

CITY OF PROSPECT HEIGHTS
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES OF OCTOBER 11, 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

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 present. A quorum was present.

Meeting Minutes of Regular Meeting of September 13, 2018

The minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission of September 13, 2018 were approved. No corrections or additions were noted.

OLD BUSINESS

Update: Workday Schedules

Agnes said our last two workdays were to be rained out but were actually pretty good. On Sunday, October 7, there was a light drizzle but no thunder and lightning. Instead of cancelling, we had a big turn out and planted over 704 plants to stabilize the shoreline by the Slough. We collected seeds and put down some seed. We had a few new volunteers.

Our last Seed Collection Workday, we thought we would have to cancel, but the sun appeared at 4:30 p.m., and the workday proceeded.

Next Sunday volunteer workday of October 21 will be held at the Seeded Prairie for seed collection and some invasive tree control performed, such as cutting down mulberry trees.

Illinois Prairie Week Outcome – September 17 – 21, 2018

Dana reported that the first three events were seed collection and the last event was the Fall Bird Walk on Saturday, September 22, 2018.

For the first two events, one was rained out and the other was cancelled due to mosquitos! However, the third event, our Special Seed Collection Wednesdays, was successful, and unfortunately, few volunteers and participants were present.

The Bird Walk was great. Lee Ramsey and Mary Lou Mellon are to be commended and have committed to the Spring Bird Walks in 2019. It is a labor of love for them.

Next year, we should start talking about Illinois Prairie Week at our June 2019 meeting.

Monitoring Project Site Results – Commissioners' Reports

All Commissioners provided monitoring reports for specific project sites, and their reports are noted on the following pages.

Dana said of the issues raised in the current monitoring reports, we have addressed a lot of them or will address them. For example, Jeremy has reworked the path at the Remnant Prairie (Seth); teasel was herbicided at the Sedge Meadow (Jill); and a couple of workdays will be utilized to place more chips on the Nature Preserve trail (Peter).

Seth mentioned in his site report that he would bring in specimens. Exhibit A is Dog Bane or Indian Hemp. Agnes said it is not in the milkweed family. It is native, but aggressive and a bit weedy. We have harvested it in the past, but we do not have an area that calls for a weedy plant. On the scale of conservatism, it is a 1, per Agnes.

Dana and Agnes have looked at the dumping site by the Nature Preserve. It is terrible. The dumping has moved west almost onto the creek bank. Peter's white pine that he has been nurturing for three years is almost completely covered by debris. Someone dumped a mound full of gravel. This is not supposed to happen.

We must speak with Dino. There could exist a miscommunication between the PHPD workers or contracted work.

Ed inquired of where things stand with the Prospect Heights Park District, like communication with the Executive Director. Has it fallen off? Dana said no, and not due to animosity. Christine is very busy, especially during the summer months, and we are too. Also, we have not had a lot of opportunity to talk. Agnes and Dana will be attending the Park District Board Meeting on October 16. This is the last meeting for approval of the burn permit plus we want to have representation at the PHPD meetings.

Agnes and Dana will arrange a meeting to talk and touch base with Christina. We could also ask to be an agenda item at the Park District Board Meeting; however, as a courtesy, we should speak with Christina first.

Ed said the dumping in the Nature Preserve makes absolutely no sense. Has the Park District looked at other areas, ones not as visible?

John asked do they want this area to be a Nature Preserve or a dump site? It cannot be both. It is a visible area with a playground, tennis courts, storyboards, baseball field and a Nature Preserve.

Agnes said we have had this discussion before and received push-back. The Park District has looked at other sites as viable alternatives, but there are issues with neighbors not wanting a dump site by their own backyards. The Park District needs an area to put their branches and debris, and they are running out of space.

Dana said we defined an area where the dumping could occur. We planted hazelnuts to cordon off the dump site from the rest of the park. We also opened an entrance coming up from the tennis court to direct traffic away from the dump site and shield off from the rest of the park when on the trail. However, they currently are moving the dump site further and further west.

Seth mentioned at our last meeting for the City to contract with a yard waste pick-up. They could get a price, it might not be economically feasible, but Seth would like to see the figures.

Peter said that every facility needs a dump site. The Park District is continuing to use the Nature Preserve as their dump site perhaps out of habit and convenience. Perhaps they could coordinate with the Prospect Heights Public Works Department and utilize the City dump. Agnes mentioned that there is a separation between these departments and the type of their refuse.

Ed asked if there was a way to avoid bringing this issue to the PHPD Board. It is an issue with the Commissioners, and Agnes said with our volunteers, too. Dana will send an e:mail message to Christina requesting a meeting.

Status: Commissioners' Monitoring Project Site Results

Nature Preserve (Gary Morava) (Peter Hahn)

Peter said he toured the Nature Preserve at 2:30 pm on Wednesday, October 10. It was raining heavily; erosion to the creek is a problem. A tree was in the creek and, also, another large tree is ready to fall across the trail on the West end. This tree is a safety hazard to people using the trail and should be removed as soon as possible.

The lower Preserve trail needs wood chips.

Dumping on the upper Preserve continues with some gravel and branches that now have nearly buried Peter's favorite white pine tree. The dump site continues its westward march to the Creek.

Major brick paving work under the tent canopy shows that bricks have been removed.

The baseball diamond restoration project is a work-in-progress.

The plantings look fine with no damage to date.

Runoff is a major problem at Morava. Hopefully, this problem has been addressed.

Remnant Prairie (Seth Marcus)

Facing north from the bike path on the west side of the path there exists quite a bit of teasel. While this is not the main area of our maintenance, the teasel could spread over to our area.

A great deal of boneset seed is available for collection.

There is a beautiful abundance of prairie dock, which is not quite ready for seed collection but soon.

The northeast portion is quite flooded with portions of stretches of water eight-feet across.

There is an abundance of a particular type of milkweed ready for seed collection. Seth is not quite sure of the specific species. However, Seth provided a sample at tonight's meeting.

Tully Park (Jill Moskal)

Tully Park is status quo with nothing new to report.

Seed collection days will be planned soon.

Seeded Prairie (Dana Sievertson)

Dana summarized the seeded prairie as a "Tale of Two Cities." The east and west sides of the Seeded Prairie are different in terms of their evolution.

West Side: Dana has never seen a prairie composed completely of forbs, and it is so dense, there is no room for weeds. The pollinators are in the thousands. Along the walking path are asters, and they continue to grow if they are not cut. Everything is 6 to 7 feet tall. The area to the left of the walking path as you are walking west is devoid of anything and instead mostly high Eurasian grasses, two feet in height. The areas that were mowed last year are recovering, but not much progress.

Seed collection will be Cup Plants, Coneflower, Rattlesnake Master, Monarda, Canada Wild Rye, some of the other tall grasses, tall Coreopsis is almost ready, and the asters are coming into bloom.

East Side: There are patches that are mimicking the west side. But before you come to the Tower as you are walking toward Elmhurst Road, there are flowers that have expired blooming and released their seed. Then a dense corps of annual weeds, which are alarming. Go a bit further and you see more forbs, Cup Plant and tall Eurasian grasses. It then dwindles down to patches of nothing on the left side of the walking path. Right hand side is a bit better. As you progress, again, to Elmhurst Road, you see all forbs. There is an overabundance on both sides of goldenrod. We must look at and intervene and reduce.

Dana said it would be outstanding if ComEd could burn the Seeded Prairie next year.

Dana stated that Public Works did a good job of keeping the path open and cleared. The Park District mowed alongside the path.

There is no evidence anywhere of anyone doing anything to molest the Seeded Prairie. Dana feels we have turned the corner of experiencing residents' interference.

Dana did not see any invasives on the West side. The East Side had little amounts of clover and Canada Thistle. The work that our interns, Jeremy and Gabby, did this summer was outstanding. The whole project is doing well.

Ed inquired if we do any more reporting to ComEd. We stay in contact with Sara Race, but do not do any official reporting. Ed said it would be nice to inform them of the success on the project. Dana will send photos and information to Sara.

Heron Pond (John Kamysz)

John reported that Heron Pond is status quo.

McDonald Creek is high and running fast. Water at the entrance prohibits easy entry still. When it drains, it is very muddy.

Plantings around the Pond are looking good. Buckthorn resprouts are moderate. No mowing has been done on either side of the trail or the trail itself.

All the plantings (Cardinal Flower and grasses) from last year are thriving. However, it was

St. Alphonsus (Ed Madden)

Ed visited the St. Alphonsus Natural Area this week and reported the area is doing very well.

Despite being a man-made retention area, wedged between the church/school's front parking lot and adjacent to Wheeling Road, the native plants have been thriving. Due to the recent heavy rains, the area is currently 90% under water; however, the careful selection of water tolerant plants has proven to be wise and were very healthy.

Ed was pleasantly surprised at the improvement since the area was first planted. As one of the initial volunteers who planted seedlings in this area a couple of years' ago, Ed was amazed at the amount of growth that has occurred in the interim.

Ed praised Agnes for the selection and the advice provided to the church for the plantings!

Sedge Meadow (Jill Moskal)

The Sedge Meadow has a few new teasel plants about three-feet tall; a few clusters of non-native foxtail or orchard grass; and common milkweed or *Asclepias syriaca*, whose seed may be ready to collect. Invasive Phragmites, Reed Canary Grass and Cattails were present and abundant. Boneset or Goldenrod has already gone to seed and is no longer yellow.

Lastly, the natural Area Sign is lop-sided on its post and needs to be readjusted and stabilized.

Status: Public Outreach – Mount Prospect Garden Club Presentation and High School Status

Garden Club of Mount Prospect: Jill reported that we need to submit a paragraph about the PHNRC and a photograph. Dana has a boiler plate on the PHNRC, but our photo needs to be updated.

Seth said when you go to the PHNRC website and in the search links, you arrive at the Commissioners' lectures. However, there are only three photographs, and they are incomplete.

Dana said this area of the website is a historical record or landing page for the talk we gave in September 2017, and it only works on a Google search engine. Dana said we should create a new webpage solely for information on PHNRC Commissioners.

We must update our group photo. Perhaps we could meet at John's or Agnes & Dana's house soon to accomplish this task. The talk is scheduled at the November 14, 2018 (Wednesday) Mount Prospect Garden Club Meeting at 1:00 p.m.

High School Program: Dana said Linda Waycie, volunteer, is still waiting for a response.

Library/Park District Program: Nature Speaks Program

The Nature Speaks Program speaker for November 29, 2018 is Joel Greenberg, Author and Naturalist, and the title of his presentation is "Hope is the Thing with Feathers: American and Three Birds." For future Nature Speaks Programs, we will issue a special invitation to our City and Park District officials encouraging their attendance.

Dana also reported that we have received a commitment from Bill Kleinman of the Nachusa Grasslands as our speaker for June 26, 2019. Bill will provide a 30-year history of tall grass prairies and bison. Dana will create a webpage on our site for his talk.

Dana also contacted the person Seth recommended who has special knowledge of Blanding's Turtles, but is still waiting to connect with him as a possible future speaker.

Nature Preserve – Interpretative Signage

Dana brought in the proof of the 24”H x 36” L sign (12-point type). Do we want to use the real estate and create two completely different signs or simply have the same signs because which way does one enter the Nature Preserve – from Elm Street or Pine Street? You can enter off either street. The only difference is a red X will be placed to indicate “you are here” on each sign to indicate either Elm Street or Pine Street.

John inquired if we have anything more to say or convey? Dana thought to place the importance of our volunteers and incorporate three or more small photos. John thought we could dedicate one sign for volunteerism and one welcome sign. However, Agnes said we already have a sign describing the project and volunteers. We have six other signs with detailed information. We have covered plenty.

Ed said the three pictures on the top right should be described as before, during and after restoration and either below or in the photo. Ed felt it was important to designate the photos. Doing so might engage an individual utilizing the trail. It is a visual representation.

Seth also said the individual utilizing the trail has limited time, so if we have the chance to add one or two extra pieces of information, a map or plant photos, we should do so. Dana will send Seth all the signs for his review. Seth is then able to make a suggestion to incorporate an idea or quick way to design a new sign to showcase complete information. Seth’s input and creation would be welcomed.

Dana will modify the sign, send to all to read and comment on, and then indicate whether or not to keep the signs the same or change them. Voting on the signs would occur via e:mail message exchange.

NEW BUSINESS

PHNRC Strategic Planning

Dana and Seth have not been able to meet. Dana will work on providing a matrix outlining goals, action steps and a person seeing each step to completion, and an area for evaluation.

Seth and Dana will then meet to discuss the Strategic Plan then all Commissioners will meet and discuss collectively.

Comprehensive Equipment List and 2019 Budget

The PHNRC needs to start thinking about our 2019 Budget. A core list should be developed of how we want/need to spend our budget, so a complete budget may be formed by the first of the year. Our present budget will be sent to Commissioners for review because we will, most likely, equipment and resources will be similar. Our largest concern is the internship program. We will discuss at the November meeting.

Poplar Creek Prairie Stewards – Seed Collecting Day(s)

PCPS Seed Collecting Day will be this Sunday, October 14 from 9:00 am to 12 Noon. All seeds are ready to be collected, and we may collect as many seeds as we want. We are particularly interested in collecting two species - Indian Grass and Little bluestem.

Agnes is also looking to the Saturday of the following weekend and any opportunities during the week to return to Poplar Creek for additional seed collecting.

Fall Prescribed Burns

Dana reported that our second burn permit has been approved and signed by the Illinois EPA. The prescribed burn was an agenda item at the City Council meeting on Monday, October 8, 2018. St. Alphonsus has approved their burn. Agnes and Dana will attend the PHPD Board Meeting of October 16 for their permission to perform prescribed burns at Park District properties. We are ready to go and just waiting for a few hard frosts!

Performing a prescribed burn is condition dependent. The fuel must be ready and not wet. Wind speed and humidity levels play a factor. We essentially have a three-day window for good burning time.

What is everyone's availability? During the week? Weekends seem to work best. John said Wednesdays and weekends are best for him.

Agnes will purchase new Nomex suits based on the increased number of members who have become certified in prescribed burns.

Seed Processing and Volunteer Appreciation Day – November 18, 2018

Our Seed Processing and Volunteer Appreciation Day will be held on Sunday, November 18, 2018 from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. in the garage at Agnes and Dana's home at 9 Marion.

Dana needs to receive Commissioners' ideas for the Volunteer of the Year. Please e:mail suggested names to Dana, who will compile a list. Voting will be by rating names 1, 2 and 3. Voting will be accomplished via e:mail.

Dana must product the trophy, which takes time.

City Civic Meetings and PHNRC Representation Reporting

Dana attended the City Council Meeting of October 8, 2018.

As mentioned, Dana and Agnes will be attending the PHPD Board Meeting of October 16, 2018.

John plans to attend the City Council Meeting on Monday evening, October 22, 2018.

McDonald Creek Commission Meeting – September 25, 2018

Jill Moskal stated the McDonald Creek Commission (MCC) held a meeting on September 25, 2018. Jill was unable to attend the meeting in person and instead listened to the recording posted on the City's website.

Jon Kindseth provided the MCC presentation to the City Council in September. The Mayor and Aldermen pledged their support of MCC to continue with their objectives.

MCC distributed the McDonald Creek Brochure but have only heard from one resident to date.

Cathy Brady toured McDonald Creek over the Labor Day weekend, and the Creek was really flooded. Somerset Park was flooded, including the playground equipment.

Jan Fuller referenced a Journal Article from September 5, 2018 entitled "City Engineer Suggests 9 Study Areas for Flood Control."

The City Engineer gave a presentation on which flood-prone areas to address first from the list mentioned in the Journal Article. He recommended adding to or enlarging storm sewers to better drain the Arlington Countryside neighborhood west of Rand Road into the creek tributary by Morava. When asked if he had considered the impact on downstream flooding, he said "No," but did not think the extra water would raise creek waters much. Aldermen seemed inclined to agree with this plan.

MCC is not in favor of doing something to increase the storm sewer to drain that neighborhood into the tributary of the Creek. The Engineer insisted it would not add that much water and increase the Creek level.

In discussing reducing the run-off, MCC said to consider:

- Rain barrels and rain gardens
- Permeable pavers
- No placement of downspouts in the swales.

The tributary becomes very narrow and floods Elmhurst Road at times. It feeds the Slough, which often floods Willow Road. Incorporating downstream impacts should be considered. There is value in keeping storm water on site, allowing it to pass through permeable/pervious surfaces to recharge our underground aquifers instead of being redirected downstream.

MCC is seeking assistance from PHNRC for a small restoration project. ComEd recently cleared vegetation under their power lines in Country Gardens Park off Schoenbeck Road. Cathy felt they sliced and diced crabapple trees that had no change of ever growing tall enough to impact the power lines. They also scalped a 50-foot section of the creek bank just west of the PHRNC's prairie restoration.

Would the PHNRC provide seed or plugs to do a sample restoration/erosion control project there? Yes. Agnes said we have 800 long-rooted grass plugs, such as Prairie Cord Grass and Switch Grass. However, we would need to review the slope to determine how steep it is. A three-to-one graded slope is recommended for successful stabilization with plants, but we could try to do it with erosion control blankets, if the slope is steeper. If it is a project for next year, we can certainly provide plugs and seeds, as well.

Agnes suggests that Cathy and MCC contact Dino and Christina directly, explain the project and ask for permission.

The next McDonald Creek Commission meeting is scheduled for Tuesday evening, October 23, 2018 at 6:00 p.m.

Wild Things Talk

The PHNRC has been contacted and requested to present at the Wild Things Talk scheduled for Saturday, February 23, 2019 at the Douglas Stephens Convention Center in Rosemont, Illinois.

Dana prepared and shared with Commissioners the title and abstract on our talk, which is:

PHNRC – How We Created a Successful Stewardship Organization

Starting with a dream, the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission has become a successful volunteer organization. Armed with knowledge, imagination, curiosity, relentless ambition and the good will of volunteers and City counterparts, the PHNRC has achieved beyond what should have been possible. Commissioners will explain what they did, how they did it, and their challenges and successes.

We must now begin to outline and prepare for this presentation.

Additionally, Agnes was asked to specifically participate in a panel discussion on plant propagation. Agnes will be one of three people on the panel.

Prospect Heights Public Library Display Cases for November 2018

John said he has a lot of bones, skulls, feathers, beaks, etc., from our Cook County Forest Preserves, from fox, deer, possum, raccoon, and they are all labeled. Therefore, he has a lot of interesting native items for the display cases. Previously, Seth offered other natural items, such as a turtle shell and seeds.

One display case could be artifacts and the second one could be identified photos of volunteers, our pamphlet, books, etc. We could also hand out the brochures or have a brochure container on the display case.

Installation is on November 1 for display the entire month.

Consideration of a December Meeting

Jill suggested we could use the time to plan for upcoming talks and the new budget. However, many Commissioners were opposed to having a December meeting.

Peter Falcone will cancel the December 13, 2018 meeting.

Outreach Programs and Field Visits

Agnes said that Anne Sullivan 4th Graders (15 to 20 students) have started a year-long project on a Prairie Chapter. They had a Field Trip recently to the Seeded Prairie, collected seed, and talked about prairie restoration.

The students have divided into groups to manage education on plants, insects, restoration etc., and will decorate their classroom with Prairie pictures.

The students want to visit the Seeded Prairie once per month throughout the year to visually see prairie seasonal changes. Agnes will provide the dates, but the Field Trip was held from 1:00 – 2:00 p.m. during the weekday. What is especially nice is that it is a seven-minute walk from their school to the Seeded Prairie.

MacArthur Middle School 6th Grade Science Class

On October 10, Stephanie Ritter, 6th Grade Science Teacher at MacArthur Middle School, contacted Agnes with a request for her science students to collect seeds. In 2016 and 2017, the 6th Graders planted prairie plants in May and collected seed in October.

This year, instead of collecting seed at the Remnant Prairie, Agnes suggested the Seeded Prairie, so students could walk and not take a school bus.

The seed collection day will occur either the last week of October or the first week of November.

Students commented that their favorite plant is the common milkweed.

Agnes has not yet received a response with a date and time for High School special needs children to visit the prairie.

Visitor's Comments

None.

OTHER BUSINESS

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission is scheduled for Thursday, November 8, 2018 at 7:00 p.m. in City Council Chambers.

ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business to come before the meeting. Therefore, the meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Jill E. Moskal, CPS
PHNRC Commissioner and Recording Secretary