

CITY OF PROSPECT HEIGHTS
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
January 8, 2026

Present: Louis Chatroop Jill Moskal
 John Kamysz Dana Sievertson
 Ed Madden Agnes Wojnarski

Guests: Freddy Jungo, 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 Seth Marcus. However, a quorum was present.

Meeting Minutes of the Board Meeting of November 13, 2025

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

OLD BUSINESS

Volunteer Workdays

Winter Projects

A volunteer workday was conducted on Sunday, November 23, 2025 at the Prospect Heights Slough near 7 Hillside Avenue. The work accomplished was cutting invasive woody species and clipping an endless supply of Tall Goldenrod seed heads. A burning brush pile was produced.

A volunteer workday was conducted on Sunday, December 7, 2025 at the Slough near Hillside and Elmhurst Road. The work accomplished involved cutting down a few hanging snags, clearing an invasion of buckthorn, and putting down some seed. A burning brush pile was produced.

The last volunteer workday of 2025 was held on Sunday, December 21, 2025 at the Slough near Hillside and Elmhurst Road. The work accomplished was cutting down a few hanging snags, clearing invasive buckthorn and putting down some seed. The Annual Christmas celebration with Kielbasa, special cookies, homemade holiday treats from volunteers, and PHNRC gift bags were provided. A burning brush pile was produced.

The first volunteer workday of 2026 was conducted on Sunday, January 4, 2026 at the Slough near 305 Hillside and the corner of Willow Road. The work accomplished was cutting shoreline invasives of buckthorn and woody species from the frozen surface of the Slough. A burning brush pile was produced.

Winter work includes removal of Siberian Elms to open the canopy, allowing more light in.

East Leyden High School Workdays

Dana reported that East Leyden High School contacted the PHNRC with a request to participate in six PHNRC volunteer workdays per year with the first one in either March or April 2026. Between 30 and 50 students are expected per workday.

A worksite could be either the ComEd Seeded Prairie, the Remnant Prairie or the Remnant Sedge Meadow.

We have been very fortunate with the presence of these earnest and hard working young people at our volunteer workdays for the past three years and look forward to continuing our relationship with them.

Agnes inquired if we have received any current interest from the Sierra Club for a joint workday with the PHNRC in April 2026? Dana reported that the Sierra Club is meeting tonight, and if so, we could tie-in their workday request with the East Leyden High School students and have one major workday. Jill cautioned that the availability of our volunteers for supervision is important.

Jill suggested inviting the East Leyden High School students to join us in our Independence Day parades.

Prospect Heights Public Library/Park District Events

Nature Speaks Program

Dana reported that a Nature Speaks Program will be conducted on February 19, 2026 at the Prospect Heights Public Library Meeting Room AB or via Zoom from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. Dr. Allison Sacerdote-Velat, the regional expert in herpetological conservation, will be presenting “Conserving the Cold and Scaly: Wildlife Conservation Research & Community Science at the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum of the Chicago Academy of Sciences. The PHNRC is appreciative of Allison joining us, again.

Dr. Allison Sacerdote-Velat is the Curator of Biology and Herpetology/Vice President of Conservation Research at the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum of the Chicago Academy of Sciences.

Allison will present wildlife conservation research and community science programs at the Chicago Academy of Sciences, focusing on the region’s amphibians, reptiles, and insects and how they use data from our volunteer biodiversity monitoring programs.

Admission is free to Nature Speaks Programs; however, registration with the library is required.

Also, Dana reported that a Nature Speaks Program will be conducted at the Prospect Heights Public Library on May 7, 2026 from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. featuring Bill Glass and his presentation on Brown Bears of Katmai National Park, Alaska.

Brown bears are the largest land-dwelling carnivore and have the most extensive geographic distribution of any bear species. Brown bears are located in North America, Europe, and Asia. In North America, they are frequently called Grizzly Bears. Bill Glass will provide a close look at the brown bears that live along the Alaska peninsula, usually called coastal or peninsula brown bears. Different fishing techniques, parental care, bear interactions, and other behaviors will be featured in Bill's presentation.

Bill Glass is a retired restoration ecologist who is especially interested in restoration of the tallgrass prairie. Bill received his master's degree at the University of Illinois at Chicago where he studied approximately 100 prairie remnants in Iowa. Bill worked with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources as a natural Heritage Biologist where he managed state-owned prairie, wetlands and woodlands in a multi-county area and worked with rare plants and animals.

Bill Glass completed his career with the USDA Forest Service as the ecologist at Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie. Bill considered this his dream job: restoring a large tallgrass prairie.

After retiring, Bill spent time exploring and photographing the natural wonders of North America. He is especially interested in large-scale animal congregations, such as the brown bears and salmon at Katmai National Park.

Katmai National Park is one of the best places to see these magnificent animals and has one of the largest, if not, THE largest, concentration of brown bears in the world. Coastal brown bears are larger than their inland cousins. The large numbers of bears and large individual bear size is a result of the food sources that inland bears do not have, primarily salmon. Katmai National Park allows visitors to get up close and observe the bears and their behavior.

Agnes says this ties into our consideration of establishing a salamander habitat and best probable space. Agnes reported that we have little ephemeral pools for salamanders around the Slough but they are not completely ephemeral, so we must convert to habitat. Agnes has checked the i-naturalist website and learned that there are salamanders in the area just not around the Slough. John reported a little ephemeral pool under creation where Greg put the stones down near a log.

Dana has sent requests for speakers but has not yet received responses.

Projects – Update/Status

Public Service Pollinator Park (Dana Sievertson)

Dana reported that the Public Service Pollinator Park is in hibernation for the winter season. However, we have a lot of seed to place in the wet area basin. Seth and Dana worked on seed processing and weighing of the seed on Wednesday and finished a large portion of the processes.

Hillcrest Lake – Shoreline Restoration Project – Year 2026

Dana reported that the Hillcrest Lake – Shoreline Restoration Project would be conducted in Section 3 located due west from the section we last worked for Year 2026. It is roughly 150 linear ~~square~~ feet. Also, Dana provided Commissioners with a typewritten sheet outlining the specific supplies, such as Coir logs, Oak Posts, etc., required to be purchased for Year 2026 of this Project.

Dana summarized that we have a five-year project with the city in this area to naturally restore the shoreline of Hillcrest Lake and with a budgeted cost of \$6,000 per year. To date, four areas have been completed for this Project, and no work was conducted in Year 2025 due to work on the Public Service Commons Pollinator Park.

Dana reported that Section 3 of the Project is very unique. The shoreline is severely undercut and goes back in about 16 inches. The native plants on top are holding the sod together. John and Dana reviewed the area today and propose to install a 16-inch Coir log in the undercut all the way down (150 feet of a 16 inch coir log) and securing it with an oak stake in front to secure it in place. Then come out 30 inches to three feet and place another coir log on the bottom of the lake and do the normal stakes and rope. The area in front of the coir log filling the void in the shoreline would be filled (42 yards of fill). That's gigantic. Lastly, place an erosion blanket and plant native plants.

Dana said a challenge is costs have increased. Total estimated cost for Section 3 is \$3,300 over the yearly budget amount of \$6,000. We have a fixed budget approved five years ago. Freddy, how would the city like to proceed? Is there any leeway to use our regular budget funds if any funds are left over by the end of the fiscal year or by April 30, 2026? Freddy will investigate and have report back to us by our next meeting.

Agnes asked is it a slow drop off? John stated we have been installing three rows of coir logs. However, in Section 3, the first row is at the same level as the ground, so a waste of coir log. Section 3 is one of the most undercut regions the Lake. If you place a coir log underneath, there is a natural drop off present, so it serves as the first step. It would be filled behind it, and only two tiers of coir logs are necessary. The difference between the surface of the ground where existing plants are located and the top of the coir log is 16 inches. It is graded. It would be a perfect 2:1 grade.

Year 2026 of this Project is estimated to begin on June 1, 2026. John will be gone for the months of July and August. Agnes said we could aim for it, but we also need the plants that will be installed in that area. Dana said we will get the infrastructure in place in June and plant later in August. Also, this could be a project for the East Leyden High School students, offering them a different experience.

Louis said that the water level must be a consideration. June is good because the spring rains will be finished. Moving dirt will be awkward because the area is planted with prime, native prairie plants. John said walking paths will be created, and we can replant native plants, although plants do bounce back, even if trampled.

Seed/Greenhouse Program Update

Agnes reported that we must purchase some seeds, planting cups and planting trays. As of Wednesday, Agnes reported that half of the seeds are outside for stratification. Agnes will be working this weekend to finish. Seed must stratify for 30 to 60 days.

Agnes will provide a spreadsheet with the weights of all the seeds, if Commissioners wish to comment on which plant species we should grow more of. The seed order must be sent next week.

Education Updates

MacArthur Middle School

Agnes said there was nothing new to report. Stephanie Ritter and the MacArthur Middle School 6th Graders were present on October 15, 2025 at the ComEd Seeded Prairie for seed collecting and seed processing. Brought some of the seeds processed back to the school and students were provided packets of seeds for personal use.

Wheeling High School

Agnes reported that she has not heard from Mrs. Mediha Abat, the Wheeling High School Environmental Science Class (STEM) sponsor and Science Teacher to schedule expected field trips in the spring.

Dana reported that Mrs. Mediha Abat participated in the Go Green Sustainability in School presentation in Wilmette. Mediha provided glowing comments about the PHNRC, which we are both appreciative of and flattered. Mrs. Abat's presentation on sustainability is on the Go Green Wilmette Website and episode [Home - Go Green Wilmette](#).

District 214 Micro internships Initiative

Agnes reported that the PHNRC has received a request for one student to participate in the spring micro-internship program. The micro-internship program is 30 hours.

Planting in the Parkway and Bioswale Program Update

Dana must schedule the meeting with Peter Falcone and Mark Roscoe for clarity on where the parameters are located either the middle of road or off the road. Both Peter and mark have different ideas. Dana will then get back to the original family who reached out to us about their prairie garden in the road.

Prescribed Fall Burns Update

Dana reported that the PHNRC conducted one successful prescribed burn in the fall. Conditions were perfect: Right humidity level along with high winds blowing off Elmhurst Road. Seven certified prescribed burn volunteers were present along with former summer interns – Eric, Evie and Isabelle. Dana reported that four volunteers have recently received prescribed burn certification, which increases the pool of certified personnel. Scheduling burns will be easier.

Louis inquired the timing of the next prescribed burn. Agnes said in the spring. However, there exists the possibility of burning the cattails in the winter if the conditions – frozen ice on the Slough, humidity level, etc., - are present. Timing would be around March 15.

CONTINUOUS REPORTING

NRC 2024-2025 Budget

John obtained a current copy of the City of Prospect Heights 2024-2025 NRC Budget, dated January 1, 2026 from Freddy Jungo.

John drew Commissioners' attention to the top of page 2 of the budget handout where Net Revenue (Expense) is reported at \$7,319.45. These funds must be spent by May 1, 2026 or they will be lost. Dana and John discussed what needs to be purchased at an estimated cost of \$5,000. Agnes indicated Greenhouse supplies are necessary and must be purchased between now and May. Dana outlined the need to purchase soil, new auger bits, carts, surfactant, herbicide, cups, new signs alerting to areas that were herbicided or planted, and new sign stands. Dana will develop a comprehensive order for Commissioner review.

Dana said one item that is necessary to purchase for the Greenhouse supply is a small hammer mill for processing seed. The cost is \$500. It is a device that processes the seed instead of a person manually breaking the seed. The device efficiently separates the seed from the husk. It is the perfect size, priced well and saves time. Also, the device will make processing Penstemon, Monarda, Cord Grass seeds and seeds that do not break apart easily much more efficiently. Agnes said we collect about 100 pounds of seed annually.

Christmas Donations: The budget indicated receipt of donations for the Friends of the PHNRC, a 501(c)3 organization, of \$25,898.29.

Signage for First Responder Commons Project: Dana is producing the signage for the First Responder Commons Project.

Prospect Heights Park District Budget and Funding: Funding from the PHPD to the PHNRC for the year 2026 has not yet been determined, but the proposed amount is \$8,000, as in past years. The PHPD Board will meet on January 27, 2026 at 7:00 p.m. and approve the budget. PHNRC Completed.

City of Prospect Heights Budget Request: We anticipate requesting a similar funding request as in 2025 or a little bit less or more. The deadline for our budget funding request is January 21, 2026.

City Civic Meetings and PHNRC Representation

Jill reported on the following:

Summary: City Council Meetings – November and December 2025: A resolution was passed authorizing the Execution of an Intergovernmental Agreement between the City of Prospect Heights and the Prospect Heights Park District regarding Policing of Park Property. The agreement

reinstated a prior arrangement allowing the Police Department to enforce both City and Park District ordinances when responding to incidents on park district property. The new agreement does not include routine patrols or premise checks; however, it clarifies enforcement authority, particularly important given the Park District's more restrictive e-bike regulations.

Peter Falcone, City Administrator, informed residents that the city is sending an informational flyer regarding the proposed 2027-2030 road bond program, which would continue to fund road repairs as the current bond expires at the end of 2026. The flyer includes details about the program, a survey for resident feedback and a QR code for access. Peter emphasized that the city will remain neutral and provide factual information to help residents make an informed decision.

The next scheduled City Council meeting is Monday, January 12, 2026.

Summary: Prospect Heights Park District (PHPD) Board Meetings – November 18, 2025 and December 16, 2025:

The Prospect Heights Park District approved the PHNRC prescribed burns for 2025-2026, as submitted.

Ray Doermer, Superintendent of Recreation, said the ArtWalk 2025 concluded on October 31. On behalf of the Park District, Ray expressed appreciation to all the artists and organizers who contributed to the success of this program and helped to highlight the unique features of the Izaak Walton Park and the community. Ray said they look forward to bringing this event back in 2026 with a new theme.

Mark Grassi, Superintendent of Parks and Facilities, said the PHPD has hired David Mack as the new Parks Department Supervisor. David will be responsible for overseeing the Parks Department, including all full-time and part-time parks staff, managing daily, weekly, and seasonal tasks and projects, coordinating routine maintenance, and assisting with park-related safety training.

Christina Ferraro, Executive Director, said the circular drive improvements at the location on Wheeling Road by Tully Park have been deferred to 2026 as the contractor continues to work with the city for permit approvals. The park enter/exit signage has been ordered. The monument sign was delivered and is ready to be installed when the project is completed.

Shawn Hughes, Superintendent of Finance, HR and IT, said that staff have been busy finalizing 2026 budgets. The Finance Committee met on December 8, 2025 to review projections, fund balances, and various 2026 budget items in preparation of the new fiscal year.

The next scheduled Park District Board Meeting is Tuesday, January 27, 2026.

Summary: Planning and Zoning Board of Appeals (PZBA) Meeting – November 19, 2025:

The meeting held nothing of significance to report. Further, the PZBA did not hold a meeting in December 2025.

The next scheduled Planning and Zoning Board of Appeals meeting is Wednesday, January 28, 2026.

Friends of the PHNRC Update

Dana reported that the Friends of the PHNRC Board will conduct an inaugural Annual Board Meeting (retreat) on January 19, 2026 from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Park Ridge Park District, Maine Park Leisure Center, Park Room at 2701 West Sibley Street, Park Ridge. An agenda will be produced and circulated with key focus areas to include 2025 Year in Review, 2026 Goal Planning, and Board of Directors' role planning and succession planning.

NEW INITIATIVES

Chilifest - February 8, 2026 (Sunday)

Chilifest was initially planned for February 8, 2026; however, February 8, 2026 is Super Bowl Sunday. Therefore, John will discuss a new date with his wife, Kristen, and advise.

Art Gallery

Dana reported that the PHNRC along with the Sunflower Group will fill the Art Gallery slot at the Prospect Heights Public Library this year. Participants are PHNRC Commissioners Agnes Wojnarski, Dana Sievertson, Louis Chatroop and family, John Kamysz and Seth Marcus. The Sunflower Group are Kate Tully, Mara Lovisetto, Andy Fagiolo, and Cathy O'Shea.

The Art Gallery will showcase inspirations from the natural areas of Prospect Heights and include paintings, photographs and sculptures. All items will be available for purchase.

Also, we would like to conduct an opening before the Show. The Show opens on September 1, 2026.

We last participated in this event seven years ago.

Further details are forthcoming.

NEW BUSINESS

Announcements to the Public

None.

Visitors' Comments

None.

OTHER BUSINESS

Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission will be held on Thursday, March 12, 2026 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 7:38 p.m.

Jill E. Moskal, CPS
PHNRC Commissioner and Recording Secretary