

CITY OF PROSPECT HEIGHTS
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
November 12, 2020

Present: Dana Sievertson
Peter Hahn
Ed Madden

Jill E. Moskal, Recording Secretary
Seth Marcus

Attendees: Peter Falcone, Assistant to the City Administrator – verify his attendance

NOTE: Meeting held virtually via Zoom. Meeting ID: 851 6138 3423

OPENING ITEMS

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. CDT by Dana Sievertson.

Roll Call

Roll Call proceeded. The majority of Commissioners were present, which constituted a quorum. John Kamysz joined the meeting at 7:36 p.m.

Meeting Minutes of Regular Meeting of October 8, 2020

The minutes of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission Board Meeting of October 8, 2020 were approved. No corrections or additions were noted.

OLD BUSINESS

Volunteer Workdays

The weather conditions for this weekend are forecasted with high winds and rain. Also, COVID cases have escalated, and a mandatory lockdown for the City of Chicago is provisional for the next three weeks. The Governor of Illinois has issued a Stay at Home Order.

Considering these factors, Commissioners decided to cancel regularly schedule workdays for the moment with the objective of keeping our volunteers safe.

The PHNRC will initiate guerilla workdays where volunteers can work individually. Information on what work needs to be completed will be communicated via e:mail message with Dana and Agnes. Tool supplies will be furnished by Dana and Agnes at 9 Marion Street. All necessary precautions with sterilization of equipment will be in place.

Prospect Heights Park District Events

Nature Speaks Program

The current presentation for the Nature Speaks Program are as follows:

November 19, 2020 (7:00-8:30 p.m.) – Dr. Doug Tallamy, Author, Educator, Researcher, and naturalist will present “Nature’s Best Hope.” Registered attendees are currently 66 plus people.

Recent headlines about global insect declines and three billion fewer birds in North America are a bleak reality check about how ineffective our current landscape designs have been at sustaining the plants and animals that sustain us. Such losses are not an option if we wish to continue our current standard of living on Plant Earth.

January 28, 2021 (7:00-8:30 p.m.) – Chris Helzer, author of *The Prairie Ecologist Blog* and the Director of Science for The Nature Conservancy in Nebraska will present “All the Little Things.”

When people think about nature, they tend to focus on the big charismatic animals we learned about as children. However, ecosystems function because of much smaller organisms, including plants and invertebrates (and many others). All those “little things” and their complex interactive networks are worth knowing and appreciating.

This photo-heavy presentation will introduce some of those little creatures, including a diversity of plants, ants, grasshoppers, plant hoppers and much more, and explain how they form and maintain resilient and healthy ecosystems.

Dana stated that our partner group at the Prospect Heights Public Library has increased the stipend for Nature Speaks presenters to \$200. Jill felt this was a testament to the quality of speakers and presentations offered in this program.

Dana commented that COVID has had an impact on the speakers we have been able to retain. Conducting the Program via Zoom Meeting has provided an opportunity for us to secure presenters from a distance, such as, Gavin Pretor Pinney from England and for those presenters in our area that would have had to travel a distance to Prospect Heights.

Bird Walks

The Spring 2021 bird walks are scheduled for Saturday, May 15, 2021 and Saturday, May 29, 2021.

District 214 Internship Program and Virtual Career Night

Dana and Agnes participated in the District 214 Virtual Career Night on October 20, 2020 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

The District 214 Internship Program (60 hours) has concluded this season. The District is reviewing the future of this Program. Therefore, we anticipate continued participation in this Program after learning to what degree and how many applicants will be chosen.

Poplar Creek Prairie Seed Collection Days

Over the course of two days, we collected 30 pounds of Indian Grass, and it has all been processed. What a terrific opportunity for us. We are very appreciative to the Poplar Creek Prairie Stewards for this opportunity and the wonderful relationship we enjoy.

NEW BUSINESS

Hillcrest Lake Update

Ed Madden gave a shout-out to the City of Prospect Heights for a front-page article on the Pollinator Park in the City's quarterly fall newsletter. Thank you! The article reflects the level of support from the City to the PHNRC, of which we are very appreciative.

Ed also expressed appreciation from the PHNRC to Peter Falcone and Joe Wade for their continued assistance and support.

The residents' attitude toward the project has been incredibly positive and appreciative of our efforts. Residents are happy, ask about workdays and request PHNRC magnets.

Our last workday at Hillcrest Lake was well-attended and very productive. We managed to clear a large area of buckthorn. Only 100 yards is left on Hillcrest Drive to clear of buckthorn.

Due to the postponement of workdays due to COVID, volunteers are welcome to work independently, retrieving tools from Dana and Agnes' home, and advising of time spent working. Simply cut and stack method. Thank you!

Seed Purchases

Agnes sought approval from Commissions to purchase seed. The seed purchases are Little Bluestem for a cost of \$220 for the Pollinator Park at Hillcrest Lake and an assortment of seed varieties that we do not have for a total seed purchase cost of \$300. Payment of these seed purchases are through the Grant (Pollinator Park) Budget.

Peter Falcone suggested we proceed to conduct a roll call vote. All Commissioners present approved the seed purchases. Agnes will complete a purchase order with John and Peter. The purchased seed will be placed before the first snowfall this season.

Signage

Residents around Hillcrest Lake are excited to have signage installed. The signage will provide information on the restoration process, the plants installed, bird identification, limited species, etc. Another suggestion is to provide seasonal information, such as, what flowers are currently blooming, bird migration, etc. A timeframe must be started to formalize the design and pricing.

Prescribed Burns

Dana and Agnes agree that we must conduct prescribed burns this year. Stantec for the ComEd Seeded Prairie and we are looking at Weds., November 18, 2020. Everyone who is burn certified, please advise of your availability. Peter and Seth are available. Ed could be available. Dana will follow-up with John.

Dana spoke with Aaron of Stantec last Friday, and the target date for a prescribed burn is the week of November 16, 2020. Timing depends on conditions. We will advise Peter Falcone for the City as soon as we have a date and notify the Fire Department. Individual burns or smaller burns we will advise as we know.

We have well into December to conduct prescribed burns, but the sooner, the better.

Dana and Agnes decided to keep the big tank and the TurboRain attached to it in the truck to assist with the burns.

Site Monitoring Reports from Commissioners

Per procedure, each Commissioner has responsibility to provide a status update on one of our eight (8) work sites monthly and communicate their report via e:mail to all Commissioners. At the NRC monthly meeting, questions and concerns are addressed. Each monthly worksite update is provided in meeting minutes.

ComEd Seeded Prairie (Dana Sievertson)

Dana reported that the ComEd Seeded Prairie is almost ready to burn. Most of it is down for the season with not a lot of green showing. The Canada Goldenrod round-up on the west side was very thorough. The East Side we never touched. We are in a holding pattern until we burn. Dana is hopeful the burn will be better than the last time we burned.

Dana added at the meeting that Sara Race from ComEd went to look at it in the summer. Stantec was going to burn. Looked at it again. Sara and Stantec felt a better approach would be to come out with a brush hog and wipe it clean. We could accomplish this task in the dead of winter to provide less impact or disturbance to the soil/ground. Then we will herbicide what is exposed. This is a one-two approach.

Heron Pond (John Kamysz)

John stated the Site Monitoring Report for Heron Pond is status quo. The Bald Cypressess have changed color and are quite beautiful

Hillcrest Lake (John Kamysz)

John reported that Hillcrest Lake is doing well. Our recent volunteer workday accomplished a lot of buckthorn removal. We also located a few oak trees and hickory trees lurking in the shadows or the depths of the buckthorn wall.

John also stated that Dana keeps watering the plantings during these very dry times. Thank you, Dana!

Morava Nature Preserve (Pete Hahn)

Peter Hahn provided a current Site Monitoring Report for the Morava Nature Preserve.

Peter said he toured the Nature Preserve on November 10, 2020 and observed most of the vegetation is brown, and the top growth is completed for the year. Peter noted some unresolved issues at the Nature Preserve, namely erosion by the stepping stones, steep creek banks, buckthorn resprouts, dead trees and an over-abundance of polk weed.

Peter also noticed a Park District worker dumping dry leaves outside the undefined limits of the brush pile. These leaves are now on top of our hazelnut plants. We should define our maintenance standards for the Nature Preserve over the winter season.

Seth also shared that the area where the cuttings are placed, left down the hill to the creek and to the right, a path has been created. It is located right at the cliff. This is a vulnerable area by the cliff, near erosion and possible collapse. When did this happen?

Peter said the path has been there and is simply more exposed now in the fall and winter because vegetation has died back. Peter uses the path to get to the stepping stones and knows the area well.

Peter said that children also use the path going down to the creek and play around that area. Peter said the children have a slide going down there.

Seth feels the path should not exist. The path should be closed or blocked. Seth feels there is no reason to have a path by a cliff because it worsens the erosion and causes risk of life. We have a defined path system throughout the Nature Preserve.

Dana said he will check it out tomorrow. The path is a short cut to the stepping stones by the creek.

The erosion situation is getting bad. It needs major work. We cannot do it. This is a good time to see it clearly, and it is disturbing.

Remnant Prairie (Seth Marcus)

Seth provided a Monitoring Report for the Remnant Prairie.

Seth stated that everything has finished flowering. Not too many woody species in the southern third of the Prairie. Some pussy willow, apparently native; do we want these?

Seth noticed a lot of Canada Goldenrod throughout the Prairie, and a lot of seed plumes.

Seth noticed a small amount of Teasel and suggested attacking it vigorously while it still is a small population.

Seth said the middle third of the Prairie has a lot of woody species that need to be addressed, such as buckthorn with fruit, etc. If we cut the woody species, then what? Given that we cannot burn because of the electric towers, we must formulate a plan.

Dana said that Sara Race from ComEd looked at the Remnant Prairie with Dana and Agnes in early summer. ComEd planned to burn the Remnant Prairie and the ComEd Seeded Prairie. However, Sara looked at the site, again, and with a Stantec representative and felt a better approach would be to come in with a brush hog and wipe it clean of the woody species. ComEd has done this once before with good results.

The timing would be the dead of winter when disturbance to the soil would be less impact because the ground would be frozen. After they come out, we would then herbicide what is exposed from all the removed woody species. This method is a one-two approach that makes management sense.

Overall, Seth said the Remnant Prairie looks good; however, Seth is concerned that some of the remnant species might be outcompeted by aggressive native and non-native species. Seth recommends a workday soon while these factors are controllable.

Remnant Sedge Meadow (Jill Moskal)

Jill reported that she conducted a Monitoring Report on November 8, 2020, walking from Willow Road south to Camp McDonald Road.

The Meadow is in fall mode and colored brown and taupe with a few spots of red and orange from woody species' leaves, like Dogwood.

The Cattails have spread and are quite obvious. Jill observed a few Canada Thistle growing amongst the Cattails.

The Cattails and Swamp Milkweed have gone to seed.

On another note, the bikeway was patched and in heavy use by cyclists and walkers.

Saint Alphonsus Prairie (Ed Madden)

Ed Madden reported that the Saint Alphonsus Prairie, like many of the other areas, has wrapped up the growing season. Everything seems to be as it should be.

Tully Park (Jill Moskal/Wendy Dewar)

Jill touched base with Wendy Dewar for a Monitoring Report on Tully Park.

A small seed gathering effort was conducted at Tully Park.

Also, Agnes herbicided a swath of turf grass. This area will be seeded with sun-loving wildflowers this winter.

Wendy would like to plan another buckthorn removal day after the prescribed burn planned for Tully Park this fall.

Wendy would also appreciate knowing when the prescribed burn will be conducted at Tully Park as soon as a date is determined.

Thank you!

Path Maintenance at the Worksites

Can we extend the path by the Slough by 9 Marion? We plan to do that and bring the path as it goes along Hillside towards the Izaak Walton sign. We started it last winter but have not completed it. Both areas are on the Agenda.

Seed/Greenhouse Program

We have 15 pounds of seed left to process, mostly milkweed. We will utilize the Jim Kay Milkweed Gin to process it.

There is not enough seed to utilize volunteers for seed processing.

Agnes said at this point, 30 different species are germinating under protective wire from animals and weighted down. They are propagating for next spring.

Volunteer Appreciation and Presentation of the Golden Loppers

Dana has sent the sign for the Golden Loppers to be manufactured and will pick it up tomorrow, November 13, 2020. We must determine a presentation date. Jill will coordinate.

Comprehensive Equipment List and 2021 Budget

This is our last meeting of the year 2020. Budget discussions will begin in January 2021. Therefore, we need to start thinking about our budget for next year.

We also have the budget to submit to the Park District. We have received overtures from the Park District to fund a portion as they did last year or like last year's budget. Anything extra? In terms of equipment, we are fine. A lot of maintenance has been completed. Operational supplies and interns' salaries must be determined.

PHNRC Treasurer Report and New 2020 Budget

John reported that nothing has changed. We do not have funds, and we have not incurred any expenses.

Seth if we are spending money, it is important to mention so that funding organization and agencies realize we ran out of money but still need to spend, so we are utilizing our own money.

Dana said he suspects it will look very much like it did last year. We have spent \$3,000 to \$4,000 of our own money. We cannot go month after month without any money. By the end of the year, we will have a full accounting. In January, we will start talking about budgeting and how much more we need.

2021 PHNRC Meeting Schedule

Jill prepared and distributed a proposed 2021 PHNRC Meeting Schedule to Commissioners.

All Commissioners are fine with the dates. Therefore, Jill will provide Peter Falcone with an approved 2021 PHNRC Meeting Schedule.

City Civic Meetings and PHNRC Representation

Jill noted that the Ad Hoc Willow Road Project Commission has not held a meeting since February 27, 2019. Also, the McDonald Creek Commission has not held a meeting yet this year.

City Council of Prospect Heights, IL – October 26, 2020

Jill reported that standard business topics were discussed plus the following topics:

1. Prospect Heights Traffic Safety Policy and Procedures.
2. Chicago Executive Airport is constructing a new U.S. Customs and Border Protection building at the airport.
3. 2020 IL Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP) Grant Application has been filed for the Wolf Road Sidewalk Extension Project.

Prospect Heights Park District Board of Directors' Meeting – October 27, 2020

Jill reported that the Park District Board met in person, but she was unaware of the location. All resident attendance/participation was via Zoom Meeting.

PH Parks Foundation has been established, a 501(c)3 organization. Purpose: Fundraising arm of the Park District to support activities of the Park District and another way for the community to engage with the Park District. The Foundation will be a separate entity with a mission to support the Board. Prospect Heights will be great parks, trails, and state-of-the-art facilities.

The PH Parks Foundation is establishing a task force to search for board members. A heavy recruitment campaign will commence, asking for resumes and applications for the applicant screening process. The Foundation is looking for skill sets, such as a Foundation background (books), marketing background for campaigns and outreach, and grant writing. Board Members should have resources to donate or know people who can donate. Qualifications: time, skills, money, activities

How much staff involvement with the Foundation? Limited to events.

The Park Foundation will look at grant writing, community outreach to secure sponsorship and money. The Foundation could have a presence at PD events.

GMRC Feasibility Study Taskforce Meetings held on Sept 1 and 14. Christina reported the PD is reviewing how the Glenview Park District completed a GMRC Feasibility Study. Need to contract professional services for education and development. Study should be completed end of 2021.

Consideration of Agreement of Exchange of Land at/adjacent to Muir Park. Meeting held three weeks' ago. Trying to have a final park design. Working with staff to accomplish and city action.

PHPD has had a good start with Budgeting.

The next PHPD Board Meeting is November 17, 2020 at 7:00 pm.

Announcements to the Public

Seth said that one of our Commissioners, Ed, had a good idea on how we can better convey to the public how much seed we collect.

Seth said Agnes sent a newsletter today, and in the newsletter, it stated the following:

Number of seeds per teaspoon of several native plants: Cream False Indigo – 250; Stiff Gentian – 20,000; Culver's root – 60,000.

Therefore, when we state the poundage of seed we collect, that represents a vast bounty of seed!

Ed said at some point, images, or photos of what a seed looks like in terms of volume would also be a good visual representation.

As a reminder, the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission (PHRNC) website address is: <https://www.phnrc.com>.

Visitors' Comments

None.

OTHER BUSINESS

Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission is January 14, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. Central Time. A December 2020 meeting is not scheduled.

ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business to come before the meeting. Therefore, the meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Jill E. Moskal, CPS
PHNRC Commissioner and Recording Secretary