

CITY OF PROSPECT HEIGHTS  
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES OF JULY 13, 2017

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

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, and a quorum was present.

Meeting Minutes of June 8, 2017

The minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission of June 8, 2017 were noted with no corrections. Upon motion made and seconded, the meeting minutes of June 8, 2017 were approved.

OLD BUSINESS

Update: Work Day Schedules for the Summer

Agnes stated that at the PHNRC volunteer workday of July 2, over 1,500 plants were planted at Heron pond. Very nice work day.

This Sunday, July 13, the PHNRC volunteer workday located has been changed from the Slough to the Morava Nature Center because the Slough is under water due to the heavy rains this previous week. We will be planting and eradicating invasives.

Agnes forwarded a video of the creek in an overloaded state to illustrate the force of a rain event on the plantings.

At some point, everything backed up. It is all interconnected. The Slough flows into McDonald Creek which flows to the Des Plaines River. When the Des Plaines River crests and the water pools onto the road, everything backs up. The tributaries eventually flow to the Gulf of Mexico.

No amount of pipes or plants will absorb that amount of water quickly.

We don't know the source of blockages. It could be downstream as well. With our experience with creek walks, there are often some significant blockages. Can we reach out to the McDonald Creek Commission and seeing about resurrecting the surveys especially with the issue of the Slough and Elmhurst Road. That could be complicated by any major blockages. The Des Plaines River overflowed onto River Road. If it is strictly relying on outflow into the river, it takes a while, but Elmhurst Road was an instant. If there was a blockage between Walnut Woods and Woodland Creek, that could be a factor.

Now we see the 100-year floods occurring every year!

A lot of the plants we planted, such as switch grass and cord grass, survived. They are aggressive grasses, so they are our last defense to help prevent further erosion. The interns planted these grasses.

An extra optional PHNRC volunteer workday is planned for Monday, July 17 at St. Alphonsus starting at 5:30 p.m. with the Garden & Landscaping Ministry.

St. Al's contacted the PHNRC regarding the wet depression in the front of their property, which measures one-fourth to one-half of an acre. They have volunteers that attend their Monday evening workdays.

The Ministry has mature prairie plants that they wish to be planted to extend this wetland area. Eventually, the school children and parish ministry volunteers will be maintaining the St. Al's wetland, planting plants, seeding, etc. The PHNRC will lend knowledge, expertise and assistance. We can conduct a burn within our project scope, but the wetland area is totally St. Al's responsibility. They will be contributing things to the project to off-set the costs and will be volunteering to help with the planting, transplanting plugs when it is time, and seed collection. We will share with the seed collection process. It is a win-win situation, just like Tully Park!

PHNRC was contacted by the Rotary Club with a request to attend a current or future PHNRC workday in July. They want to volunteer with us. Agnes will advise.

The Taylor Creek plants (quantity: over 2,000 plants from the Grant and from the Heron Pond Project) have arrived for Heron Pond and Morava Nature Center. We received over 2,000 plants from the Grant and from the Heron Pond Project. They are all planted except for 30 water lilies. The summer interns did a great job, putting on waders and getting into the water to plant.

All were planted immediately right after they were received. We've planted over 8,000 plants with 15,000 left to plant.

John asked if we have received any feedback from the residents. Agnes said the feedback has all been positive. However, one resident is concerned about the one very narrow stretch of land and fears that if nothing is done, it will erode. This narrow piece of land is a path for the creek to connect to the pond. The concern is that a sea wall would be more effective than the water prairie grasses.

Let's just try it for one or two growing seasons. There is no forced water coming in to wipe it away. It is an isolated pond.

At the Morava Nature Center, the areas getting the massive amount of erosion at are areas where there are still trunks of trees imbedded in the creek bank so you have an eddy in front and an eddy behind the tree trunks, which dig really deep and forms a pocket for water to collect. You don't have the same water force at Heron Pond as at Morava Nature Center.

We feel confident in stabilizing the shore of Heron Pond. Pond lilies are aquatic vegetation, which slows down the water from reaching the shoreline. They act like a shock absorber. This would not work in a creek situation. The Park District funded this.

On Sunday, July 9, Dana and Agnes participated in the Poplar Creek Stewards volunteer workday to assist them with their planting. PCPS assisted us with plugging 15,000 native plants, so we wanted to return the favor. Commissioners plugged 400 plus carex plugs in very remote areas near the dam.

#### PHPD Annual Block Party – June 24, 2017

PHNRC participated in the June 24, 2017 PHPD Annual Block Party. It was a lot of fun and a nice way to be visible to our community. The event was very well organized and a great time.

We signed-up 68 new subscribers for e:mail receipt of the PHNRC Journal and workday notices. Most of the people who visited our booth were already signed up. We received interesting feedback, such as how great the plants were that we distributed last year. The plants (six-pack) we distributed this year were new species. A lot of people expressed appreciation, stating that what we are doing is making a difference and that they walk the Slough paths all the time. It was wonderful to hear these kind words.

One person who signed up at the Block Party attended our last workday. We are hopeful to see more dividends at future workdays and when the weather cools.

Next year, plan more projects, have better signage to be visibly more appealing and prepare more plants to give away. We distributed 800, six-packs of prairie plants this year.

Dana expressed appreciation to all Commissioners for their assistance in planning, preparing and operating our booth.

#### City of Prospect Heights 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade

Members provided their comments on our participation in the City's 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade.

Utilizing John's Volkswagen Beetle (1965) was an attraction. We feel we should have better signage. Our logo was a bit small for decorations. We should also make our "float" more visually appealing.

John thought it was not environmentally sound to distribute our postcard in a plastic bag. The simpler, the better. We also must purchase more candy or gum for distribution to the crowds.

A lot of our volunteers joined us, up to eight people.

A lot of people approached us to say they enjoy what we are doing for the community and they particularly like the walking paths at the Slough. It's nice to know we make a difference.

Hebron Presbyterian Church put forth a lot of effort in welcoming our town and planning a great lunch after the parade. Their generosity was truly heart-warming. It was perfectly organized.

For the July 4, 2018 parade, it would be great if we had our own float with music playing with Silphiums (four prairie Silphiums)!

### Kids' Care Work Day of June 25, 2017

The Kids' Care Work Day of Sunday, June 25, 2017 was truly amazing! Children between the ages of 2 to 13 years attended with their parents and grandparents to plant prairie plants along the top of the McDonald Creek at the Morava Nature Center. We were in awe of how quickly and diligently the children worked.

Agnes started the workday with a brief introduction, then lunch, planting, an educational piece while walking the trail. The kids get to come back to the Morava Nature Center through the years and see the fruits of their labor. Preview of what the facility will be.

You got a preview of what the facility will be. The children were using the things that were there, like sitting and walking on the log and standing on the tribal center, looking at insects, pointing at things, and asking a ton of questions.

Future workdays with adolescents are planned with the Boy Scouts at Morava, and the Kids' Care would like to do another workday in the Fall, perhaps seed collection. MacArthur Middle School would also like to do seed collection in the fall.

It would be great to have high school kids involved. John has tried multiple times with the Hersey SOS Program and Environmental Science Teacher, but to no avail. They have not returned John's calls.

We're aware that the faculty is involved with sports after school. So much going on! If we could just get our feet in the door with any high school, talk with them and get them to volunteer, they will want more, like MacArthur Middle School. Perhaps we should try another contact with a high school over the winter months.

### NEW BUSINESS

#### Summer Interns

The summer is just whizzing by! A week from tomorrow or July 14, will be Jeremy Shultz's last day. Aaron will be with us just four more weeks until he must return to college. The work the summer interns have accomplished is extraordinary. They have accomplished so much, it is like having an extra volunteer PHNRC workday every week all summer long. We have watched our two summer interns grow, progress and accumulate knowledge. They are talking about plants in Latin names, question Agnes and from their very first days with us. We can trust them to go out and get the invasives without identifying the plants for them. They know the native plants, the control methods, the reasoning and the priority.

Peter has experienced workdays with our summer interns, and he is impressed with their work ethic and quest for knowledge. Even rain does not deter them from working. They organize and utilize their time well through education, filling trays, organizing seed, etc.

Dana said this is something he would like to see continue year after year with our interns. We must ensure the program is managed correctly. The dividends are huge. The amount of work accomplished is unbelievable. Every single site we have is in a much better place thanks to our two summer interns.

They are going back to school with a completely different perspective on everything because of this experience. To know that you have touched someone's life and given them basically professional experience at such a young age it changes their world view and perspective on everything.

The summer interns are working together on an article for the PHNRC Journal.

Next Wednesday, July 19, we would like to schedule a prairie hopping day. We'd like to take our two interns to Poplar Creek Prairie in Hoffman Estates, view the gravel hill prairie (335 acres of prairie) and then the Schulenberg Prairie in Wheaton, Illinois. We would start at 7:00 a.m. and return at 3:00 p.m. Pack a lunch.

The idea is that our interns have been working at a rudimentary level and haven't had a chance to see a fully mature prairie. Our experience has been this prairie tour illuminates the whole experience and provides an opportunity to see results from 20 years from now.

#### Morava Nature Center and Eagle Scout Project

##### Morava Nature Center

Chipman Architects have basically said they are not willing to build a suspension bridge because they do not want to accept the liability. They suggested placing stepping boulders in the creek. We are considering this right now, working with a landscaper that works with the Park District and garnering quotes and information on the feasibility of this feat.

Sam contacted Dana. He is under a deadline to get his Eagle Scout Project underway. We will try to sync it up so he can be part of the ongoing discussion with the landscaper. Sam's focus has shifted to the trail, lining the trail, putting up the interpretative signage and creating the pebble rock crossing. What is Sam's deadline? We want to ensure his Eagle Scout Project is successful.

The Park District came through with a bulldozer and cleaned up all the rubble and debris that was dumped. The path is 6-1/2 feet wide, and it is now delineated and covered with chips. The path is now ready for the Scouts to line it out, and they can work on the other side of the path.

Discussion about the interpretative signage must be accomplished quickly. Our grant should be extended by a certain time within the next few months, so we must set a deadline and work together on the interpretative signage.

About \$7,500 has been expended on the project to date, out of \$20,000, so we have \$12,000 remaining for the stepping boulders, signage, plants, shrubs, trees, labels for the trees, information on bird species, etc.

Commissioners should think about the interpretative signage for the Morava Nature Center and come to the next meeting to discuss and finalize. The thought process is: What should the interpretative signs say? What is the type to build and cost? How much signage and placed where? The interpretative signs need to hold up in the weather. We will brainstorm on this project at our next meeting.

Christina has provided us with leads on weather-hardy interpretative signs. Can we use chalk boards or signs that can be changed out?

What type of interactive features other than the tribal area, (i.e., hollowed out logs, seat logs, etc.) can be installed for the Morava Nature Center?

Com Ed is coming out on July 18 at 8:30 a.m. to the Morava Nature Center. The PR arm of ComEd to look at the progress at Morava for the Green Regions Open lands grant. They will be taking pictures of all their projects. The meeting should last 15 minutes. Dana will have available before and after photos of the site to hand to ComEd.

#### PHNRC Slough Presentation for Nature Speaks in September

To date, Jill, John, Dana, Agnes and Ed are participating in the September 19 presentation.

Dana will prepare a matrix as a guideline. The presentation will focus on the history of the Slough and the work we have accomplished.

Dana visited with Didier Nolet to see the progress of his paintings of the Slough. The show will be hung on August 31 and opens on September 1st. A reception will be held on September 7 with a brief presentation of the paintings. The show runs from September 1 to the end of the month.

After our own presentation on the Slough on September 19, Rachel Goad of Plants of Concern is November 30, 2017; Steven Packard is scheduled for January 23, 2018; Allison Sacerdote-Velat, a curator of herpetology at the Peggy Notebaert Museum, will be presenting her important research on the green snake on April 19, 2018; and Dr. Gerould Wilhelm on June 28, 2018.

#### Journal Articles

Jill will write an article on the City of Prospect Heights 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade and our participation. An article will be written on Dr. Abigail Derby-Lewis and her Climate Change presentation of July 10, 2017. The next installment piece on Dr. Hilty will appear.

Ed felt that Dr. Derby-Lewis' presentation was spectacular. It was a compelling presentation, a class act. The presentation was well-attended by 50 to 55 people.

Jill suggested, once again, that we place an article in the *Daily Herald* one to two weeks before the date of each presentation, and Ed suggested also placing a summary article after the presentations.

#### Chicago Wilderness Force of Nature Award

Agnes will be receiving the Chicago Wilderness Force of Nature Award at the Chicago Botanic Gardens on July 27 at 3:00 p.m. The Force of Nature Award highlights bold and exceptional work being accomplished on behalf of nature in our region. Agnes was one of 57 nominees.

#### Visit of Dr. John Hilty

Dr. John Hilty is coming for a visit. He is the author of Illinois Wildflowers.org, which is a website that everyone uses. He is a brilliant genius. He wants to come out to this region and see the natural areas and photograph these areas, like Volo Bog, which consists of conservative plant species not seen anywhere else.

Arriving the evening of August 1 at 8:00 p.m. On August 2, Hilty will visit Volo Bog, Spring Bluff Fen and the gravel hill Prairie at Poplar Creek. Agnes desires to have the site Stewards available to meet with Dr. Hilty. Then on August 3, Dr. Hilty will tour all our sites.

#### Visitor's Comments

No comments were generated by our audience.

OTHER BUSINESS

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission is scheduled for Thursday, August 10, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. The venue for our August meeting may either be the Morava Nature Center or Izaak Walton Nature Area.

ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business to come before the Commissioners, and the meeting adjourned at 8:01 p.m.

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