

CITY OF PROSPECT HEIGHTS
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES OF MAY 10, 2018

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

Attendees: Peter Falcone, Assistant to the City Administrator

OPENING ITEMS

Welcome to Seth Marcus

Agnes Wojnarski, Chairperson, introduced Seth Marcus as our new Commissioner.

Seth has been a dedicated resident of Prospect Heights for 31 years with a lifelong commitment to nature, the environment, gardening and the enjoyment of the outdoors.

Seth holds a Bachelor's Degree in Biology and has pursued additional courses in animal behavior and plant identification. Seth is also a Certified Prescribed Burn Crew member.

Agnes noted that Seth is a regular dedicated volunteer with PHNRC on both scheduled workdays and Wednesdays with Agnes and has a personal mission to keep the Nature Preserve clear of trash.

All PHNRC warmly welcomed Seth Marcus!

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. A quorum was present.

Ed Madden joined the meeting at 7:10 p.m.

Meeting Minutes of Regular Meeting of April 12, 2018

The minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission of April 12, 2018 were approved. No corrections were noted.

OLD BUSINESS

Update: Workday Schedules

Agnes provided an update on workday schedules.

Our previous workday on May 6, 2018 involved clearing garlic mustard and planting celandine poppies especially on the creek banks in the Nature Preserve. Agnes stated we removed 30 bags full of garlic mustard.

Agnes herbicided a large quantity of invasive goutweed. At the next workday or with the interns, we will continue to herbicide this prolific invasive plant.

The Nature Preserve looks great. Everything we planted and seeded is growing.

Our future workdays will be at the Slough, Nature Preserve and other sites as the growing season begins.

Both Peter and Agnes have been going out on their own to herbicide Canada Thistle on the west side of the seeded prairie. This invasive is everywhere in the seeded prairie. Now is a perfect time to get it before it really starts to grow and mature. The Slough also needs to be herbicided.

John mentioned a couple of large downed trees on the path and across the creek at Heron Pond. There is also a ton of garlic mustard in the area where we previously planted.

We'll plan our next workday at Heron Pond and alert the MWRD to remove the downed tree that fell across the pond.

Our neighbor at 102 North Pine Street spoke with us about the foot traffic in the Preserve. It is a wonderful thing that so many people utilize the trail in the Nature Preserve, but our neighbor feels his privacy has been removed.

He reminded us of our promise that after clearing buckthorn, we would plant trees in its place. We will transplant elderberry because it grows fast, provides a good cover or screen and is a good food source for the birds.

Our neighbor plans to speak with the Mayor and the Park District.

Seth inquired of the long-term plan of the City placing yard waste in the Nature Preserve. Dana said it is Park District's plan. Members discussed planting hazelnut as a shield to the waste dumpsite. We've already redesigned the trail to avoid it.

Seth also mentioned the quantity of rubble scattered around the site. Agnes stated that the rubble was dumped by residents and contractors. We have suggested alternative sites to the Park District. Their compromise is to bring path up from the tennis courts and grow a shield around the debris pile. Eventually the road will be cut off. We must live with it.

Will the ComEd prairie be mowed soon? Dana will meet with Mark tomorrow morning at 10:00 a.m. The prairie has grown so quickly, it is difficult to tell where the mow path begins.

We are experiencing issues with the Milkweed (Swamp Milkweed and Butterfly Weed) this year. It has germinated late; only 20% has germinated. Milkweed is the gateway prairie plant.

Monitoring

Monitoring our project sites for the results of our efforts is important. At the ComEd prairie, quadrat samples must be taken. Dana asked if anyone has time to do this activity.

Dana is working with Mary Lou Mellon and Cyndi Lubecke to monitor birds and keep the list up to date; the list keeps growing.

Water monitoring is also an important activity we must plan to do.

Dana asked if Jill could reach out to Cathy O'Brady for Frog monitoring. Cathy has been performing this activity at the Slough.

Our Butterfly monitor is Chris Mest, an arborist, who monitors the seeded prairie and the Slough.

Dana inquired if we need to produce a General Site Report to the City this year. Peter stated only if the Council directs us to; therefore, we will produce a General Site Report if we are requested to do so. A Special Report is expected later. Agnes felt we could outline the positive results of our effort, our current objectives and future plans in our presentation on the initiative to increase public access to the wetlands plan.

Status: Seed/Greenhouse Program

Agnes said we have transplanted 20,000 seedlings. We will have a special workday with Poplar Creek Prairie Stewards (PCPS) on Wednesday, May 16, 2018 from 9:00 a.m. to 12 Noon to transplant seedlings.

Agnes said all the plants are out of the Greenhouse, and Agnes will separate the plants for planting either in the woodland or prairie. The plants that were overwintered had an 80-90% survival rate, so we have a lot of plants in their second or third year that are ready to go.

Agnes said we have a lot of stock and a lot of plants. Agnes will assemble six-packs of prairie plants for the Prospect Heights Block Party. The plants will be something that was not given away at the previous two Block Parties and will contain plants that can be planted in the same area.

Dana mentioned they have a resident woodchuck, so have placed fencing around the plants for protection.

Earth Week and Special Workday – April 19-22, 2018

The Nature Speaks presentation by Dr. Allison Sacerdote-Velat on green snakes on April 19 was very informative and a nice lead into our Earth Week events.

The special early Bird Walk on April 21, 2018 was quite fun and a good time to see a lot of birds and ducks.

Our workday on April 22, 2018 was successful. We started with a walk around the Slough then transplanted plants, as well as planted trees around the Slough. We concluded with a delicious lunch. We had 13 to 14 participants, two of which were from PCPS. We did not have any residents from the community, so we must work on that fact.

Plan to Increase Public Access to the Wetlands

Dana said it is our objective to provide a rough plan to Alderman Larry Rosenthal and for the June City Council Meeting on how to increase public access to the Wetlands.

Dana met with Mark Roscoe of the Prospect Heights Public Works Department. They walked around the Slough and talked about two scenarios. Mark has a full schedule, but will clear some time for all of us to sit down with Mark and discuss how to do this. The crux of the plan is to focus on the trails and try to get a boardwalk installed and slanted towards what we have done at the Nature Preserve with interactive signage and plant identification signs.

John suggested placing the boardwalk through the grasses where the current bridge is located, past the observation deck of Izaak Walton Park and continue it northwest around the back of Agnes' home. Mark is making us some maps that we can work with and hand to us with his files.

Regarding Hillcrest Lake, Mark has some ideas. We will table that discussion for now.

Dana requested Commissioners to think about the charge and our ideas for improving it.

Library/Park District Program: Nature Speaks Program

The Nature Speaks Program scheduled on April 19, 2018 with Dr. Allison Sacerdote-Velat and her presentation on the "Smooth Green Snake – Conservation in Northern Illinois" went well and was a good talk.

Our next Nature Speaks Program is scheduled on June 28, 2018 with Dr. Gerould Wilhelm, Director of Research at the Conservation Research institute in Cedarburg, Wisconsin. His presentation is on "Consilience, Concinnity and the Way."

Dana has contacted a few people for our next speakers' line-up. He also has a potential new speaker for the Fall.

A Bird Walk is scheduled for this Saturday morning, May 12, 2018. Outstanding birder and Prospect Heights resident, Cyndi Lubecke, will lead the Bird Walk as both Lee Ramsey and Mary Lou Mellon are recovering from health issues. PHNRC will be present to assist Cyndi. John said he will bring his scope.

Currently, 11 people are registered for the Bird Walk. However, we have a 58% chance of rain. The Prospect Heights Park District will contact people via phone by 3:00 p.m. on Friday, May 11, if the Bird Walk is cancelled due to inclement weather.

Agnes felt that since there was a slight chance of lightening and thunder the Bird Walk should proceed as scheduled and only cancel or stop the Bird Walk if lightening is present. Dana said that the Bird Walk would not be cancelled on a forecast of only a slight chance of dangerous weather conditions.

Nature Preserve – Interpretative Signage

Dana has encountered a problem with the new PHPD logo. The colors of the new PHPD logo are lost in the background color of our interpretative signs making it difficult to discern the PHPD logo. The colors of the PHPD logo are close to matching our background color, so the PHPD logo colors should be enhanced. Dana will rectify this problem with Christina. Once resolved, the PHPD logo will be applied to all the interpretative signs.

We have spoken with Chris Stinet at Emerald Landscaping regarding the walking stones. He is working on plans to stabilize the stones. Chris felt the stones were placed too close together, causing them to undercut each other. He also felt another stone should have been placed in the mix. Chris will reset two of the stones deep into the shoreline with rocks underneath and will add another small stone in the middle of the walking stone set.

Chris may need to utilize a small Bobcat; however, he may simply use muscle-power and leverage. Chris is aware that we need to have this situation corrected soon.

Insecticides – Informational Hand-Out Distribution

Peter did a great job on the one-page (backside front) insecticide informational hand-out entitled “What are Neonicotinoids Pesticides and How Do Neonicotinoids Work?” The hand-out has been printed and was distributed at our Earth Day Workday. Gardeners appreciated receipt of this information.

Dana will send the document to Peter Falcone for printing and placing in the brochure holders in the lobby of City Hall. We will also print more copies for distribution at the Prospect Heights Community Days on June 2, 2018 and the Prospect Heights Block Party on June 3, 2018.

NEW BUSINESS

Website Updates

Dana has upgraded our website. All videos in the video gallery have been restored and are ready for viewing. Also, all the Nature Speaks’ Program videos are also posted on our website, and they are Rachel Goad, Plants of Concern Manager; Stephen Packard, Restoration/Conservation Icon, and Dr. Allison Sacerdote-Velat, Smooth Greensnake Conservation in Northern Illinois. The link is on our homepage and under the Nature Speaks menu tab.

Dana is in the process of updating all the PHNRC Projects.

Dana also asked and received permission from David Ludlow to utilize a few of his bird photos in the banner at the top of our website.

Status: Summer Interns

Jeremy Shultz will begin on May 21, 2018, and Gabi Szyniec will start May 29, 2018.

Gabby is excited to start her summer internship with us and has already contacted the Cook County Forest Preserve District for training. The CCFP offers PHNRC intern training where invasives are reviewed and a general introduction to interning is provided. Gabby also plans to obtain an herbicide license.

Prospect Heights Community Days – June 2, 2018

Jill and Dana will manage the PHNRC table at the Prospect Heights Community Days on Saturday, June 2, 2018 from 9:00 a.m. to 12 Noon. Dana will bring the new boards, our postcards and the insecticide informational sheet.

We will have two tables and two tents. Agnes will need assistance assembling six-packs of native plants.

Prospect Heights Park District Block Party – June 23, 2018

The Prospect Heights Park District Block Party will be held at the Gary Morava Center on Saturday, June 23, 2018 from 2:00 – 10:30 p.m. All Commissioners are requested to attend and assist, especially with assembling our spot at 1:00 p.m. Peter may not be able to be present due to his work schedule. Seth must check his schedule.

We will, again, have two tables and two tents, and distribute copies of our postcards and the insecticide informational sheet. We'll have our two boards and give away six-packs of native plants.

Jill queried if we could have photos of our project sites, birds and ducks at the Slough, etc., scrolling on Dana's PC. Dana's PC is utilized for attendees to register for the PHNRC Journal. However, Patrick suggested utilizing a digital photo album.

John mentioned that the Hillcrest Lake residents host a Block Party. Members wondered if it was only for residents.

McDonald Creek Commission Meeting – April 24, 2018

Jill Moskal attended the McDonald Creek Commission (MCC) meeting of April 24, 2018 for PHNRC representation.

The McDonald Creek Commission is still planning to make their presentation at the June 11 City Council Workshop Meeting. Their presentation will focus on their purpose and objectives, primarily educating the public and having residents take responsibility and ownership of the McDonald Creek.

The McDonald Creek brochure has been produced but members still need to distribute it to residents.

A large portion of the MCC April meeting was devoted to discussing creek bank erosion and the destabilization of the Camp McDonald bridge. Members felt that the MCC should first approach Mark Roscoe of Public Works and Joe Wade, City Administrator, with their findings and recommendations then request the City to send a proposal to MWRD. MCC strongly felt that recommendations to MWRD must come from the City and not MCC.

The next scheduled McDonald Creek Commission Meeting is Tuesday, May 22, 2018 at 6:00 p.m. in City Hall Chambers.

Consideration: PHNRC Meeting Location – May, June, July, August and September

Dana proposed an outdoor meeting location, weather permitting, for the PHNRC meeting dates of June 14, July 12, August 9 and September 13, 2018. A vote showed all in favor but one. Therefore, the motion was moved.

Members discussed various outdoor locations, such as the Izaak Walton League pavilion, the picnic table at Heron Pond and Claire Lane Park, as well as different areas of town where we want to start new projects. The outdoor location must be a public place owned by the City or Park District.

Peter Falcone advised that our meetings may be held in a public location, as long as our agenda is posted at the public location 48 hours in advance of our meeting date and time. Our meeting would also be considered a Special Meeting.

Members discussed the availability of City Hall Council Chambers in the event of inclement weather on the day of the meeting date.

Garden Club Visits

North Town Garden Club, June 2, 2018

Agnes said the North Town Garden Club will visit Prospect Heights on June 2, 2018. Their field trip to our town will involve a walk around the Slough and a picnic lunch. They are expecting 10 members to participate.

Master Gardeners of Cook County, September 12 or 19, 2018

Jill spoke with Beverly Krames of the Master Gardeners of Cook County visiting our town on a Wednesday in September.

Their desire is to arrive at 10:00 a.m. and enjoy lunch at 12 Noon after their Field Trip around the Slough. They are anticipating 12 attendees. They would appreciate learning of the concept of the Slough restoration, what we're doing to protect the Slough, what's out there, our future plans and have a hands-on experience for attendees. The Master Gardeners are very interested in the environment and native conservation. Many work the Farmer's Market on the weekend and have been in contact with the Citizens of Conservation.

MacArthur Middle School Science Class Field Trip

Stephanie Ritter of MacArthur Middle School would appreciate a field trip to our site on June 6 for the school's Make a Difference Day. Participants would be 20 Grade 6 students from 9:45 -11:15 a.m. We could plan the field trip at Gary Morava but must ask Christina if the Park District could herbicide the grass behind the tennis courts. It appears the Park District is allowing the grass to grow and not be mowed. If so, we could plant prairie plants on the hill to support it. Then the students could observe their work and results. It is a safe place for the school bus to deliver the children.

Visitor's Comments

None.

OTHER BUSINESS

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission is scheduled for Thursday, June 14, 2018 at 7:00 p.m. Location to be determined.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Jill E. Moskal, CPS
PHNRC Commissioner and Recording Secretary