're currently thinking four big signs and six trail markers are needed.

Cost: Dana received two estimates.

Twenty signs:	\$374.00
Eleven Trail Markers (aluminum signs, Project signs, large)	\$772.00
Twenty Trail Markers (\$4.33 ea.)	\$ 86.00
Posts:	Between \$124 and \$133
Total Cost:	<u>\$1,356.87</u>

Signs at the Morava site are paid from the Grant and total \$255. We're looking to confirm \$250 from the Police Department.

Do we need pricing from someone else? We have money in the budget for the signs. Would have to be used for City Signs. Sign content would have to be approved per Peter Falcone.

Slough Utility Line

The utility line located at the Slough is owned by AT&T. Spoke with the head of maintenance and scheduled to come out tomorrow to take a dead line out. Other lines are "live" wires.

Feasibility of moving the live lines. Accomplished through AT&T's Engineering Dept. Manage poles or bore into the Slough. Aesthetic purposes so City has to pay. Don't think moving the poles or directional boring is cost-prohibitive. Maybe replace the poles with osprey poles.

Visitors Comments:

Mark Kostecki, a Prospect Heights resident at 410 East Camp McDonald Road, reached out to Peter, and Peter suggested he attend our monthly meeting.

Mr. Kostecki wants to know what he can do to help the monarchs and has an extensive garden that was planted by his wife, who is now deceased. He is trying to maintain the garden. Could we suggest some plants?

The garden must have a host plant for the monarch to lay eggs in. Milkweeds are common to this area, and come in four or five different species, depending on soil, light, etc.

Agnes and Dana will visit Mr. Kostecki's property and put together three to four pages of our recommendations

OTHER BUSINESS

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission is scheduled for Thursday, June 8, 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 8:28 p.m.

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