

CITY OF PROSPECT HEIGHTS
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES OF JUNE 14, 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
 Luke Mathew, Son of Prospect Heights' Residents

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. A quorum was present.

Meeting Minutes of Regular Meeting of May 10, 2018

The minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission of May 10, 2018 were approved. No corrections were noted.

VISITORS' COMMENTS

Agnes proceeded to address the concerns of Luke Mathew, who was present on behalf of his parents who reside at 398 Owen Court, Prospect Heights, Illinois since 2008.

Luke expressed his parents' concern and worry of bank erosion and bank stabilization of Hillcrest Lake that borders the west side of their property. The Plat of Survey shows their property line extends into Hillcrest Lake. Luke's parents considered building a concrete barrier, but the City directed them to ask us for advice and assistance.

Dana stated that in 2016, the PHNRC requested the City to commission Hey and Associates (ecologist) to study the water shed and look at erosion and pollutants. From this report, PHNRC created a plan. Our plan was based on their recommendations to rectify these concerns. The Plan called for stabilizing the shoreline all around Hillcrest Lake and the Slough and utilizing riparian buffers. Turf grass has shallow roots while native plants have root systems 15 feet in the ground.

If naturally and successfully stabilizing the shoreline, the habitat is also benefitted.

PHNRC has placed aquatic plants in the Slough and can show instances where these plants work to stabilize the shoreline by filtering and hold the water. The aquatic plants ease the ripple effect of the water. Residents can also plant their own plants.

PHNRC has not been able to work on Hillcrest Lake because of the proposed MWRD plan to raise Willow Road and increase to three huge culverts. This will limit the water flow around Owen Court. The area will be under construction and consideration of resident concerns will be addressed.

Upon inquiry, Peter Falcone said the MWRD Project is still compensatory water issues and working with MWRD. The entire MWRD Project objective is to decrease flooding events.

Agnes said the flow of the water against the banks causes erosion, so every rain event causes erosion. The water level around the Slough has been altered and changed due to development and flooding issues so the culvert was created. The culvert was clogged for years, which maintained a certain water level of the Lake and Slough, as well as vegetation and wild life. At some point, because of the greater floods, the pipe was opened all the way. The pipe would not naturally be occurring there and made the water flow faster. This changed the quality of the wetland and vegetation.

The water level of Hillcrest Lake has changed. We have more development, parking lots and impervious surfaces. Residents did not want to see “green scum” on the Lake, so the Lake was herbicided, per residents’ request, which killed native plants. A leafy aquatic plant is good for the Lake, acting as a natural filter.

Dana also mentioned that PHNRC is starting to craft a plan for access by the public to Hillcrest Lake and the Slough.

Ed Madden suggested that naturalizing the Lake bank along Owen Court to Willow (strip of road) could address issues, and if Willow Road is raised, Owen Court may not be further impacted.

Seth inquired about the water flow. Where does it go in and out? Comes in on the west side (Elmhurst Road), which was recently flooded, and an outlet on Camp McDonald Road. Ed explained that there are three pipes under Willow Road that connect it and a pipe on the north end of the lake between the houses. The east side of the Lake is the lowest point.

The PHNRC is pleased and willing to assist with ideas for bank stabilization and naturalizing parts of resident’s lands. PHNRC would have to start soon so plant roots can start to grow and establish deep roots. PHNRC favors naturalization and not building a cement wall. We need to know if there is an easement on the property.

PHNRC received contact information for Luke Mathew and agreed to meet at 8:00 a.m. on Friday, June 15, 2018 to review his parent’s property and options for stabilizing the shoreline.

OLD BUSINESS

Update: Workday Schedules

This month has really been a burden with all the flooding from heavy rainfalls and the loss of the temporary greenhouse.

We had an excellent workday at the Slough on June 3 by removing a lot of buckthorn and seeing populations of Michigan Lilies in areas where we removed buckthorn during the winter months.

We are very appreciative of the Prospect Heights Public Works Department's effort to chip the buckthorn debris. Thank you, PHPW!

The workday for Sunday, June 17, will be at the Nature Preserve where we will create a privacy hedge for the residents by transplanting elderberry shrubs along the fence line (20 feet). A lot of people are utilizing the trail.

Interns have been busy herbiciding invasive goutweed by the fence and planting native plants.

Future workdays will be governed by weather conditions.

Status: Seed/Greenhouse Program

With the removal of the temporary greenhouse per zoning ordinance and square footage issue, we will be unable to grow as many plants as we have accomplished in the past. We might be able to get a variance for 2.5 months usage of a temporary greenhouse, but do not really know the possibility. A temporary greenhouse houses 17,000 plants and helps us save money. Without it, we may only be able to grow 5,000 plants.

Dana asked Peter Falcone, and he responded that Joe Wade is speaking with Dan Peterson about the variance and IDNR for the grading for the carp.

We are seeking alternatives to use of a temporary greenhouse. Every commissioner could have a temporary greenhouse (6' x 8" and on a platform) on their property. However, managing a greenhouse is a lot of work. For two months, you must monitor temperature conditions with heaters, fans and electricity usage; water the plants; and check on the plants periodically throughout the day.

Plan to Increase Public Access to the Wetlands

Dana distributed a condensed colored map of the Slough and Hillcrest areas. The original map was produced by PHPW, is the size of 55" x 36" and available at public meetings.

The map has minimal information; just underlying concepts. The coding on the map is as follows: Red Line = Existing Nature Trails; Blue Line = Proposed Extensions of the Nature Trails; Yellow Lines = Proposed Boardwalks; and Green/Yellow Wavy Square = New Riparian Buffer.

The Boardwalks would have to be elevated in the wet areas of the Slough.

The New Riparian Buffers would be surrounding Hillcrest Lake and include mowed paths. However, if Willow Road is raised, this negates the plan.

Access points to go up to the water would be considered along with adding benches and interpretative signage. Parking would also be allowed, and Mark of PHPW suggested parking on Hillcrest Drive. Currently, parking is not allowed, and PHNRC feels residents would not like parking access by other citizens.

The two lots that are privately owned at the southeast corner of Hillcrest Lake would have to be cleared of buckthorn. This would allow increase access to fishing on the Lake and a gravel area for parking. Hillcrest Lake is shallow in this area.

Pedestrian walkways (permeable walkway) could be provided along Willow Road and a graveled area for cars to park, if you want to increase pedestrian usage, per John.

Compensatory storage is needed with the Plan. Funding is needed to institute the Plan.

Peter Hahn requested to see preliminary plans by MWRD.

Peter Falcone also said consideration is being made by the City to extend sidewalks on Camp McDonald Road from Route 83 to the Prospect Heights Metra train station. Peter is unaware of any other areas that are not on major thoroughfares. Any sidewalks done were through Grants.

Peter said that the Plan would currently cost more than what is in the City budget. The City would need to partner with MWRD and Cook County. When you do that, especially since it is a waterway, you have more things to consider and do.

To date, we have very minimal amount of information because we have not discussed the plan at length except overlying concepts. We need an in-depth, prolonged discussion about this.

We do not know how high the Plan is on the list of priorities. We do not know if compensatory storage is in the plan. We do need to know if the City is going to proceed. If we present a plan, then the City can work with MWRD. Our suggested plan would be parking, permeable paths with pedestrian access along Willow Road, boardwalks, benches and interpretative signs.

The Plan would have to be presented to the City Council, even if it is only ideas and concepts. We would glam onto what is existing, modify it, verbal presentation with slides and have handouts.

Prospect Heights Park District Project

Dino Squiers contacted Agnes and Dana this past Spring regarding the area just north of the Morava Center pool where the concession stands are located and where they used to place the bands. The plan is to remove the pavers out and pour concrete, but Dino thought of naturalizing the area and build a permeable path. Dino specifically requested plants to attract pollinators.

The pavers are old and a safety hazard. The Park District will maintain the path section under the tent as concrete, but what Dino proposes will be a naturalized path to the concrete path.

PHNRC will supply Dino with a list of suggested native plants and ideas on how to incorporate it in the remodeled (cabana) area. PHNRC will also provide the native plants.

Library/Park District Program: Nature Speaks Program

Currently, 20 people have registered for our next Nature Speaks Program 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 will be sending an announcement tomorrow morning, which usually generates 10 more people to register for Nature Speaks Programs. Dana suggested Commissioners to encourage people to attend the June 28 Program. Jill suggested reaching out to the North Town Garden Club.

Our Nature Speaks Program speaker for the Fall is Joel Greenberg, Author of The Natural History of the Chicagoland region. For the last 11 years, Mr. Greenberg has been a writer, speaker and consultant on a variety of environmental issues.

Cyndi Lubecke has led our Spring Bird Walks. Our Bird Walk of May 26 was made extra-special with Lee Ramsey and Mary Lou Mellon arrived mid-way to say "Hello."

Cyndi said we have experienced an unbelievable amount of bird species in our area this year. Cyndi said they will be back in the Fall. Cyndi estimated 98 species.

We no longer have our butterfly monitor, and the monarchs are abundant, too! We also need frog, turtles and dragon fly monitors. The species' populations are exploding!

To be a monitor entails some training, spending an amount of time in a certain area, observation, counting species along a certain amount of time, etc.

Nature Preserve – Interpretative Signage

Dana has finally received the last approval from the City. Everything is corrected for the Nature Preserve Interpretative Signage. Dana will place the final format in the files and send out for production.

Special signs will be placed at the beginning and end of the Nature Preserve trail. The sign at the start of the trail will discuss the project and the City's and Park District's involvement. We need ideas for the sign at the end of the trail. Dana will incorporate pictures.

Special Workday with the Poplar Creek Prairie Stewards (PCPS)

Volunteers from the Poplar Creek Prairie Stewards came out enmass on May 16, 2018 and transplanted hundreds of plants. Some of the plants were ready from the previous time that PCPS transplanted, and they left with some. PCPS was wonderful!

North Town Garden Club Field Trip

We received an invitation from the North Town Garden Society to present our Slough Restoration Power Point Presentation on Thursday evening, April 5, 2018. From this invitation, we feel very fortunate to have made an invaluable connection with a wonderful group.

Members of the North Town Garden Club visited us on Saturday, June 2 for a complete guided tour of the Slough, native plants we planted and identified, our challenges, and how we manage our project. The guided tour concluded with a lovely lunch provided by the Club.

We feel gratified to have made a connection with the North Town Garden Club. They were thrilled to come to Prospect Heights, and they made another monetary donation to the PHNRC. Thank you!

Prospect Heights Community Days

PHNRC, once again, participated in Community Days on Saturday, June 2, 2018.

Community Days was lightly attended, but we were proud of our displays, books, materials and plant giveaways and happy to speak with those attendees who visited our table. We also received very nice feedback from Mayor Helmer, who complimented us on our Resources Journal and expressed appreciation on our Commission's work.

MacArthur Junior High School Field Trip

MacArthur Junior High School Science Students planned a work day at the Nature Preserve for their "Make a Difference Day" on June 6, 2018. Students planted 800 plants on the hill into the prairie then Agnes led a walk through the Preserve and provided an educational talk. Students were attentive and expressed interest by asking questions on issues, like drainage. Students mentioned that they do walk the trail. Students further participated by picking up trash in the area.

This was the third "Make a Difference Day" that MacArthur Junior High School held at one of our project sites. They schedule time with us twice a year, and each time, more students attend.

NEW BUSINESS

Status: Summer Interns

The amount of work that Jeremy Schultz and Gabi Szyniec accomplish is simply amazing! They are focused, driven and eager to learn. It is an incredibly great program and rewarding for us, not only for the work accomplished but to see their interest and dedication with natural area management.

The interns have been focusing on invasives and planting. They've been to Heron Pond, Tully Park, Nature Preserve, the Slough and the seeded prairie. They have not had a chance to get to the remnant prairie.

Gabi has obtained her herbicide license. The interns work together.

The PHPD cuts the grass at Heron Pond; however, someone cut the inside and not the outside of the path. We will ask PHPD to cut straight down the middle of the path, just wide enough for a lawn mower. John said parts of the mowed path were not uniform. Should we go and measure and have Dino look at it? Should we provide PHPD with parameters for mowing?

Seth suggested using our own lawn mower, but John said you must drive over private property plus there is standing water in the area.

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. Set up is at 1:00 p.m. We will invite volunteers to help. One of our interns will be present.

Handouts have been prepared. We will utilize our boards and have burn equipment and tools available for display. We will be giving away six packs of native plants.

McDonald Creek Commission Meeting – May 22, 2018

Jill Moskal attended the McDonald Creek Commission (MCC) meeting of May 22, 2018 for PHNRC representation.

The McDonald Creek Commission Chairperson, Cathy O'Brady, was absent. Therefore, Jan Fuller chaired the meeting.

MCC may tentative present to the City Council on June 11, 2018. Jill since learned that they did not present on this date.

MCC members continued discussion on the best way to distribute their McDonald Creek brochure. They talked of dividing the City into sections for each MCC person to address. Alternatively, they may mail the brochure with an informational sheet and cover letter to Prospect Heights' residents.

MCC will participate in the Prospect Heights Community Days on June 2, 2018. Jan and Rick will be MCC representatives.

Mark Roscoe, Superintendent of Public Works, was present and covered the May 9 e:mail message he sent to MCC members on his meeting with MWRD regarding flow, level, erosion, bank stabilization, bridge work and debris regarding McDonald Creek on May 8, 2018. Mark and the MWRD looked at locations around the creek from Camp McDonald Road to the Mount Prospect park and talked through ownership and responsibility.

Mark and MWRD reviewed the stabilization that was done over 20 years ago on 905 Camp McDonald Road when the bridge was replaced. The block work is in good condition for its age and is still doing what it was designed for.

Regarding a large-scale creek plan for stabilization, a comprehensive plan would need to be developed, reviewed by the Army Core, IEPA and Des Plaines Watershed Committee.

The next scheduled McDonald Creek Commission Meeting is Tuesday, June 25, 2018 at 6:00 p.m. in City Hall Chambers.

City of Prospect Heights 4th of July Parade

Members discussed plans to participate in the City's 4th of July Parade. The Volkswagen bus is unavailable, so we will use the leaf. Decorations are needed for the leaf. Jill will purchase candy and bags to house the candy and an informational sheet on PHNRC.

New Project Considerations

One volunteer has asked for advice and help to naturalize the grounds of the condo complex (300 units) located on the east side of the City. We can act in the role of consultant, but the condo residents would have to accomplish the work of planting native plants. We would need a strong commitment from the complex, ensure everyone is on board and ensure they have ability to maintain it. We simply are overburdened with work with our current projects.

PHNRC Summer Meeting Location

Members discussed the outdoor locations of our future meetings dates of July 12, August 9 and September 13, 2018.

Members decided on Heron Pond (the picnic table) for July 12. The location the entrance to Walnut Woods off Wheeling Road.

Visitor's Comments

None.

OTHER BUSINESS

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission is scheduled for Thursday, July 12, 2018 at 7:00 p.m. at the picnic table located in back at Heron Pond.

ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business to come before the meeting. Therefore, the meeting adjourned at 8:34 p.m.

Jill E. Moskal, CPS
PHNRC Commissioner and Recording Secretary