

CITY OF PROSPECT HEIGHTS  
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION  
BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
September 10, 2024

Present:       Pete Hahn                   Jill Moskal  
                  John Kamysz           Dana Sievertson  
                  Ed Madden            Agnes Wojnarski  
                  Seth Marcus

Guest:         Peter Falcone, Assistant City Administrator

OPENING ITEMS

Call to Order

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

Roll Call

Roll Call proceeded. All Commissioners were present. A quorum was present.

Meeting Minutes of the Special Board Meeting of July 11, 2024

The minutes of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission Board Meeting of July 11, 2024 were reviewed. No changes or corrections were noted. Therefore, the meeting minutes of July 11, 2024 were approved.

OLD BUSINESS

Volunteer Workdays

Volunteer workdays were conducted on August 4, 11 and 18, 2024 at Pollinator Park at Hillcrest Lake for planting of the Shoreline Restoration Project.

A volunteer workday was conducted on September 1, 2024 to complete the plantings near 7 Hillside Avenue, removal of invasives, and a general clean-up of the area.

A volunteer workday is planned for September 15, 2024 for planting near 408 Hillcrest Lake, cleaning up Phragmites debris on Owen Court, removal of a few invasives, and continuing a general clean-up of the area.

Volunteer workdays continue to be heavily attended. We are never less than 20 people. To date, volunteer work hours are over 2,550 hours. Not all volunteer hours have been logged into the database. We are still welcoming new volunteers from those who attended the Arlington Heights Independence Day Parade. Commonwealth Edison personnel are also bringing their children to our volunteer workdays.

### Prospect Heights Public Library/Park District Events

#### Nature Speaks Program

The Nature Speaks Program on October 23, 2024 will feature a screening of the outstanding film entitled “Why Not Scotland?” This film is a one-hour and will be shown in the Library Meeting room and via Zoom. The library will also prepare and offer popcorn for enjoyment during the viewing.

Across mainland Europe, nature is making a dramatic recovery through restoration to rewild countries, like Poland, France, etc. All over Europe, wildlife is returning, forests are expanding, rivers are being set free, and wetlands are being restored. As nature bounces back, people are returning, too, finding new economic opportunities and enjoying the many benefits of a revitalized landscape.

Flo is a young Scot from Glasgow. Seeing the depleted state of nature across her own country, Flo feels dispirited and, like many of her generation, increasingly fearful about an uncertain future. However, on a journey around Europe, Flo encounters a different story, finding places where nature is making a dramatic comeback, revitalizing human communities. Encouraged by these stories of hope and renewal, she is prompted to wonder: If this is possible elsewhere, why not Scotland? The film underscores starting points of where they are and where they are going in Scotland.

On January 28, 2025, Flo will be the speaker for the Nature Speaks Program to provide an in-depth presentation on her experiences making the film. The presentation will be via Zoom at 7:00 p.m. Central Time.

The last Fall Bird Walk will be conducted on Saturday, September 21, 2024 from 7:30 – 9:30 a.m. Spring 2025 Bird Walks have been scheduled on May 10 and May 24, 2025.

### Projects – Update/Status

#### ComEd Seeded Prairie

Dana did not have time to visit the Commonwealth Edison (ComEd) Seeded Prairie to provide an updated Monitoring Report. However, Dana and Agnes spent the morning today with 22 ComEd people who were on site for service hours. They collected 12 pounds of seed and learned the history of the ComEd Seeded Prairie project. After the workday, all return to 9 Marion for lunch, which was provided by ComEd, then enjoyed a tour of the Slough.

Dana reported that the ComEd Seeded Prairie is overrun with Tall Canada Golden Rod. ComEd is in Year 2 of the 5-Year Study on Canada Golden Rod, but we must address this situation now. One possible solution is to cut the seed heads while they are still green or before the plant goes to seed.

Dana learned that the ComEd Seeded Prairie is not on the ComEd burn schedule this year. This is unfortunate. Dave Bart of ComEd suggested mowing the prairie before the Tall Canada Golden Rod goes to seed. Currently, as we head into fall, the Tall Canada Golden Rod has flowered but has not gone to seed. However, mowing now would prove detrimental and loss of other Asters and native prairie plants.

Agnes stated our workday of September 28, 2024 could be held at the ComEd Seeded Prairie because it is in our best interest to clip the Tall Canada Golden Rod flowering heads and stack the remnants on the side. Next, StanTec would mow in the late fall.

Could the NRC burn the prairie? No, due to challenges with the presence of the power lines and liability insurance. We are trying to get on their burn schedule. ComEd has 500 acres of native sites, some of which are remnant prairies, that they manage; therefore, that is a priority over our sites.

Sarah Race's replacement is Leslie Viaduct. Also, Dave Bart said if we have any super interns, please let them know they are hiring.

#### Heron Pond

John reported that Chris Wood has volunteered to manage the Heron Pond trail. To date, Chris has done a great job. The trail has been mowed and cut back, providing a walkable and passable trail. A relatively large tree branch, which fell across the small trail on the peninsula, has been removed. Fall colors are blooming at Heron Pond.

#### Nature Preserve (Gary Morava)

Peter reported that he reviewed the Gary Morava Nature Preserve on September 4, 2024. While collecting some seeds, Peter did not observe any major problems. The paths have been trimmed back and are in good condition.

The small oaks planted years' ago need to be cleared around them so that can grow better.

The branch pile is getting larger, and a pile of rotten wood chips is of no use.

Native plants are seeding, and some are flowering.

Peter observed it was a good evening to see the Nature Preserve in good shape.

#### Pollinator Park and Shoreline Restoration Project

John reported that Pollinator Park/Hillcrest Lake are looking good with a lot of foot traffic. Agnes recently cut back some invasives and herbicided. This area is planned for future plantings.

John stated that Dana spends a tremendous amount of time watering the new section of the Shoreline Restoration project. All plants are looking good, and the area is admired daily by passersby. Thank you, Dana!

John said the lake's water level is low. The Solstice Garden was trimmed by Spencer and looks great! The autumnal equinox is on Sunday, September 22, 2024 at 7:43 a.m. Central Time.

#### Remnant Prairie (Wheeling)

A Monitoring Report for August was not provided.

#### Remnant Sedge Meadow

Jill reported that the Remnant Sedge Meadow provided a viewing of mostly green grasses, including Reed Canary Grass, along with Canada Goldenrod. A few Canada Thistle and Teasel were present. Native plants, such as Sawtooth Sunflower, Swamp Milkweed, Dark Green Bulrush, Crested Sedge, and Soft Stemmed Bulrush and invasive plants, such as purple Loosestrife, Phragmites, and the Cattails in the middle of the Remnant Sedge Meadow were viewed. Monarda is present this year at the Remnant Sedge Meadow and is ready for seed collection.

#### Saint Alphonsus

Monitoring Reports for June and July on Saint Alphonsus were not provided.

#### Slough, The

Agnes Wojnarski reported that the Slough is excellent except for the Tall Canada Golden Rod. We have been working on eliminating the Tall Canada Golden Rod located by Hillside throughout the summer, but another workday in this area would be advantageous.

Agnes stated that the Tall Canada Golden Rod is very aggressive, colonial, and has been becoming worse over the years. Therefore, all plantings should be removed.

#### Tully Park

Jill provided the Monitoring Report for Tully Park from Wendy Dewar.

Cardinal Flower, all the yellow flowers, White Snake Root, and Bone Set are currently blooming in Tully Park. Asters are just beginning to bloom.

A fair amount of Yellow Goldenrod native to our area, and perhaps Elm Leaf, are showing. Unfortunately, the native Yellow Goldenrod is outnumbered by the Canada Goldenrod, which is everywhere!

Wendy predicts that by mid-September, seed collection from Monarda, Inland Oats, Wing Stem and Cup Plant will be possible.

Wendy expressed appreciation for Friends of Tully Park volunteers and neighbors, Rod and Mary Ellen Siemens, for trimming back during August the drooping growth along the new trail at Tully Park

### Seed/Greenhouse Program

Agnes reported that, to date, we have collected a lot of seeds and have 150 trays of seeds. Agnes said we are getting to the point when the seed collected will be abundant.

Seed Collection Wednesdays are continuing until the end of October.

### Summer Internship Program 2024

Agnes said the Summer Internship Program of 2024 has concluded. It was really great! Emma Tokarczyk and Ava Foster performed a lot of work and learned over 200 species of native plants.

### Education Update

#### Wheeling High School

Three Environmental Science classes of Wheeling High School are coming on September 11, 2024 between 8:00 and 9:40 am; 10:00 and 11:40am; and 1:40 to 3:00 p.m. John suggested having them clip the Tall Canada Golden Rod heads!

#### MacArthur Middle School

Agnes reported that she has not heard from Stephanie Ritter, the Science Teacher at MacArthur Middle School, on seed collection and classes. However, Agnes believes she will hear from Stephanie soon, perhaps in October.

### District 214 Micro-Internships

A District 214 Micro-Internship Fall Program will not be held due to lack of fall interns.

### District 214 Micro-Internships – Recognition Award to the PHNRC

The PHNRC was honored with a special ceremony at the District 214 Board Meeting in July 2024 for our outstanding internship program with the high schools of District 214. The PHNRC micro-internships are listed in the Agriculture and Natural Resources career track and have opportunities for students to enroll in the fall and spring seasons.

Also, District 214 premiered the video it created with the PHNRC and this year's summer intern and former District 214 Intern, Ava Foster. The link may be found in the August 2024 issue of *The Resources Journal*. We look forward to continuing our relationship and programs with District 214.

Dana and Agnes will be attending a District 214 meeting to be presented with a Recognition Award for the PHNRC and the debut of the video they made with Ava. This is a very nice recognition. Look forward to other programs with them.

Prospect Heights Park District Summer Camp – Nature Camp, August 8, 2024

Agnes and Dana reported that Nature Camp on August 8, 2024 went well. Many of the attendees remembered us from years past. It was and is a great experience for the young children. They have a lot of fun with and learn a lot from the programs we outlined for the morning.

CONTINUOUS REPORTING

ComEd/Green Regions Grant Application

Dana is proud to announce that the PHNRC has been awarded our fifth ComEd/Green Regions Grant! The Grant monies will be utilized to create the Public Service Commons.

The Grant is a matching grant with the PHNRC contributing \$7,000, in part, through donations from volunteers, commissioners, and a generous donation of \$4,000 from Julie and Dr. Chris Wood. The City of Prospect Heights provided an additional \$3,000, making the grant total of \$10,000, which was matched by ComEd. The project total is \$20,000 with work on the project intending to start this fall.

Ten years' ago, the late Alderman Larry Rosenthal expressed a long-held dream, which was to create a park and name it Public Service Park, in part to honor the men and women who serve the city as Police Officers and Firefighres. Alderman Rosenthal desired a place where they could slip away to eat lunch or simply have a moment to themselves. The rest of his dream was to have the area become a meeting place where the public could come and enjoy being a part of a civic place. The PHNRC has used Alderman Rosenthal's dream as an underlying concept to form the basis of Public Service Commons.

This project will establish a rich, biodiverse pollinator habitat that will serve as a nature refuge in a service area that is currently surrounded by concrete and asphalt, has no ecological value, and does little to combat climate change. The project will turn the one-third acre site into a natural area oasis that separates the Police Station from the Fire Department. It is a high-profile, highly visible plot that, when completed, will offer a multitude of educational opportunities for thousands on an annual basis through informational signage, walking paths, and public volunteer opportunities. A covered pavilion with tables will be added by the city in 2025-2026.

The Public Service Park will provide Police and Fire Department personnel with a calming environment to take a respite from the demands of their professions, immersed in the serenity of a prairie filled with pollinators, bird, and wildlife. It will be a place of observation and learning for students and residents, supported by the Educational Outreach Program of the PHNRC.

The project will, also, reduce maintenance costs and drastically change the area aesthetics.

The conversion will include over 15,000 native plugs representing 79 species of native plants. Phytoremediators will be used in the incorporation of the bioswales to help clean the runoff from the surrounding asphalt and hold it on site. Four varieties of Milkweed will be incorporated into the plantings. The site will also be overseeded in the fall and burned annually starting in the second year. All native plugs are the product of the PHNRC Greenhouse Program.

Dana met with Mark Roscoe of Public Works, Peter Falcone, and Joe Wade about two weeks ago. We look to have the cement work completed this year because it is disruptive to the site and creates the most disturbance. Mark agreed and has contacted the engineering company, stating it takes about one month before plans are drawn then two weeks after the plans are designed. Dana said we are looking to later in the Fall, which is enough time to do the work and plant the new trees.

The cement is for the pad where the pavilion will be constructed, something the city will add in two years. The pavilion construction is not part of the Grant, but the pad and two, AVA compliant sidewalks are part of the plan. The sidewalks will connect the Police and Fire Departments. The cost of the cement pad and sidewalks is \$11,000.

Dana mentioned that a few trees need to be either removed or cut down. Memorials will be reassigned to the newly planted trees.

#### Eagle Scout Project

Dana did not have anything new to report.

#### Adopt-A-Trail Update

John reported that volunteer, Chris Wood has adopted the Heron Pond Trail. Thank you, Dr. Wood! Chris has mowed and trimmed the trail, and fallen branches have been removed.

In his September Monitoring Reports, John said he noticed that trails have been widened at many of our sites. Some are almost wide enough to look like a road. Therefore, John would appreciate a discussion on optimal trail width.

#### NRC 2024-2025 Budget

John provided Commissioners with a copy of the current City of Prospect Heights 2024-2025 NRC Budget.

John reported that funding from the City of Prospect Heights and the Prospect Heights Park District along with donation funding provided \$21,944 in Revenue. Supply Expenses included topsoil expenses and stairs installed at the Slough of over \$2,400. Coupled with the Intern Expenses, our Net Revenue is about \$6,600, which is available until the end of the fiscal year in April 2025.

Hillcrest Lake Shoreline Restoration Budget: John reported that the Capital Budget of \$6,000 for this year has been fully spent, mostly for the purchase of soil. Over a ton of fill soil was required to fill in the bank area that experienced undercutting erosion. Net Revenue reported is \$17.80; however, this is inaccurate. This budget is overdrawn.

The two Des Plaines Material Topsoil expenses in the NRC Budget totaling almost \$1,000 belongs in the Hillcrest Lake Shoreline Restoration; however, since this budget is overdrawn, we have it covered in the regular budget for now.

First Responder Park Funds: The First Responder Park Funds budget is currently \$20,000, which included the ComEd Green regions Grant of \$10,000, a City Donation of \$3,000, NRC Carry-Over Funds of \$3,000, and a donation of \$4,000 from volunteer Chris Wood.

#### City Civic Meetings and PHNRC Representation

Jill reported on the following:

City Council Meeting of August 26, 2024: Regarding the improvements to raise the elevation of Willow Road and Owen Court to prevent flooding and closure: The project has been delayed beyond a 2025 completion date as additional and future engineering and geotechnical analysis is required due to stability issues with the extremely poor soil under Willow Road. However, to prevent losing Rebuild Illinois Funding, Owen Court and the compensatory storage components have been separated from the Willow-Owen Flood Control Improvement Project and will proceed with an anticipated completion date of July 1, 2025.

Prospect Heights Park District Board Meeting of July 23, 2024: Christine Ferraro reported that the Park District plans to install a parking area on the additional parcel of land recently acquired along with access to the original park area for mowers. Plans must be approved by the MWRD. The Park District is sensitive to neighbors' concerns of the grading impact on the parcel of land, particularly stormwater.

Updates: Dana, Agnes, Mark Grassi and Christina Ferraro with residents met at Tully Park. The PHPD will not be going forward with proposed plans for the property at 214 Wheeling Road. The property will remain as is for now. The PHPD must consult with the MWR. The plans to develop a 25-foot-wide entrance that links 214 Wheeling Road with the land to Tully Park has been scrapped. A pass through wide enough for a lawn mower to traverse through to Tully Park is desired. In lieu of a parking lot at 214 Wheeling Road, a small gravel area to unload the lawn mower may occur. However, the PHPD is not currently moving forward with proposed plans. Christina interviewed all the residents present to recapitulate their concerns.

Planning and Zoning Board of Appeals: Chicken Ordinance: Dan Peterson has met with residents who have concerns about chickens and residents who wish to establish a chicken owners' group. The August 28 PZBA meeting was cancelled; therefore, further information on the chicken ordinance is expected at the September 25, 2024 PZBA meeting.

#### MacArthur Middle School and Tree Initiative Program

Pete Hahn provided an update on a Tree Initiative Program with MacArthur Middle School.

Pete said the tentative planting date for 12 trees is scheduled October 24, 2024. The trees are donated by Openlands and planted by students, staff, parents, volunteers, and anyone else interested in the project. Met with all parties involved at the school. Marked out the locations for the trees. This is a cooperative adventure between District 23, MacArthur Middle School, Openlands, TreeKeepers Chapter, and Peter Hahn as the PHNRC representative. Pete will have more information at the PHNRC October 10 meeting regarding the exact time of planting the trees.

Openlands is the larger organization with TreeKeepers as a side group under the umbrella of Openlands.

## NEW INITIATIVES

### Drone Herbicide of Cattails at the Slough – Second Application

Dana reported that Davey Tree was cautious of oversupplying the cattail area with herbicide to prevent damage to the restored area; therefore, they left a 10-foot band of cattails around the full distance.

Agnes was working on a plan with the interns to combat this situation by creating a cut-down 10-foot swath of cattails to act as a buffer from the herbicide during this year's application. However, the quote from Davey Tree this year is \$4,000 or double the price from last year.

Dana and Agnes paid for it last year, and they do not have the money this year. Therefore, Commissioners proposed approaching Davey Tree to negotiate a better price and perhaps a payment plan.

It is really effective, but Agnes feels we should wait. Line item for our budget. Best time to apply is August with September as the latest.

Also, Agnes stated our interns this summer worked through the Reed Canary Grass but a bit unnecessary because of the large seed source located west of Elmhurst Road along the McDonald Creek. The Reed Canary Grass continues to be a challenge and reappeared this year. Perhaps we could address it next year with the interns.

### Arlington Heights Garden Club Slough Tour and Winter Presentation

Dana reported a Slough Tour was provided for the Arlington Heights Garden Club in August. Participants felt they learned a lot.

The Arlington Heights Garden Club is interested in the PHNRC providing a presentation to their group during the winter months. No date has been set.

## NEW BUSINESS

### Seed Collection Wednesdays – August 21 – October 23, 2024

Agnes reported that Seed Collection Wednesdays have started and may continue past the end of October due to the unusually warm weather.

### Poplar Creek Prairie Stewards Seed Collection Days

Agnes said Poplar Creek Prairie Stewards Seed Collection Days have not yet been confirmed but October is a nice month to do so. Collecting seeds from the PCPS site is wonderful because we are allowed to collect as many seeds as we need.

Illinois Prairie Week – September 15 – 21, 2024

Illinois Prairie Week is scheduled from September 15 – 21, 2024. The PHNRC will conduct a volunteer workday on September 15. Therefore, it will be held by Pollinator Park, and our PHNRC banners, restoration materials, books, and other resources will be on display.

Pop Up Art Sale – September 21, 2024

The Pop-Up Art Sale will be held on Saturday, September 21, 2024 at the Izaak Walton Pavilion. Dana encouraged Commissioners to attend and will place our PHNRC banners at the Sale.

PHNRC Annual Seed Processing and Volunteer Appreciation Day

Dana and Agnes confirmed that the PHNRC Annual Seed Processing and Volunteer Appreciation Day will be November 10, 2024.

Wild Things

Coordinators of the Wild Things Conference requested the PHNRC to provide a presentation on our Independence Day Parade activities on March 1, 2025. Kate Tully, Cathy O'Shea, John Kamysz and Mara Lovisetto agreed to be part of this objective. A proposal has been submitted. We were also asked to provide another presentation but due to current site work, we are unable to but look forward to perhaps providing a presentation at the Wild Things Conference in 2027.

Announcements to the Public

None.

Visitors' Comments

None.

OTHER BUSINESS

Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission is October 10, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. Central Time in City Hall Chambers.

ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business to come before the meeting. Therefore, the meeting was adjourned at 7:34 p.m.

Jill E. Moskal, CPS  
PHNRC Commissioner and Recording Secretary