

CITY OF PROSPECT HEIGHTS
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
SPECIAL BOARD MEETING MINUTES
April 8, 2025

Present: Pete Hahn Dana Sievertson
 John Kamysz Agnes Wojnarski
 Jill Moskal

Guests: Peter P. 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 Ed Madden and Seth Marcus. However, a quorum was present.

Meeting Minutes of the Board Meeting of March 13, 2025

The minutes of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission Board Meeting of March 13, 2025 were reviewed. No changes or additions were provided. Therefore, the meeting minutes of March 13, 2025 were approved.

OLD BUSINESS

Volunteer Workdays

The scheduled volunteer workday of March 16, 2025 was conducted at the Remnant Sedge Meadow with 47 students from East Leyden High School Service Club to remove invasive woody species. The weather turned snowy, and the high school students persevered.

The scheduled volunteer workday of March 30, 2025 was cancelled due to the threat of thunderstorms. However, on Saturday afternoon, March 29, 2025, volunteers worked at Tully Park to install 50 Wild Plum Saplings along the border between Tully Park and the 214 South Wheeling Road property. Dana Sievertson drilled holes for saplings, which affords ease in planting.

Dana reported that estimated Volunteer Hours is near 350 hours for the year 2025 to date. The hours for spring prescribed burns will be calculated and added to the Volunteer Hours for 2025.

River Trails Park District

A special volunteer workday will be scheduled on April 13, 2025 to assist the River Trails Park District with their ambitious restoration project, Woodland Trails Park. We have a history of annually helping one of our partner organizations, such as Grainger Woods, Camp Pine, and Poplar Creek Prairie Stewards. Additionally, the East Leyden High School All-stars will join us for another massive workday! Only one task is scheduled: Buckthorn removal. A burn pile will be possible.

Sierra Club

The Sierra Club is expected on Saturday, April 26, 2025 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. For those of us working the event, the hours will be 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. We are moving our regularly-scheduled volunteer workday of April 27 to April 26, 2025. The location will be the Remnant Sedge Meadow, and the work area will be the west side of the bike path to the fence to remove buckthorn, woody species, and cattails, and along the railroad tracks to remove buckthorn and woody species.

We are expecting between 60 and 100 people from the Sierra Club. Our regular volunteers will be present to provide leadership and instructions.

Special Ask

On April 27, 2025 (Sunday), our regular volunteers, Chris and Julie Wood, has asked us to host a church group for a short workday. Teenage volunteers will be present for transplanting and then a tour of the Slough. The workday will start at either 12:30 or 1:00 p.m. and conclude at 3:00 p.m.

Prospect Heights Public Library/Park District Events

Nature Speaks Program

Dana did not have anything new to report on the Nature Speaks Program. It has been challenging to receive responses from proposed speakers. Dana also welcomes suggestions for speakers. Dana has a speaker for May and will explore dates for the summer and fall of 2025. Dana made two new requests today.

Should we use previous speakers? What they spoke about has been recorded so unless they have something new, and we must remember that the library needs to get something out of it as well.

Projects – Update/Status

Public Service Commons (Fifth ComEd Green Regions Grant)

Dana reported that the Annual Arbor Day Tree Planting sponsored by the Prospect Heights Garden Club, the City of Prospect Heights, and the Prospect Heights Park District will occur at the newly-created Public Service Commons Project in between the Police and Fire Departments. The date is April 25, 2025 at 9:15 a.m., and the location is 14 East Camp MacDonald Road at the Police Station.

The planting will be accomplished by Public Works and is funded by the Prospect Heights Garden Club and the Natural Resources Commission in conjunction with the ComEd Green Regions grant that will fund the Public Service Commons Project.

The Public Service Commons is the manifestation of a long-held dream of the late Alderman Larry Rosenthal. It was his dream to create a nature space as a place of refuge for the Policemen and Firemen.

The Garden Club is contributing an extra \$250 for the purchase of a larger caliber tree, such as a Hackberry, which will be delivered and planted on April 14, 2025, and the ceremony will be conducted on April 25, 2025. Dana will stake the area, and Mark will pre-dig the hole with his equipment and check with J.U.L.I.E. for the location of utilities.

We have a few new areas to plant at the Commons and pushing back toward the parking spaces. The depression located in front of the Police Station is now part of the compensatory storage area; therefore, it will be dug out, and we will plant the area thereby increasing the footprint of the Pollinator Park. Patrick, as part of his video documentary, will be videotaping the tree planting.

Seed/Greenhouse Program Update

Agnes reported that the Greenhouse is filled with growing plants, including a lot of native plants and new, special species.

Tomorrow, Wednesday, April 9, 2025 will be the first Transplanting Wednesday. The hours are 5:30 – 7:00 p.m. Later on the time will change from 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.

Agnes stated that the temporary holding Greenhouse will be erected within the next two weeks and be present for only one month. A permit must be filed with the Planning Zoning Board of Appeals.

Education Update

MacArthur Middle School

Agnes stated nothing new to report with the MacArthur Middle School.

Wheeling High School

Agnes reported that Mrs. Mediha Abat, the Wheeling High School Environmental Science Class (STEM) sponsor and Science Teacher, will be bringing one group comprised of 30 students from the Wheeling High School Environmental Club on April 16, 2025 at 10:00 a.m. for a tour or introduction of the Slough. The visit will conclude by 12:30 p.m.

District 214

Agnes said that we have three wonderful interns for the spring micro-internship program! They will be coming on Tuesday and Fridays for two hours each day.

Agnes said they are astute at utilizing their dichotomous tree keys to identify species. Agnes said they identified a very rare Italian tree – the Lombardi Poplar. They are having fun exploring, walking around, and learning. The last 30 minutes of the day involves work.

Spring Prescribed Burns

Dana said the spring prescribed burn season has concluded. It was a good season. A few places did not get burned, like Heron Pond and half of the Nature Preserve at Morava because of the construction on Elm Street. However, it was a successful burn season in total.

Unfortunately, we did get any of the cattails in the basin because it is too late in the season to burn. Peter said we should aim for the middle of winter when the ground is frozen. It is difficult to walk through there when it is slushier. Agnes said that next year, we will prioritize the areas that have not been burned to ensure rotation.

Sierra Club Presentation

Dana and Agnes will be providing a presentation on invasives and native species to the Sierra Club on April 10, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. at the Schaumburg Spring Valley Nature Center.

Arlington Heights Garden Club

Dana and Agnes will be providing a presentation to the Arlington Heights Garden Club on April 28, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. Dana welcomed any other Commissioners who would like to attend and assist.

The presentation will be on our organization, how we started out and what we did. They are looking to replicate the NRC in Arlington Heights. We look forward to providing our presentation and the opportunity to strengthen our relationship with the Arlington Heights Garden Club.

CONTINUOUS REPORTING

NRC 2024-2025 Budget

John Kamysz received a report on the City of Prospect Heights 2024-2025 NRC Budget from Peter Falcone that he distributed to members ahead of the meeting.

John stated that our Net Revenue was currently \$1,406, and this amount must be spent by May 1, 2025. Therefore, Dana will be providing Peter Falcone with a order for Greenhouse supplies, such as soil, pots, etc.

Proposed 2025-2026 Budget and Comprehensive Equipment List

The PHNRC operational budget request and letter for the fiscal year of 2025-2026 as provided to the City of Prospect Heights on January 29, 2025. Our budget request was presented at the City Council Meeting of March 10, 2025. The first reading of the FY 2025-2026 budgets will be

conducted at the City Council meeting of April 15 and the final reading will be conducted at the City Council Meeting of April 28, 2025.

City Civic Meetings and PHNRC Representation

Jill reported on the following:

City Council Regular Meeting of March 10, 2025:

The first presentation of the FY 2025-2026 City of Prospect Heights Budget was conducted. The PHNRC budget request was presented. No questions were posed.

City Council Regular Meeting of March 25 2025: During the continued presentation of the City's FY 2025-2026 Budget, Mark Roscoe outlined upcoming projects, including the Public Service Commons project. Mark noted the need for modification of this Project due to the Fire Department's expansion.

The next scheduled City Council meetings are April 15 and April 28, 2025. The first reading of the FY2025-26 Budget for the City will be conducted on April 15. Jill will be present at that meeting.

The Planning and Zoning Board of Appeals meeting of March 19, 2025 was cancelled.

The Prospect Heights Park District Board Meeting of March 25, 2025 were cancelled.

Friends of the PHNRC

Jill reported that the Friends of the PHNRC Board met on March 18, 2025. An organization's mission statement was discussed and approved. The Friends of the PHNRC have adopted a doing business as (dba) identity of Neighborhood Prairie Project.

Further discussions were held on a Business Matrix and Organizational Chart for the Friends of the PHNRC. An organization centered on three key focus areas of Administration, Marketing and Fundraising, and Projects and Education was proposed. Committees would be formed for each of the three key focus areas. A report from the Start-Up Committee was provided by Maja Wojdalski. Board Member Project Priorities; Financial Processes; Fundraising Concepts; Marketing, Logo and Branding Guidelines; and Founders Projects were discussed at length.

A Business Plan is being developed to document and prioritize current commitments and recurring expenditures of the PHNRC and a complete understanding of funding resources.

The next scheduled meeting of the Friends of the PHNRC is April 15, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.

Dana added said we talked to Stephanie Ritter, who is the Science Teacher at MacArthur Middle School. Ms. Ritter has accepted to be on the Friends of the PHNRC Education Committee. Ms. Ritter is excited about the opportunity and will be retiring from teaching next year.

Summer Interns 2025

Our two summer interns, Isabelle Sparreo and Sawyer Schnell, have applied online and working on getting their pesticide licenses. They are also completing employment paperwork.

A start date has not been confirmed. It may be June 10, which is late in the season. Agnes prefers an early date and offsetting their start dates by one week. For example, each intern would work one week alone either at the start of or the end of the summer program.

Jill reminded Agnes that her scheduled work Sabbatical is the full month of June, so Jill will be present to assist or work the first part of the month of June.

City of Prospect Heights Community Days

The City of Prospect Heights Community Days will be held on Saturday, June 7, 2025 starting at 9:00 a.m. and in the typical location of between the Police Station and Fire Department.

City of Prospect Heights Independence Day Parade

John said the parade will be held on Saturday, July 5, 2025, and the PHNRC will have a float presence.

John will submit an application for the Arlington Heights Fourth of July Parade on July 4, 2025 (Friday).

John spoke with Kate Tully, and she is planning to create about 12 giant prairie flowers for the Art in the Park and which could be utilized during the Independence Day parades. John is brainstorming to create bugs and other things to jump out of the flowers. John will review the construction and perform maintenance on existing parade creatures in our inventory.

City of Prospect Heights/Park District Block Party

Dana spoke with Christina Ferraro and confirmed that the PHNRC will be present at the Block Party on Saturday, June 21, 2025.

NEW INITIATIVES

Tree Initiatives Program Update

Peter said the Native Tree Planting event originally scheduled on April 2, 2025 was rescheduled to April 9, 2025 due to weather conditions.

Also, Peter said seeking grants for Wheeling and River Trails is a possibility.

Site Monitoring Reports

Jill said Site Monitoring Reports will begin in May and continue until October 2025.

Members should provide their Site Monitoring Reports to Commissioners before the scheduled meeting dates. Only pertinent items of concern or issues will be reported and discussed at our meetings.

Arbor Day Planting – April 25, 2025

As mentioned earlier in the meeting, an Arbor Day Planting sponsored by the Prospect Heights Garden Club, the City of Prospect Heights, and the Prospect Heights Park District will occur at the newly-created Public Service Commons Project in between the Police and Fire Departments. The date is April 25, 2025 at 9:15 a.m., and the location is 14 East Camp MacDonald Road at the Police Station. The tree will be delivered and planted on April 14, 2025, and the ceremony will be conducted on April 25, 2025.

Transplanting Wednesdays

Transplanting Wednesdays begin April 9, 2025 and conclude May 28, 2025.

NRC Videos

Patrick Colvin has generously committed to continuing the process of making videos about our sites and our processes, etc. Patrick will be filming at Tully Park on April 18 at 3:00 p.m. Patrick will work with Agnes and Dana very early that day and obtain a brief introductory part. Patrick will then spend time with Mary Ellen Siemens and Wendy Dewar.

This is a nice new addition. If anyone wants to be in the videos, let Dana know. Patrick needs content for his news channel, and we could use the exposure.

Native Plant Education Day

The Office of Mary Beth Canty contacted Agnes and Dana; however, they were unable to respond in a timely manner. Therefore, Christina Ferraro became involved and has taken the lead for this initiative. The Native Plant Education Day is scheduled for May 17, 2025 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at the ComEd Seeded Prairie. The Office of Mary Beth Canty, the Prospect Heights Park District, the City of Prospect Heights, North Cook County Water and Soil Department, the Illinois Mosquito Abatement, and the PHNRC are sponsoring this initiative.

The Native Plant Education Day will be geared toward children and education on native plants. We have 40 days to develop a concept. A virtual meeting is scheduled for April 15, 2025 at 3:00 p.m. If you'd like to be part of it, let Dana know.

NEW BUSINESS

Announcements to the Public

None.

Visitors' Comments

No visitors were present at the meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission will be held on Thursday, May 8, 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 7:28 p.m.

Jill E. Moskal, CPS
PHNRC Commissioner and Recording Secretary