

CITY OF PROSPECT HEIGHTS
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
September 8, 2022

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

Absent: Agnes Wojnarski

Guest: Peter Falcone, Assistant City Administrator

NOTE: Meeting held virtually via Zoom. Meeting ID: 839 088 81956

OPENING ITEMS

Call to Order

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

Roll Call

Roll Call proceeded. All Commissioners were present except our Chairperson, Agnes Wojnarski. However, a quorum was present.

Meeting Minutes of Regular Meeting of August 11, 2022

The minutes of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission Board Meeting of August 11, 2022, were reviewed. No changes or corrections were noted. Therefore, the meeting minutes of August 11, 2022 were approved.

OLD BUSINESS

Volunteer Workdays

A make-up volunteer workday was conducted on August 14, 2022 at Hillcrest Lake to plant the new section of the shoreline restoration and finishing the deck with prairie species at the first planting.

Our volunteer workday of August 21, 2022 was held at the Slough near the north Boardwalk for planting. Also, transplanting the last of the seedlings under the canopies at Headquarters (9 Marion Place) was also conducted.

Our volunteer workday of September 4, 2022 was conducted at Hillcrest Lake to plant the prairie species that will back-up the shoreline restoration. We created 120 feet of riparian buffer that will retain and filter storm runoff while adding to the pollinator habitat and enhancing the aesthetic value of Pollinator Park.

We are astounded at the number of volunteers that are joining us for our workdays and Special Seed Collection Wednesdays. Seventeen volunteers were present at the Seed Collection and 20 plus volunteers at our workdays.

Over the course of this year, we have currently logged 2,261 volunteer hours of which 481 hours were with Pollinator Park and the shoreline restoration project and 110 hours for the Boardwalk Project. The volunteer hours do not include the hours worked by our summer interns.

Our volunteer workday of September 18, 2022 will include Felix, the Eagle Scout who managed the Board Walk Project, who is a member of S.O.S. (Service Over Self) at Hersey. Felix seeks to put together a program for Sept 18 and to draw 30 volunteers. The workday is planned for the Boardwalk Project to plant 3,000 plugs into the newly reclaimed cattail sections, which comprise an 0.25 to .067 acre created with assistance from Seth and Jill.

Commissioners expressed concern of neglecting our other work sites. In some respects, we are because Dana explained that we have two major projects for the summer: The Shoreline Restoration Project, which involves 30 feet more than the pilot program, and closing out the Boardwalk Grant, which must be completed by December 31, 2022. These two summer projects have dictated where our time and efforts were placed. We are aware that maintenance of other work sites has been neglected.

Dana said we have concluded the Shoreline Restoration Project for this year except for watering the newly installed plantings. The Shoreline Restoration Project is for another five years. The September 18 workday will be the last workday dedicated to the Boardwalk Grant. We will then proceed to the secondary tertiary sites where work is required.

We are not intentionally neglecting our other work sites. We do not favor one site over another.

Our regularly scheduled workday for Sunday, August 21 will be conducted at the Slough where the sedges may be easily planted within dry conditions by the Boardwalk.

Prospect Heights Public Library/Park District Events

Nature Speaks Program

Dana reported receipt of \$250.00 from the Prospect Heights Park District for our participation in the Nature Camp on August 9, 2022. We are sincerely appreciative for receipt of these funds.

The Fall Nature Speaks Program will be conducted on October 20, 2022 from 7:00 – 8:30 pm via a zoom presentation by Dan Jaffe Wilder on “Kill Your Lawn.” In his presentation, Dan Jaffe Wilder will talk about the diverse options available from whole lawn replacement to strategies for reducing inputs and increasing ecological value.”

Kevin Griebenow, a friend of John’s, will present on hydrology and the water shed on January 26, 2023. Kevin is a Dam Engineer with the Army Corps of Engineers and can educate us on water flow and how it works.

The third Nature Speaks Program slot may be filled with a presentation by the beekeeper, Grace Hart, Aveole Urban Beekeeper, in the Spring 2023. Dana will provide the public relations materials to Ed for publishing.

Fall Bird Walks

The Fall Bird Walks are scheduled for Saturday, September 17 from 7:30-9:30 a.m. and October 8, 2022. The Bird Walks will be conducted by Mary Lou Mellon of the Bird Conservation Network. The first Fall Bird Walk will kick-off Illinois Prairie Week.

The Spring 2023 Bird Walk dates have been confirmed: May 13 and May 24, 2023 and conducted by Mary Lou Mellon. The Spring 2023 will begin Mary Lou's ninth season of conducting our Bird Walks.

District 214: Buffalo Grove Prairie Update

Dana reported that Agnes and Dana will be meeting with the students and Rich, their Faculty Adviser, sometime in the next week to review next steps with the Buffalo Grove Prairie Project. Agnes and Seth are planning to visit the Prairie tomorrow, pending Agnes feeling better.

District 214: Wheeling High School Update

Seth and Agnes provided the introductory lecture on what we do and native restoration work at Wheeling High School recently. The attendees were the same class that came out for the Slough Tour. The lecture was well-received by the students, teachers, and administrator. Plans now exist to install a prairie at the school. School year started and requested we present the lecture.

Commissioners praised Seth and Agnes for their energy and perseverance in working with Wheeling High School.

MacArthur Middle School Prairie

Agnes and Dana met with the Principal of MacArthur Middle School and the Faculty Adviser and learned the proposed project of the wet prairie located between the school buildings has been tentatively approved. Another meeting will be held to determine next steps. Agnes and Dana will advise when the work begins. It will be a live, living classroom environment -plants, pollinators, insects and birds.

Prospect Heights Garden Club

Seth provided a presentation to the Prospect Heights Garden Club on September 1, 2022. The Garden Club donated to our Commission. We are appreciative of the Garden Club's interest and support of our Commission and work. It was noted that we have spoken to the Prospect Heights Garden Club in the past.

Slough Boardwalk Project

Dana stated that the ComEd Grant Report must be submitted by December 31, 2022. The only remaining item to finish is the signage. The PHPD Budget has \$2,043 remaining, which will cover this work.

Our volunteer workday of September 18 will be the last of the giant planting days to reclaim land from the cattails. The 8,000 plugs installed by the Buffalo Grove High School Environmental Club last year have established themselves and completely taken over the area.

The Grassy Lake in Barrington had the same conditions as the Slough – buckthorn, cattails and phragmites. Two single volunteers changed 200 acres over 20 years, and it looks exactly like what has transpired here in the first year of the Grant. They used seeds where we used plugs. Plugs are the better solution because of the coming and going of water. Currently we planted 3,360 plugs in the cattail reclaimed area and have another 4,000 ready and 3,000 plugs to plant on September 18, 2022.

Pollinator Park Update and Shoreline Restoration Project

The current phase of the Shoreline Restoration Project had 4,087 plugs planted, the majority of which are warrior sedges and cord grass into the coconut roles. At the last workday, 1,800 plugs were planted in 1.5 hours by 20 volunteers. The planting has been completed, and it is an amazing result. What is remaining for this year is watering and maintenance.

John said we planted out from the restoration shoreline to the grass. Will the proposed walkway path be installed? Yes. We will plant that by the end of the season, and it can be accomplished without an organized workday. John suggested recruiting neighbors across the street from the restored area to assist with watering the area to relieve Dana and Agnes of this burden. In the past, local resident, Lou has volunteered to assist with watering.

Path Maintenance at Worksite

Path Maintenance at our worksites has been a low priority to everything else. We will try to catch up. Dana and Seth have periodically worked on the paths at our worksites.

Seth said our Special Seed Collection Wednesdays have seen a huge turnout of volunteers. Seth proposed conducting Maintenance Mondays from 5:30-7:30 pm for path maintenance at our sites. It is a short notice, but we could restart in the spring. Commissioners also discussed having an additional Sunday workday for organization purposes.

Commissioners discussed sending an e:mail message to limited volunteers for the Maintenance Mondays starting September 12 at the Nature Preserve (Gary Morava) at 5:30 p.m.

Path maintenance involves the use of string trimmers, sometimes a lawn mower, and sometimes a battery-powered saw for clearing downed trees. A lawn mower is required to keep the path at Heron Pond and the east side of the Slough trimmed.

Dana would like to review our current Waiver with Joe Wade because we do not know the full extension of the liability. Dana was emphatic that we do not provide a power tool to any volunteer but only to those who have a proven history and knowledge and experience with the tool. Ed thought there might be acceptance for Commissioners to utilize a power tool in our role as city officials.

The Waiver of Liability was created and produced by the PHPD and used ubiquitously across the city and Park District platforms.

Seth reiterated that the reason we are mentioning this is that there are sites that require path maintenance; therefore, a more organized and productive approach may be required.

Pete said that a tree with a trunk that is about two feet in diameter at the Preserve has fallen lengthwise down the path and causing limited access to the brush pile. Be careful as a few oaks are nearby and were barely missed by the tree falling. The oak trees should be visibly protected. Volunteers would be needed to haul branches away to the brush pile. Dana said he will send an e:mail message to Dino of the Park District to see if the Park District crew could manage the tree removal. However, Pete cautioned the use of bobcats, tractors, and other vehicles in the Nature Preserve that will trample and tear up the site.

Pete said he realizes we must prioritize our work at our sites, but he would appreciate our remembering that the Nature Preserve is unique. While a small-sized preserve, it requires maintenance. Dana said that for 2023, the work events involve a smaller section of the Shoreline Restoration Project at the north corner; therefore, we will dedicate 2023 to path maintenance.

The only sizable work on the docket for 2023 is the shoreline restoration project because we have no other Grants. Therefore, Dana shared that Agnes proposes next year's work events involve the north corner shoreline restoration (smallest section) and dedicated effort to maintain our worksites to get back on track.

Seed/Greenhouse Program

Dana reported that the Special Seed Collection Wednesdays have experienced large volunteer presence.

The Seed/Greenhouse Program has concluded for the year. Just a few remaining plants need to be transplanted. Other plants are being organized and positioned to be placed in the ground. We have distributed 8,900 plugs out of 40,000 plants that were grown or one-fourth of the inventory.

Illinois Prairie Week (September 19 – 23, 2022)

Dana will issue a notice on Illinois Prairie Week on Monday, September 12, 2022 of the activities from September 17 to September 24, 2022. Also, the calendar on our website is current.

Sept 17 (Saturday) Fall Bird Walk – Mary Lou Mellon, Bird Conservation Network
7:30-9:30 a.m.

Sept 21 (Wednesday) History of the ComEd Seeded Prairie – Dana and Agnes
9:00-10:30 a.m. The presentation will center on how it was created, the pitfalls, great results and unexpected outcomes.

Sept 21 (Wednesday) Special Seed Collection Wednesday at the ComEd Seeded Prairie
5:30 p.m. to Dusk

Sept 24 (Saturday) Pop Up Art Sale at Izaak Walton Pavilion – Sunflower Group with
10:00am – 4:00 pm assistance from the PHNRC

The History of the Slough will be presented via a Tour on September 14 starting 5:30 p.m.

Prescribed Burns

Dana reported that the burn permit has been granted. Everything requested has been approved. Therefore, we have another year of prescribed burns.

NEW BUSINESS

Poplar Creek Prairie Stewards Seed Collection Days

Dana said that we have an exchange program with the Poplar Creek Prairie Stewards where we grow plants for PCPS, and they allow us to collect seeds at their site. Agnes has the dates for this season's seed collection at Poplar Creek. An e:mail will be sent to both Commissioners and volunteers with the PCPS Seed Collection Days.

Annual Seed Processing and Volunteer Appreciation Day

Commissioners discussed when to hold this year's Annual Seed Processing and Volunteer Appreciation Day. Dana suggested November 27, but other Commissioners reflected that past year's events were held the Sunday before Thanksgiving. Commissioners were also amenable to holding the Event on the Saturday before Thanksgiving. Commissioners considered the dates of November 19 or 20, 2022, and Dana will mention these dates to Agnes. The thought of starting a bit later, such as 10:00 or 10:30 am, was discussed.

Commissioners should begin thinking of a volunteer recipient for the 2022 Golden Loppers Award.

Treasurer's Report

John Kamysz provided Commissioners with an updated copy of our City of Prospect Heights FY2022-23 NRC Budget, which was supplied by Peter Falcone and includes the Capital Budget for shoreline restoration. John stated that there was nothing new to report.

Commissioners' Site Reports

ComEd Seeded Prairie (Dana Sievertson)

Dana reported that the ComEd Seeded Prairie is overrun with Canada Golden Rod, and the path is closed and needs a vertical trim. Otherwise, it has been a banner year for the Seeded Prairie. Grass-leaved Golden Rod has replaced the Canada Golden Rod we cut down two years' ago. Grassland Restoration Network have taken to herbiciding the Canada Golden Rod and planting a parasitic plant called the dotter to control it.

Heron Pond (John Kamysz)

John reported that Herod Pond is overgrown, making it difficult to walk the trail with a very thick batch of what we planted, but also invasives and a lot of Pokeweed. Therefore, the trail at Heron Pond needs attention.

Hillcrest Lake/Pollinator Park Project

John reported that the planting is almost completed along the new section of restored lakeshore. It looks great! John said we will need to finish planting closer to the road to establish the walking path like other areas.

Nature Preserve (Gary Morava) (Pete Hahn)

Pete reported that he toured the Nature Preserve on September 7, 2022. Pete said he could only walk the path in specific sections. A large Siberian Elm tree has fallen across the path near the brush pile. The tree is large and takes out about 100 feet of the walking path. Therefore, Pete said a large crew of volunteers with chainsaws are needs to clear the path. Other paths were overgrown and in need of clearing. We sure do miss the interns!

The native plants are blooming profusely, especially the yellow flowering plants. Pete commented it is a shame that residents cannot walk through the Nature Preserve to enjoy the last days of flowering native plants.

Remnant Prairie (Seth Marcus)

A current report on the Remnant Prairie was not provided.

Remnant Sedge Meadow (Jill Moskal)

The Remnant Sedge Meadow shows many invasive woody species, like Dogwood, and invasives, such as Queen Ann's Lace.

The interns spent a weekday working at the Sedge Meadow in early August herbiciding Teasel, Canada Thistle, and a few woody species. Photos were provided by Jill to show that herbiciding the Teasel was effective.

Jill has set an objective to study, obtain an Herbicide License, and then take proactive measure to eradicate invasive species at the Remnant Sedge Meadow with the long-term goal to upgrading the Remnant Sedge Meadow to a ComEd Grade A Rating.

Saint Alphonsus (Ed Madden)

Ed reported that St. Alphonsus Prairie is starting to die down, and it appears that most of the seeds have been released.

Slough

Ed said the aquatic plants located in the south Slough area are tough! They are flourishing because they are established and clearly have exploded this year with beautiful blooms.

Dana said we plan to dig up arrowheads from the Slough and plant them in the new two areas of aquatic planting at the shoreline restoration project areas.

Tully Park (Wendy Dewar)

Wendy Dewar reported that White Snake Root, Boneset and Flat-top Golden Rod are blooming at Tully Park. Another unfavorable type of Golden Rod is also blooming.

Nothing is quite ready for seed gathering; however, Wendy anticipates that seed collection will begin soon.

Ragweed is growing and will be, hopefully, removed next week before it goes to seed.

City Civic Meetings and PHNRC Representation

Jill highlighted notes from the following August 2022 City Council and PHPD Board meetings:

City Council Hybrid Workshop Meeting – August 8, 2022

A City Council Hybrid Workshop Meeting was not held on August 8, 2022 because it was summer break for the City Council

City Council Regular Hybrid Meeting – August 22, 2022

Dan Peterson, Director of Building and Development: Draft city maps were distributed to Council. They are not the official maps because they have not been reviewed by Zoning; however, they reflect actions taken by Council. In one month, the maps will be formalized.

Along with it will do text amendments this fall to amend zoning codes to reflect the changes that the annexation of the 30 acres along Sanders Road required.

The map change was the reduction of the 30 acres, but also left OS (Office 01 Zoning). Will have to be redistributed through the city to ensure the zoning changes are accommodated.

Ald. Ludvigsen: With the new maps and zoning changes, have we considered the Census to reappropriate and ensure the Wards are distributed accurately? Joe Wade said this was a good question, and he will investigate.

Acting Mayor Dolick: Acting Mayor and Ald. Dolick asked Dan Peterson if the antenna behind the Fire Department was complete? Dan said a final inspection is due. However, the antenna is in keeping with the submitted plans and design approved by Council.

Mark Roscoe, Director of Public Works: Arlington Countryside Storm Sewer Project is operating on schedule. All underground work down Camp McDonald Road is completed. The work on Forest Avenue by the station is in progress. Looking at mid- to end-of-September as a completion date.

The School District ground has been leveled. Sod delivered and installation is scheduled for mid-September.

The Project is coming together, and it is exciting to see.

Next Meetings: A City Council Workshop Meeting is scheduled for Monday, September 12, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. The City Council Regular Meeting will be held Monday, September 27, 2022 at 6:30 p.m.

Prospect Heights Park District – Board Meeting of August 23, 2022

Jill was unable to attend the August 23 PHPD Board Meeting. Therefore, the information presented is directly from the Board materials packet.

214 Wheeling Road/Tully Park Update: The appraisal process of 214 South Wheeling Road is ongoing. The intergovernmental agreement with the City will be developed soon. The demolition is planned for spring of 2023.

Budgets: The budget process for 2023 has been initiated after familiarization with prior year processes and developing a tentative schedule. The budget handbook has been sent out to staff. The Fy2023 Budget presentation is scheduled for the December 13, 2022 Board Meeting.

Day Camp: Day Camp concluded on August 12, 2022. On Tuesday, August 9, the Natural Resources Commission was onsite doing nature-based activities with our campers. Looking forward to Summer Camp 2023!

Enrollment numbers for Camps: Please note these may be duplicate participants. For example, a camper may have attended five weeks, so he is counted five times in the numbers listed below.)

FY 2022: 3,158 (entire summer)

FY 2021: 2,286 (entire summer)

FY 2020: Camp was not held re: COVID Pandemic.

FY 2019: 2,199 (entire summer)

Lions Park Project Update: Williams Architects have updated the imagery boards for display. Staff is working with PCI on a community education plan.

Next Meeting: The next scheduled PHPD Board Meeting is Tuesday, September 27, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. at the Gary Morava Recreation Center on Camp McDonald Road in Prospect Heights, IL.

Announcements to the Public

None.

Visitors' Comments

No visitors were present.

OTHER BUSINESS

Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission is October 13, 2022, at 7:00 p.m. Central Time.

ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business to come before the meeting. Therefore, the meeting adjourned at 7:51p.m.

Jill E. Moskal, CPS
PHNRC Commissioner and Recording Secretary