

CITY OF PROSPECT HEIGHTS
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 8, 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
Paul Haisman
Tyler Haisman, Sophomore, St. Viator

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 October 11, 2018

The minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission of October 11, 2018 were approved. No corrections or additions were noted.

OLD BUSINESS

Update: Workday Schedules

Agnes reported that Seed Collection Wednesdays have concluded. We are pleased that they were so successful both with the amount of seed collection and the volunteers that assisted.

Our Sunday volunteer workday of November 4 was rained out.

Our next Sunday volunteer workday is November 18, 2018 where we will hold our Seed Processing and Volunteer Appreciation Day. Afterward, we will conduct our workdays with brush cutting and bonfires.

Jeremy will be constructing new seed processing trays for our use.

Dana mentioned the need to install the six to 10 posts for the interpretative signs at the Nature Preserve before the ground freezes. If we cannot accomplish this task during an upcoming Sunday volunteer workday, perhaps Jeremy will be available to install the posts.

John Kamysz suggested renting a hole digger from Home Depot and mentioned he is available on Wednesday morning, November 14.

Report on Commissioners' Monitoring Project Site Results

Agnes stated that most of the prairie project sites are down for the season. Therefore, Monitoring Project Site Results will resume in the spring 2019.

Nature Preserve (Gary Morava) (Peter Hahn)

Peter provided a brief report on the Nature Preserve.

Peter visited the Nature Preserve on October 25 and November 7. Unfortunately, he viewed Park District workers dumping leaves on top of the dump site, causing the dump site to edge closer to the creek bank or the creek or the edge of the stream. Peter also noted gravel and topsoil in large amounts added to the dump site. They are dumping rumble and not just organic material.

Peter said the creek bank suffers from erosion, and the material on the dump site is piled up and very high.

Concrete work under the canopy by the baseball diamond has destroyed approximately 90% of our plantings, which is almost a complete loss.

Peter mulched new trees and bush plantings with wood chips. There exists plenty of wood chips for later use on the trails.

The Creek still has blockages by the creek bank by the stairs. Peter noticed the stepping stones have eroded a lot, which may eventually destroy the stairs. This erosion is recent and may be the result of our stepping stones.

Dead, low hanging trees and branches are present and should be removed for safety reasons.

Next Steps: Upon receipt of Peter's Nature Preserve Monitoring Report, Dana spoke with Dino, the PHPD Superintendent, and then Agnes, Dana and Dino visited the site. What the PHPD is calling a berm is a dump-site for dirt, concrete, tree roots, all kinds of materials as a by-product of new cement patio areas. It's dumped dirt and take it away as needed. That's that. Not doing anything about it.

Peter said the dump site is an eyesore, but he understands that facilities need a dumpsite. It is sad, however, that the dumpsite is in the middle of the Nature Preserve area. It looks like there is not much we can do about it.

Dana recommended planting hazel nuts. Half of them survived, although they grow slowly. We can plant elderberry or pokeberry next year to act as a buffer or shield.

Have we approached the PHPD Board because it has gone nowhere with the staff? We have had internal conversations, but they are not willing to do anything. Ed suggested we make a presentation at the next Board Meeting. Keep in mind the staff reports to the Board.

Does the dump site really have to be there? Could we not appeal to them for an alternate location? What can they dump? Is it permissible to dump in a flood plain? There are regulations not to dump next to a waterway.

Seth agrees with Ed, but we should have a beautiful, polished presentation prepared including photos and maybe suggestions of alternate sites, which we investigate. If the Park District's dump site must be in the Nature Preserve, there should be demarcations of boundaries.

Seth said we would prefer they not dump at all in that area, but if they must, can they agree to a very clear zone of where they can dump and cannot dump?

Seth said Prospect Heights has industrial areas; could they be suitable for a dump site? Could the PHPD Board find another resource? Most residents have yard waste pick up at their homes.

Dana said their argument is that the dump site at the Nature Preserve is centrally located to all their projects. The next closest area is the golf course, but it has been completely ruled out. John said they already dump (wood, debris, chips) at Heron Pond because trucks go in and out of there all the time. There is a lot of room back there and very few people go there. Peter said there is an area in front of the area that was seeded. A barrier or fence could be installed, but the neighbors disagreed. Debris is piled higher and higher and contributes to the erosion of the creek in that area.

Agnes said we do not want an aggressive stance because the PHPD has funded interns. However, Seth said the dumping is contrary to our Mission, and we should express our concerns. Seth said our mission is to preserve the parkland in Prospect Heights.

Agnes stated the Nature Preserve project started with a caveat that the Park District needs that area in the Preserve for dumping. The Park District allowed us to convert the remaining two acres into a Nature Preserve. The PHPL also utilizes the Nature Preserve for their Storyboards. However, it is now an awkward situation and has escalated in proportion to the amount and type of materials and debris being dumped. In the beginning, the dump site held organic debris, and we were able to keep pace with it by having the debris as the base of our bonfire during a workday.

Dana said the appeal is to ask for an agenda item at the next PHPD Board Meeting.

Dana will see Christina next week and will ask her of the possibility of placing us on the Board Meeting Agenda. Ed, Peter and Seth will prepare the presentation, which Commissioners will review at our January 2019 meeting.

Agnes will also review the plantings by the canopy and baseball diamond. Our plants may have been trampled when forming of the concrete slab, , etc., but Agnes said it may not be too bad. The plants are alive underground. We can over-seed that area, too.

Peter said he does not know where the run-off from the canopy will land but it seems at least a three or four-inch curb there presently where we planted that needs soil to bring the curb up to grade.

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. Members took a photo in City Council Chambers at the conclusion of the meeting and will take another natural-looking photo at John's house over the weekend.

Dana said a rehearsal of the Slough 101 presentation should be held before Wednesday, November 14, 2018.

High School Program: Agnes said that our volunteer, Linda Waycie, had contacted the Hersey High School Ecology/Biology Club, but it appears they are not interested.

Seth said the Wheeling High School Science Department seems enthusiastic on developing a long-term program to engage High School students with the PHNRC. The students would volunteer to provide physical labor working our project sites and engage in science, educational and art projects.

Seth stated the feedback has been positive, and he will send a detailed e:mail message with our proposal to the Secretary of the Dean of Science.

Another route to get volunteers is the S.O.S. (Service Over Self Program) at Hersey High School. John contacted Hersey over three years' ago and did not receive much of a response. However, a connection with PHNRC would provide students with service hours rather than a scientific education.

Field Trips: Nothing new to report.

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." Ed will send a press release to the *Daily Herald* for publication.

Current attendance is 15 with 49 seats available.

Dana stated we have received a commitment from Dan Thompson, Wildlife Ecologist with the Forest Preserve District of Du Page County, to provide a presentation on Blanding's Turtles on January 24, 2019.

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 has created a webpage on our site for his talk. He is being promoted in the Journal along with Joel Greenberg.

Dana has contacted Gary Glowacki, Wildlife Biologist with the Lake County Forest Preserve District, as a future speaker for the spring or fall of 2019.

Status: Prospect Heights Public Library Display Cases – November 2018

Agnes expressed appreciation to all Commissioners who assisted in designing the three PHPL Display Cases showcasing information on all the work we have been doing for the last four years. People have expressed interest.

Dana will provide a notification to Peter for publication in the City's e:Newsletter.

Nature Preserve – Interpretative Signage

Dana stated that all the files have been approved, PHPD has approved, and the signs are in production. Dana will receive an Estimated Time of Delivery tomorrow. Dana will inform Commissioners when the signs are ready to be installed.

Outcome: Poplar Creek Prairie Stewards Seed Collection Days

Agnes said we had planned one seed collection day at Poplar Creek and had a pretty good turnout; 8 volunteers from Prospect Heights the first time and the second time, six volunteers. We collected a lot of seed from the site.

Next Saturday, November 17, PCPS will conduct their Seed Processing Day at the Cook County Forest Preserve Headquarters in Busse Woods' Red Barn from 10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

NEW BUSINESS

Slough Construction

Dana reported that Hillside Road was resurfaced, as part of the City Plan. When Dana first met with Mark Roscoe and the City's Engineer, the plan was to replace the road and the two-foot gravel section. When they stripped the road down, they also removed the two-foot gravel section utilizing the same tool. The paved road is two feet wider than planned. They excavated 24" or 30" of the full length of Hillside increasing the width of the shoulder and adding two feet. We have lost that much more space that will translate into runoff straight into the Slough. It also eliminates the possibility of a buffer system. It is very disappointing and a shame. This has impacted the wetland in a negative way.

Seth inquired who oversaw the project? The Prospect Heights Public Works Department. Seth stated that several things that happen in our City relate to our mission, and we are not consulted on. Part of our Strategic Planning is that we should be recognized as a body of expertise in a particular realm that should be consulted for our opinion. We are not the ultimate, but we should have input. Someone finished the plans, and someone approved them. If they are going into the nature area property that is when all players in Prospect Heights should be consulted.

What Seth proposed is in our Strategic Plan and needs to be mandated by the City Council. However, Dana does not see anything happening until the elections conclude in April 2019.

Dana said our relationship and dialogue with PHPW and Mark Roscoe is good. Mark frequently calls us with updates, and he is terrific to work with.

Seth suggested conducting an analysis and investigation. What went wrong with this communication? What is the process? The Slough is a crown jewel in Prospect Heights of natural areas has been adversely affected.

Peter said that road grindings have oil in them, and that would wash into the Slough.

The shoulder was always part of the contract, but when Dana met with PHPW, the understanding was to excavate the existing area and put it back but not add two feet of paved road.

What can we do to salvage and mitigate the situation? Agnes said it will be very important to vegetate the remaining shoulder and stabilize the shoreline.

Seth asked if there are materials to propose as an alternative that are ecologically sound? It is not going to happen. It's already done. The budget and project are set and fulfilled. The whole thing could have been a pervious road.

PHNRC Strategic Planning

Dana and Seth briefly met and crafted key points of our strategic plan. When formalized, Dana will send to all commissioners for review.

Comprehensive Equipment List and 2019 Budget

Dana provided Commissioners with a copy of our PHNRC FY 2017-2018 budget from the City for reference.

The following year we whittled this down to \$4,500 for the intern position and \$900 for operational supplies. In that previous 2017 budget, we had the grant we applied for in which we received \$5,000 from the Park District and \$5,000 from the City for the Grant. We do not have this income this year. However, we can suggest the Park District or City to apply for the Com Ed Green Regions Grant. The deadline is March 15, 2019.

Peter Falcone stated that as an Advisory Committee, we can ask for \$5,000. However, we should ensure that PHPD is on board. Therefore, we will start conversations.

Dana said we should start budget talks in January 2019. The copy of the PHNRC FY 2017-2018 budget is rough data on what we have done in the past.

Fall Prescribed Burns

Agnes stated that burn season is approaching. The Cook County Forest Preserve will try to burn next week.

Snow is forecasted for tomorrow, Friday, November 9. The temperature will drop to the 20s. Currently, our concerns are precipitation and how fast the ground can dry. We could perform separate burns over a couple of days. All of our equipment has been checked and ready to use.

John inquired if all the grasses have dried? Some still look green. Agnes says it depends on the species. All of the warm season grasses and prairie grasses are dry. Woodland grasses remain in the basil leaf stage, and the turf grasses will stay green. We will not burn the cattails this year.

Wednesday, November 14 might be a good day to perform a prescribed burn, but we have our presentation to the MP Garden Club in the afternoon. Peter, John, Seth and Dana are available on November 14, so a burn could be performed in the morning.

We will advise Peter Falcone. Dana will coordinate with Peter to send a Reverse 911 message to residents, and Dana will send an e-mail burn notifications. Our website carries a link to posted updated burn information for reference.

Com Ed wants to burn all three prairie locations – the Remnant and two seeded prairies. We will burn St. Alphonsus' area when the children are out of school. The Sedge Meadow is not worthy to burn.

City Civic Meetings and PHNRC Representation Reporting

John Kamysz attended the City Council Meeting of October 22, 2018. John reported not much was discussion as far as directly considering the PHNRC. Discussion centered on the airport, staggered election terms for Aldermen and Home Rule.

Dana inquired when the next PHPD Board Meeting would be held, and it is Tuesday evening, November 13, 2018.

McDonald Creek Commission Meeting – October 23, 2018

Jill Moskal stated the McDonald Creek Commission (MCC) did not conduct a meeting as scheduled on October 23, 2018.

The next McDonald Creek Commission meeting is scheduled for Tuesday evening, November 27, 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. It is a day of incredible learning opportunities.

The Wild Things Conference is a regional conference that draws naturalists from the entire Midwest and all parts of the United States. Last year, it was held at the University of Illinois – Chicago Campus. The Conference hosts eight sessions on the topics of conservation, restoration and prairies, and a keynote speaker. The Wild Things Conference is attended by the “Who’s Who” of natural areas management.

In 2017, PHNRC presented for the first time at the Wild Things Conference. They have contacted us, again, to make a presentation and requested Agnes to participate in a panel discussion on seed propagation.

2019 PHNRC Meeting Schedule

Jill outlined a 2019 PHNRC Meeting Schedule. The proposed 2019 meeting dates are: January 10, February 14, March 14, April 11, May 9, June 13, July 11, August 8, September 12, October 10, and November 14, 2019. A meeting would not be conducted in December 2019.

After a brief discussion, Commissioners approved the 2019 PHNRC Meeting Schedule.

Jill will send the 2019 PHNRC Meeting Schedule document to Commissioners and Peter Falcone.

Visitor’s Comments

Tyler Haisman, Visitor, attending the October 12, 2017 PHNRC Meeting regarding a Citizenship of the Community Badge exercise for an Eagle Scout project with Troup 166 of Arlington Heights. Tyler was present this evening to fulfill a Civic Class requirement from St. Viator High School. Tyler mentioned that he really liked learning about the PHNRC last fall and chose one of our meetings for his Civic Class requirement. Commissioners warmly welcomed Tyler.

OTHER BUSINESS

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission is scheduled for Thursday, January 10, 2019 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 7:59 p.m.

Jill E. Moskal, CPS
PHNRC Commissioner and Recording Secretary