

CITY OF PROSPECT HEIGHTS
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
SPECIAL BOARD MEETING MINUTES
February 16, 2023

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

Guest: Peter Falcone, Assistant City Administrator

NOTE: Meeting held via Zoom. Meeting ID: **837 6520 0792**

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, and a quorum was present.

Meeting Minutes of Regular Meeting of January 19, 2023

The minutes of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission Special Board Meeting of January 19, 2023 were reviewed. No changes or corrections were noted. Therefore, the meeting minutes of January 19, 2023 were approved.

OLD BUSINESS

Volunteer Workdays

Our volunteer workday of February 5, 2023 was held at the Prospect Heights Slough near PHNRC Headquarters (Marion and Maple Streets) to complete essential winter work by clearing invasives, mostly buckthorn, on both sides of the Slough, clearing snags and general maintenance. The result of the workday was clearing 98% of buckthorn on one entire side of the Slough.

Our volunteer workday of February 19, 2023 will be conducted at the Slough at Hillside, Maple and Olive to conduct essential winter work of clearing invasives, mostly buckthorn, tending to a few downed trees and bringing a few down, creating fire breaks, and distributing more woodland grass seed. The site has the potential to be muddy.

Volunteer turnout for recent workdays have been well-attended, enthusiastic and accomplishments!

Also, we are planning to celebrate the Commission's 9th anniversary and St. Valentine's Day. A Kielbasa roast, snacks and another special anniversary cake from Sadiecakes after the workday.

Prospect Heights Public Library/Park District Events

Nature Speaks Program

Dana did not have new information to report, and nothing has been currently scheduled after April 20, 2023.

Peter Cairn from Scotland will be our speaker on April 20, 2023, and this is part of Earth Week 2023. National Geographic published an article entitled *The Rewilding of Scotland* and returning Scotland to its natural state. This project is a concerted effort by the whole country and several organizations by offering a restoration tourism B&B package where you pay to volunteer on the projects. Dana said Peter is an amazing speaker.

Dana said the PHNRC, the Public Library and the Park District are coordinating a proposed joint event with the beekeepers that would involve a hands-on workshop and a talk. This may or may not be our next event.

The Spring Bird Walks will be conducted on May 13 and May 27, 2023 (Saturdays). Please be sure to register with the Park District.

Slough Boardwalk Project – Update/Status

Dana and Agnes have been reviewing methods to burn the cattails this winter, and they spoke with a crew based in Wisconsin. They, too, have found the relative humidity to be high this winter season. The crew has cut the cattails, rake them into a pile, and use a propane torch to the pile when frozen. Dana and Agnes are doubtful that our area will experience a hard freeze; therefore, managing the cattails will roll into the spring and may be patchy. We will try the Wisconsin crew method next winter.

Agnes feels we may have been displacing a lot of the cattails that have been on the land and a lot are deep into the water. That is what we are left with, and fire does not carry from the land to the water where the cattails are now located. Dana feels that perhaps the cattails wick the water up into the shaft.

Dana said the signs for the Board Walk have been created. Dana will provide information for Commissioners' review and approval then send for production.

Pollinator Park Update and Shoreline Restoration Project

The Pollinator Park signs have been received. Therefore, Dana provided Commissioners via e:mail with the amended Pollinator Park map to indicate sign placement locations.

Dana and Agnes meet with Mark Roscoe and discussed areas to place the signs. Mark provided his approval. Therefore, the signs will be installed as soon as the ground thaws. At that time, Dana will have a follow-up conversation with Tim and Heidi regarding placement of the Welcome sign location. Tim and Heidi agreed last summer to the placement; however, Mark suggested confirming their thoughts before installation.

Also, Mark Roscoe provided approval for us to remove the large Siberian Elm located in Pollinator Park at the next freeze.

The next phase of the Shoreline Restoration Project is to work at the north area where the finger of land with severe erosion is located and where the land is almost touching the road. Our work along Willow Road is pending due to the Willow Road Reconstruction Project.

Timing of starting the next phase is based on when our 2023 summer interns will start work.

Dana mentioned that a Willow Road Project Commission meeting is scheduled for March 16, 2023 where a 60% update will be provided on the MWRD Project. This meeting will provide us guidance on where road modifications will impact the areas where we want to work. John wondered if we could push on to the next section and come back to this area after MWRD's work. John said we have found that every bit of shoreline needs restoration. Therefore, it is not worrisome if we shift to another area.

Completing the first phase of the Project placed us over budget by \$976 for this year's allotment and needs to be made up out of next year's allotment. However, we have a lot of material in inventory. Dana estimated about \$500 worth of materials in inventory. Unless extra materials cost more this year, which is an unknown, it should balance out relatively well. We want to avoid going over budget.

Path Maintenance at Worksite

Agnes said that path maintenance is currently unnecessary.

The Board Walk is holding up with the fluctuation of temperatures, freezing and water. A few sections are tilted, but the majority of the Board Walk looks good. Dana said it is a torsion box style construction that is holding well.

Seed/Greenhouse Program

Agnes said all the seeds are stratifying out in pots.

The Greenhouse will start accepting half of the new plantings either the first or second week of March. We have 20,000 plugs to plant, half of which are sedges and will be planted in the reclaim areas of the Board Walk or restoration of the shoreline later in the summer. We are growing 20,000 plants this year, which still adds up to 40,000 plants. We grew 40,000 plants and installed 20,000 plants in 2022. Agnes said second year plants are good to have in inventory because they are strong and healthy.

Prescribed Burns

Agnes mentioned that the Cook County Forest Preserve District burned last week because it was perfect timing and everything was dry. The Forest Preserve District has 60,000 acres to choose from.

Our scheduled Spring prescribed burns may be conducted earlier than usual because Agnes said the Red Wing Blackbirds are singing, and they typically are seen in March. Also, another hard freeze could be possible. We are ready for anything.

NEW BUSINESS

MacArthur Junior High School Science Fair – February 9, 2023

Dana and Agnes managed the PHNRC table and displays at the MacArthur Junior High School Science Fair on February 9, 2023. Agnes said it was a lot of fun. They were approached by many interested students and adults and distributed informational materials. Agnes said it was educational because they must ask a question to get a stamp, so topics like monarch butterflies, pollinators, habitat, etc., were queried and discussed. The Science Fair is an event where future volunteers may be found.

Dana said there is an interesting synergy at the school. The new principal as of last year and lives in Crystal Lake on a large tract of land, and he is enthusiastic about restoration work. The new Assistant Principal is interested in the environment, too. When you couple this with the Science Teachers at MacArthur, it is terrific.

Wheeling High School

Agnes said that the NRC provided a presentation last week at Wheeling High School.

Wheeling High School Environmental Science Class (STEM) and their teacher/sponsor, Mediha Abat, wish to start up their field trips, again. They arrive at NRC Headquarters in a bus then walk the Slough and are on an educational excursion for 90 minutes. Next, they assist us with pulling garlic mustard, transplanting, etc.

Agnes felt this year was special because Mediha has twice as many students interested in the class so she will have four instead of two classes. The students are saying they enjoy the field trips to come out and see us. With the extra classes, the Event will be all day. The event is held on Wednesdays from March through May, and the specific dates are March 15, April 5, April 19 and

May 3. Events will be held in the morning (two classes) and afternoon (two classes). Also, Mediha is approved for March 1 should we get a nice warm spell.

Agnes said that Mediha has added many educational ideas to the program, and the students must work for it, completing papers, learning their plants, etc.

Eagle Scout Project (Brady Martin)

Dana said he could not have done the Eagle Scout Project without John and Monty. Twenty Scouts were present to participate in the current Eagle Scout Project of building seed processing stations. Parts were pre-cut then the Scouts broke out into groups and completed the detailing work before assembling the units. The Scouts did a great job and produced 10 finished seed processing stations.

Dana expressed sincere appreciation to John and Monty for their professional assistance.

John learned that the Boy Scout Troop is a conglomerate of schools in the Old Town Neighborhood of the City. John also learned that the Scouts' projects were mostly painting the inside of school buildings. The Scouts appreciated coming out here and felt they found relevance in the Project they completed for the NRC.

The Scouts are hopeful they could come back to complete other potential projects.

John said that a lot of the kids did not know how to properly use tools, so John and Monty were happy to show them how to effectively utilize a screwdriver, hammer and other hand tools. John felt the Scouts walked about feeling fulfilled from this project.

John took the Scouts on a tour of the Slough and mentioned that the Board Walk was an Eagle Scout Project, so the Scouts saw that not all projects are one and done. There is a lot more to it.

Dana said at our recent Seed Processing Event in November, we had only seven seed processing boxes and 30 people. Therefore, the addition of the 10 seed processing stations created positively changes the equation.

Prospect Heights Park District Budget Update

Dana reported that the PHPD Budget has been approved and will fund \$7,500 plus additional funds for the Nature Camp in August 2023. The amount could be \$1,000 depending on how many days we manage for the Nature Camp. The funding from the Park District provides the summer interns' salaries, Greenhouse costs, and other obligations. We are very grateful and blessed.

Our proposed budget for the year 2023-2024 was submitted to the city in November 2023 for approval.

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.

John reported that we have \$2,000 to utilize before the end of the current fiscal year. Dana said these funds would be utilized for Operational Supplies especially chain saw blades and incidentals. An auger needs to be serviced. After this season, lopper maintenance will be scheduled.

Dana said the cost of materials for the current Eagle Scout Project was \$520, and Home Depot made a contribution of 50% for the materials. Therefore, we paid \$250. Thank you, Home Depot, for your support and generosity. Dana will be placing a mention in the Journal.

Dana said that Dr. Chris Wood, our volunteer, made another \$500 contribution this year. He is amazing! He works hard, brings his friends, and donates to the Commission. He is one in a million!

City Civic Meetings and PHNRC Representation

Jill highlighted notes from the following January 2023 City Council and PHPD Board meetings:

Strategic Planning and Directions Special Meeting – January 4, 2023

Finance Department: FY 2023-24 Budget Construction and Discussion of Capital Projects Funding

Finance Director Graefen noted that the city has had a remarkable record of being able to secure grants for capital projects. She noted that the Finance Department uses the laddering investment strategy so that each month something matures. Further, she said the goal is for the General Fund to be able to provide funds to the Capital projects Fund for recommended projects.

City Administrator Wade said that Staff was constantly looking to secure more grants and complimented Assistant City Administrator Falcone for his efforts in this area.

Public Works: Possible Future Storm Water Management Improvements

Director Roscoe said the Arlington Countryside pipe and pump station will be ready in February 2023.

Director Roscoe said the city is looking at storm water improvements and that the City is collaborating with other communities on this issue.

Director Roscoe said the city is looking to interconnect with water sources and form redundancies/looping water systems at minimal cost.

City Council Regular Hybris Meeting – January 9, 2023

Staff, Elected Officials, and Commission Reports

Introduction of Proposed Text Amendments Related to Short-term Rental Properties by Building and Economic Development Director Dan Peterson.

Director Peterson said that the city has not updated its rental agreement codes since 2002. That predates the popularity of AirBnB and other short-term rentals.

The city needs to control single family rentals through registered operators, who vet residents, renters, and collect taxes.

Alderman Ludvigsen said Prospect Heights is not a vacation destination; therefore, who would be renting single family homes? Director Peterson said the city has a current situation where a pilot has relocated and wants to rent his house when he is away but use it when he is in town. Currently, he has corporate guests using his home. Further, the possibility that single family housing rentals may be popular in this area if the Chicago Bears locate to Arlington Heights.

Director Peterson said that the updates to the Ordinance would not apply to R-2 housing. Alderman Ludvigsen wanted to know why and who would stop a younger person from renting homes for parties. Director Peterson said that is exactly why the city wants rentals to go through a registered operator to vet the renters.

Alderman Dash asked what would happen if a renter did not go with a registered operator? Director Peterson said they would then be in violation of the City Ordinance.

Alderman Morgan-Adams asked if the Ordinance would distinguish between people renting a few months and someone taking in a long-time renter? Director Peterson said that was a completely different situation: Tenants are allowed, and the renter must register as a landlord.

Public Comment on Non-Agenda Matters: Jerry Simmons of 1010 East Clarendon.

Jerry Simmons noted that as a River Trails Condo Association representative, crime and flood insurance increases should be noted. Mr. Simmons said that because of a pipe that has not been installed, the area is still considered a flood zone.

Mr. Simmons noted that there has been gunfire in the area, and the police have suggested installing a fence. Mr. Simmons would like the city to consider that the landlords need to be more proactive and that the city take away or fine landlords who do not keep up safety measures prescribed by City codes. Mr. Simmons also suggested a rewards system for landlords who are compliant.

Mr. Simmons commented on AirBnb's saying that Fox Lake is currently trying to eliminate these licenses because they have caused issues.

Mr. Simmons expressed appreciation to the Police for their efforts in ensuring safety on the east side of the city.

City Council Regular Meeting – January 23, 2023

The meeting lasted 35 minutes.

Acting Mayor Dolick proposed the removal of Staff Reports as a regular agenda item and instead Staff Reports will be provided as topics dictate.

Next Meetings: A City Council Regular Meeting will be held Monday, February 13, 2023 at 6:30 p.m. A City Council Regular Meeting will be held Monday, February 27, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.

Prospect Heights Park District – Board Meeting of January 24, 2023

The 2023 PHPD Budget was approved. Following is a screenshot of page 3 of the Budget highlighting 100 Corporate Fund and 200 Recreation Fund (Nature Camp) where funding for the PHNRC is held/reported.

SUMMARY of ANNUAL BUDGET & APPROPRIATION ORDINANCE FOR FISCAL YEAR 2023

FUND	BUDGET	APPROPRIATION
100 CORPORATE	\$ 815,980	\$ 979,176
200 RECREATION	2,020,819	2,424,983
300 GOLF	1,972,326	2,366,791
404 AUDIT	18,025	21,630
405 PAVING & LIGHTING	10,400	12,480
406 LIABILITY INSURANCE	106,931	128,317
407 IMRF	121,935	146,322
408 POLICE	45,020	54,024
409 MUSEUM	7,000	8,400
410 SPECIAL RECREATION	168,647	202,376
411 SOCIAL SECURITY	180,562	216,674
412 MEMORIAL	4,200	5,040
413 COMMUNITY EVENTS	25,640	30,768
CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT/BONDS		
518 CAPITAL	1,506,407	1,807,688
523 CAPITAL	342,100	410,520
608 BOND & INTEREST - 2014B	469,600	563,520
612 BOND & INTEREST - 2022	665,157	798,188
613 BOND & INTEREST - 2023	10,665	12,798
GRAND TOTALS	8,491,414	10,189,697

Tully Park: The PHPD mentioned expanding Tully Park. This means that the PHPD's plan is for the City to demolish the home at 214 South Wheeling Road, Prospect Heights in either May or June 2023. This will provide access to Tully Park so that the Parks Department can more efficiently get their equipment to Tully Park to mow the lawn.

The five-year plan provided by the Friends of Tully Park with input by Agnes and Dana as Chairperson and Co-Chairperson of the PHNRC has not been discussed with the PHPD Board of Directors and PHPD Staff. Therefore, currently, there is no approved Plan for Tully Park.

Code of Conduct for the Park District: The Code of Conduct for the Park District was introduced by Christina Ferraro at the PHPD Board Meeting of December 13, 2022. The Code of conduct has been approved and will be printed and posted on all Park District properties.

A copy of the Code of Conduct for the Park District will be provided with the February 16, 2023 PHNRC meeting materials.

Future Planning: Christina Ferraro proposed conducting a workshop in April and must design what it would look like. Election Day is April 4, 2023. What will the District 23 school plans look like? March 24, 2023 is the date for the pilot referendum. A decision must be reached within six months after April. Having a conversation of where we are going would be helpful.

Future Board Agenda Items: November 2023: Approve Prescribed Burn 2023-2024. December 2023: FY2024 Budget Presentation.

Block Party 2023: The PHPD Block Party is scheduled for Saturday, June 24, 2023. The stage, sound, and two bands have been secured for the event. Securing food truck vendors will begin end of January 2023.

Next Meeting: The Prospect Heights Park District Board will meet on Tuesday, February 28, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. at the Gary Morava Recreation Center in Prospect Hts., IL.

Ed Madden suggested posting the Code of Conduct in a prominent place by the garage at 9 Marion where we do a lot of our work and, also, post the Code of Conduct on our website. Dana said he will have copies available when volunteers sign in at our volunteer workdays.

Annual Plan Review

Dana provided a draft Annual Plan to Commissioners. Dana expects to complete it by the end of next week then Commissioners will review and discuss what has to happen at our sites and prioritize. Once finalized, completing Strategic Planning is the next step. We think of the Annual Plan as an outline of tasks for each of our sites.

Announcements to the Public

None.

Visitors' Comments

Jill mentioned an article she recently read in the Daily Herald that this time of the year is mating and breeding season for coyotes, so coyotes will be more prevalent. The article cautioned owners of small dogs to be particularly vigilant going as far as to vary the walking dog route because coyotes could become familiar with the routine. Also, and most importantly, do not feed coyotes.

OTHER BUSINESS

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission will be held on Thursday, March 9, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. Central Time.

ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business to come before the meeting. Therefore, the meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Jill E. Moskal, CPS
PHNRC Commissioner and Recording Secretary