

CITY OF PROSPECT HEIGHTS
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
November 14, 2024

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

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 except John Kamysz. However, a quorum was present.

Meeting Minutes of the Board Meeting of October 10, 2024

The minutes of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission Board Meeting of October 10, 2024 were reviewed. No changes or corrections were noted. Therefore, the meeting minutes of October 10, 2024 were approved.

OLD BUSINESS

Volunteer Workdays

A volunteer workday was conducted on Sunday, October 13, 2024 at The Slough near 7 Hillside. Work accomplished included fall maintenance: clipping cattail seed heads, clipping tall Canada Goldenrod, and clipping a good measure of buckthorn.

A volunteer workday was conducted on Sunday, October 27, 2024 at The Slough near 105 Hillside to continue fall maintenance at the Slough. Work accomplished included clipping the very last of the Cattail seed heads, tall Canada Goldenrod, and Buckthorn. Also, collecting seed and cleaning the margins of Zeke's Trail.

A volunteer workday was conducted during our big event on Sunday, November 10, 2024. Work accomplished was processing all of the seeds collected during this year's Seed Collection Wednesdays.

The plan for winter workdays involves heavy maintenance work at Gary Morava Nature Preserve, ComEd Seeded Prairie, and along Hillside Avenue from the intersection of Hillside Avenue, North Maple Avenue and East Marion Avenue to the north end. The work to be accomplished is as follows: ComEd: a solid workday cutting woody species, buckthorn and

herbiciding; maintenance work at Morava; and a radical re-work on Hillside especially between Marion and the intersection. Agnes said if the warm weather continues, she would appreciate starting at either the ComEd Seeded Prairie or the Remnant Prairie.

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. Registration is required.

The Nature Speaks program in early 2025 has changed to February 13, 2025 from January 28, 2025 and from 7:00 – 9:00 pm Central Time. The timing for Flo Blackbourn will be 1:00 a.m. Scotland Time.

Projects – Update/Status

Public Service Pollinator Park

Dana spoke with Mark Roscoe on November 14, 2024 and will meet with him tomorrow, if possible, along with Joe, the Arborist, regarding the Public Service Pollinator Park. The initial work is to lay out with paint the location of the cement slab and trees followed by mowing the paths and preparing the area for Agnes to start herbiciding. Herbiciding should be performed in the fall and, again, in the spring to ensure invasives are eradicated before planting of native plants. The concrete slab and herbiciding must be accomplished before the ground freezes. Dana will have more information later tomorrow afternoon.

The original schedule indicated to plant one Tulip Tree, a new Burr Oak, a new Swamp Oak and a Hackberry Tree. The Prospect Heights Park District must move a few trees from the ComEd right of way. Two are good-size caliber Tulip Trees; therefore, transplanting one of the Tulip Trees in lieu of the Hackberry Tree will save between \$600 to \$700 in tree costs. These funds may be applied to another part of the project. Dana provided Commissioners with the schematic.

The trees from the ComEd right-of-way must be removed by the end of next week. Coordination of our receipt of the trees and planting of the trees in the Public Service Pollinator Park will be coordinated with Joe, the arborist, tomorrow.

Seed/Greenhouse Program

Agnes reported that a lot of seed was processed at the November 10, 2024 workday and volunteer event. Seth and Agnes processed seed on November 13, 2024. One more seed processing session is needed then Agnes will weigh all the processed seeds for a total count. Seed will then be placed in pots for stratification over the winter season.

Education Update

MacArthur Middle School Seed Collection and Seed Processing

October is typically an education month. This year, it was bigger and better than ever.

On a warm and sunny early October day, 160 MacArthur Middle School 6th Grade students came out for a day of native seed collection on the prairie and seed processing with the PHNRC. With the guidance and supervision of MacArthur Faculty members, the students walked over from the school campus in two waves of 80 students. The group was broken into smaller groups that rotated from seed collection out on the prairie to seed processing at the Country Gardens pavilion.

Faculty Leader, Stephanie Ritter, was very appreciative of the PHNRC and its volunteers for spending time with her students and helping them to understand a bit more about prairie plants.

Agnes reported that mixing of seed will not be conducted with the students this year. However, the students took seed packets home with them.

MacArthur Middle School and Tree Planting Initiative

On October 24, 2024, TreeKeepers from Openlands came out and joined forces with the PHNRC to plant 12 native trees on the MacArthur Middle School campus. Faculty, staff, and 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students from MacArthur Middle School participated in the proceedings and rotated to plant trees, mulch, and water. TreeKeepers brought all the trees, the tools, the mulch, and a lot of knowledge. The students truly enjoyed planting the trees and learned about the planting and care of trees.

Mary Hahn, a member of TreeKeepers and sister of Commissioner Pete Hahn, expressed that planting native trees is a fulfilling experience, especially seeing how eager students are to learn, teachers who are engaging and caring, and conservation groups, like the PHNRC and Openlands, afford the time to educate and to care for our environment.

Pete Hahn was a co-coordinator of the October 24 event with MacArthur Middle School.

Twelve native trees were planted: three Bald Cypress, three American Hornbeam, Three Shingle Oak, and Three Swamp White Oak.

Dana said TreeKeepers provided an overview for staff and volunteers, and guidance and educational information for students and faculty. Program Specialist, Molly Roche, and Forestry Program Coordinator, Liam Nigro, provided a festive, fun atmosphere. The event was well-organized, and the enthusiasm put into the Event.

Seed Collection Wednesdays

Agnes reported that Seed Collection Wednesdays has concluded for the season. A lot of seeds were collected, and a final count is forthcoming.

PHNRC Annual Seed Processing and Volunteer Appreciation Day – November 10, 2024

The PHNRC Annual Seed Processing and Volunteer Appreciation Day was held during a regularly scheduled workday on Sunday, November 10, 2024 from 10:00am to 1:00 pm followed by a pot-luck luncheon. Forty-six (46) people were present. Mary Watson received the Golden Loppers as Volunteer of the Year 2024. Mary stays after workdays, she works on her own because work needs to be done, she is ubiquitous, and she is an incredible example of a perfect volunteer.

Ten (10) Year Awards were presented to Maria Ampulski and Louis Chatroop. Maria was unable to attend the event due to work; therefore, her PHNRC 10-Year Award will be delivered to her. The PHNRC 10-Year Awards were commissioned by Mary Watson: a necklace for Maria and a pin for Louis with the PHNRC logo.

Dana said that next year, we will have three or five volunteers in receipt of a PHNRC 10-Year Award.

Dana expressed appreciation to Ed Madden for chronicling the Event with photos. Also, Wendy Dewar was paramount in helping to organize the event during the day.

Prescribed Burns and Permit Renewal Update

Dana reported that our current burn permit expired on November 9, 2024. Dana was certain it was applicable through January of the year.

Dana encountered challenges in reaching our Agency Contact, Floyd, only to learn that Floyd has retired, and the application process has changed. The application process is very extensive and must be completed only online. The maps we normally do as part of the package had to be updated to include some of the new sites. Dana spoke with the new Agency Contact and learned our new burn permit application qualified; therefore, fall prescribed burns should start by the end of November 2024.

CONTINUOUS REPORTING

NRC 2024-2025 Budget

In John's absence, Dana provided Commissioners with a copy of the current City of Prospect Heights 2024-2025 NRC Budget. The current copy should reflect a recent \$500 contribution. Under Supply Expenses, purchase of Aqua Neat, an herbicide, must be included. Our current Net Revenue (Expense) is \$6,687 less the herbicide purchase.

Our Net Revenue for Restoration Expenses is \$17.80. The First Responder Park Funds are currently \$20,000.

Agnes has a grass seed list to purchase with our donations because it is not part of our original budget request. Agnes proposed purchasing the following grass seed:

Bottlebrush Grass	One pound
Canada Wild Rye	Five pounds
Indian Grass	10 pounds
Little Bluestem	15 pounds
Riverbank Rye	Six pounds
Virginia Wild Rye	<u>10 pounds</u>
Total:	47 pounds for \$918.75

A voice vote was held, and the purchase of seed at \$918.75 was approved with no opposition.

Also, Agnes said purchase of 10 loppers, 10 clippers, parts for clippers, garden gloves, batteries, bar oil and chain saw blades, two-stroke oil and bars for the chain saws was necessary. A list will be comprised and sent to Commissioners for review and approval. The purchase of these supplies is not within our normal budget.

City Civic Meetings and PHNRC Representation

Jill reported on the following:

City Council Meeting of October 14, 2024: Police Chief, William Caponigro, will be retiring in February 2025.

Prospect Heights Park District Board Meeting of October 22, 2024: The PHPD Board held a special meeting on October 15, 2024 to address residents' concerns in the Tully Park neighborhood and provide feedback for the new parcel located at 214 South Wheeling Road. Concerns from residents on the proposal to install a gravel area on the new parcel involved aesthetics, privacy, and unauthorized access.

Residents' proposed alternatives and a sketch to illustrate their suggestions.

Staff are investigating the cost and feasibility of alternative options suggested for the gravel area and aim to work with the PHNRC to explore the use of native plants and other landscaping elements to enhance the aesthetics and address drainage concerns.

Staff will schedule another community meeting to present the revised plan. The work is anticipated for the spring of 2025.

The PHPD Board's main concerns are the safety of their workers and efficient work. Tully Park must be serviced by the Park District; therefore, access to Tully Park is needed by park District personnel.

Planning and Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting of October 23, 2024: The PZBA meeting of October 23, 2024 was cancelled. The next scheduled PZBA meeting is November 20, 2024. A December 2024 meeting is not planned.

Friends of the PHNRC

Dana reported that we have received notice from the lawyer that our formal application for establishment of a 501(c)3 named as Friends of the PHNRC has been approved. We now await approval from the government and are optimistic we would be fully established by the end of December 2024. When approved, a call will be placed to schedule the first meeting and establish a bank account. Checks need to be deposited.

The Friends of the PHNRC have installed Marsha Lehr as President and Jill Moskal as Secretary and Treasurer.

Dana will place a formal announcement in the November 2024 Journal and showcase Marsha.

NEW INITIATIVES

Signage for Pollinator Park

Dana is very concerned for the native planting areas around Hillcrest Lake, which are being trampled by fishermen walking from Hillside to the Lake. Dana wishes to use the remaining budget funds to create signage for Pollinator Park stating: “No fishing. Restoration in Progress.”

The NRC is aware that how we express our objective to the public is important and sensitive; therefore, Dana will confer with Mark Roscoe of Public Works. Perhaps simply stating: “No Access. Restoration in Progress” would be sufficient. Seth suggested creating a map showing access places to the Lake.

Trails/Paths and Optimal Width Conversation

This topic will be discussed at our next meeting of January 9, 2025 when John Kamysz is present.

NEW BUSINESS

2025 Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission Meeting Schedule

Jill Moskal provided Commissioners with a suggested 2025 meeting schedule in the November 14, 2024 meeting materials packet. Commissioners reviewed the schedule and approved the following 2025 cadence:

January 9, 2025	July 10, 2025
February 13, 2025	September 11, 2025
March 13, 2025	October 9, 2025
April 10, 2025	November 13, 2025
May 8, 2025	

Jill noted that meetings are not scheduled for June 12, 2025; August 14, 2025; and December 11, 2025.

Announcements to the Public

Seth introduced a company called Zero Waste Cartel, which offers sustainable products for use and that do not harm our environment.

Seth purchased the Zero Waste Cartel Bamboo Toothbrush and distributed one to each Commissioner for their personal use.

Zero Waste Cartel Bamboo Toothbrush is made with 100% sustainably sourced bamboo and castor bean oil bristles and is TSA approved. Packaging is 100% compostable. The bamboo toothbrush is comfortable and lasts as long as plastic toothbrushes.

Zero Waste Cartel states that the average American produces five pounds of waste per day and suggests it is time to rethink the way we consume.

Veteran's Day – November 11, 2024

Dana and the PHRNC Commissioners wish to express sincere appreciation to all the people who work for us. We truly appreciate you. Also, a special thank you to our Veterans and those who serve our country.

Visitors' Comments

None.

OTHER BUSINESS

Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission is January 9, 2025 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