

CITY OF PROSPECT HEIGHTS
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES OF JULY 14, 2016

Present: Dr. Agnes Wojnarski, Chairperson
Peter Hahn
Dr. John Kamysz
Edward Madden (joined the meeting at 7:15
p.m.) Dana Sievertsen

Attendee: Jill E. Moskal

OPENING ITEMS

Call to Order

Agnes Wojnarski, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. CDT.

Roll Call

Roll Call proceeded. All Commissioners were present for Roll Call except Edward Madden.

Meeting Minutes of June 16, 2016

The meeting minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission of June 16, 2016 were approved. No corrections were noted.

OLD BUSINESS

Intern Progress

On July 7, 2016, Daniella Sanchez, our summer intern, injured her back while pulling weeds. The exact injury is unclear, but Daniella has three work days off. Daniella will return to work as of July 13 and will perform non-strenuous work that does not involve lifting or bending until her injury has mended.

Daniella is a very dedicated worker and an asset to the program. For example, Daniella and Commissioner Peter Hahn were working at the Remnant Prairie collecting seed from 9:00 a.m. to 12 Noon then after lunch the majority of the plugs were planted at the east side of the Slough.

To Note: The West side of the Slough is being mowed. This activity will have to be addressed.

Plan of Work Days for July/August

The Canada thistle is in bloom; therefore, it is important to immediately eradicate the thistle.

The teasel is a biennial and will be cut down to prevent seeds from dispersing.

Planting may occur in July, but we need to be careful. The temperatures are quite hot during the July; therefore, what is planted will have to be watered over a few weeks' time.

Planting will occur in the shady areas and where there is water.

Planting in the prairie open spaces should probably not occur until the month of August. We will follow the Morton Arboretum's lead in this regard.

The Sedge seeds are ready to be harvested. We will reinstate seed collecting on Wednesday evenings beginning on July 20 from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at the ComEd prairie and sedge meadow. We will post the work nights on our website.

We will move forward with spot brush cutting and spot herbiciding then plant plugs in August. We will plan a burn in the fall.

We have reached out to Sarah at ComEd for a date when she can visit the ComEd Prairie in August.

NRC Journal

Dana reported that a series of two stories on Dr. John Hilty will be posted in the NRC Journal beginning July 21, 2016 and over the next two months. Dr. Hilty is the webmaster of the well known Illinois Wildflower website.

Dr. Hilty typically does not grant interviews and does not like to be photographed. Dana described Dr. Hilty as a charming eccentric genius. You can view Dr. Hilty's work at www.illinoiswildflowers.org, and read over 800 pages on everything from wild flowers to native flora.

The next NRC Journal will have an update on the work at the ComEd prairie and Slough.

Library/Park District Programs

Prospect Heights Public Library: Kurt Dreisilker, MS, Head of Natural Resources at the Morton Arboretum, will be the next guest speaker at the Prospect Height Public Library and will provide a presentation on invasive species and how they can be managed.

Prospect Heights Park District Programs: Two families signed up for the "Hop, Skip, Jump – Critters in the Creek;" however, one family didn't show, and the other family would appreciate attending on another date.

Our programs are listed in regular mail flyers, on the PHPD website and on the PHNRC website, so our programs are widely advertised.

We will plan two additional bird walks. Members of the Bird Conservation Network will conduct them free of charge. The bird walks are a lot of fun.

A certified arborist has shown interest in the PHNRC for providing a children's outreach program and naturalized lawn care program. He will submit proposals to us.

NEW BUSINESS

Moratorium

The moratorium issued by the City of Prospect Heights City Council for PHNRC's project at the ComEd Prairie has been lifted. PHNRC may proceed with plans for planting of prairie flowers per City Administrator, Joe Wade.

The Future of the Prairie

The Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission (PHNRC) is an official Prospect Heights City Commission that conducts its own meetings and receives funding.

PHNRC produced a video (14 minutes) entitled "Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission Progress Report on ComEd Prairie Restoration," which is narrated by Agnes Wojnarski. The video walks through all of the issues at the ComEd seeded prairie: successional weeds, management techniques, set backs and our intent for the future. The video has been posted on the websites of PHNRC (www.phnrc.com) and the City of Prospect Heights website (www.prospect-heights.il.us) and was shown at the City Council Workshop Meeting of July 11, 2016.

The ComEd prairie restoration is located on the west side of Elmhurst Road and north of Palatine Road.

Residents felt that they were not contacted for their input before the project began. Also, residents' concerns are mostly about weeds taking over the restoration area. The weeds are there as placeholders until new plantings can fully grow. It will take about three to five years for a complete prairie restoration to occur.

Also mentioned at the City Council Workshop Meeting was the need for the PHNRC to conduct community outreach, communication and education before implementation of restoration plans. To increase communication, we may need to send an e:mail message, call or knock on doors.

The PHNRC had reached out to residents in the community with an offer to provide prairie tours to educate residents on our purpose, plans and restoration work. Sunday, July 10, two families attended a one-hour tour. They were impressed with the prairie restoration and very respectful.

Two additional tours have been planned and listed on PHNRC's Calendar of Events: Friday, July 15 from 7:00-8:00 p.m. and Friday, July 22 from 7:00-8:00 p.m. PHNRC Commissioners are encouraged to attend at least one of these scheduled tours.

PHNRC will also provide a few more opportunities to expand everyone's knowledge of prairie restoration and our purpose and plans. The tours provide a visual means of PHNRC's efforts to restore the land to prairie, what the prairie will look like when the project is completed, and the benefits of a prairie for the area.

Agnes contacted Ms. Lynn Schumacher via email to personally offer her an opportunity to visit a mature prairie to understand prairie restoration and place our work in a clearer perspective. Nearby mature prairies are Poplar Creek in Hoffman Estates, Illinois and the Morton Arboretum in Lisle, Illinois. As of this meeting, Agnes has not received a response from Ms. Schumacher.

One of the questions raised at the City Council Workshop Meeting of July 11 concerned the mowing buffer at the ComEd Prairie. The designated measurement should be 15 feet. However, the residents expanded it. Therefore, we would like to bring the mowing buffer back to 15 feet by using our plugs, which will make it more visually appealing.

Another issue: Who is to maintain the 15 foot buffer from Elmhurst Road to Schoenbeck Road? The former PHNRC Commissioner managed this work. We will have to speak with the Park District; they may want to do it or Jim McNeil of Public Works. In the meantime, the PHNRC will mow the buffer and create a path down the center of the ComEd Prairie.

Before tonight's meeting, we received a very nice phone call from Alderman Scott Williamson (Ward 3). Scott said he did not want the PHNRC to feel they are under attack. Alderman Williamson said he thought our presentation was terrific, and he will support us.

ComEd Green Regions Grant Awarded for Gary Morava Nature Preserve

PHNRC has applied for the ComEd Green Regions Grant through the Prospect Heights Park District for the Gary Morava Nature Preserve, which is located behind the tennis courts. PHNRC plans to utilize \$20,000 of the grant money for signage, plants and shrubs, as well as building a nature playground to provide children exposure to nature. Also, PHNRC would like to build outdoor classrooms to bring nature closer to children and provide interactive events and/or a nature camp.

The opportunity to apply for this Grant is a big deal. Edward Madden voiced much appreciation and praise to the Commission for their hard work and time in completing the application and making this all possible. The Gary Morava Nature Preserve has the raw material, and it is a great location, but PHNRC really shaped it into a cohesive application.

To Note: Dana to move all documents to the Publications page of the www.phnrc.org website.

Somerset Park – Application for Chi-Cal Grant Funding

Somerset Park is located north of Palatine Road and south of the bike path by the church.

Somerset Park is a project started by the Prospect Heights Park District and in which the PHNRC is being of assistance. PHNRC applied for the Capstone Project awarded by the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

College senior students of landscape architecture choose certain projects. They try to match the right project with the right senior. Sean McMillian, currently a senior at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, spent the last year working on the design plan for Somerset Park and Sean's efforts are impressive! Sean incorporated water filtration to capture water run-off, designed a bike path, shows usage of plants as phytomediators, etc.

The PHPD and PHNRC applied for the Chi-Cal Grant funding last year and did not receive it; however, perhaps with a project with the design plan in place will create more possibilities to receive grant funds.

Christina Ferraro, Executive Director of the Prospect Heights Park District, is putting the application together, and PHPD will have jurisdiction. If the Somerset Park project becomes a viable project, it will make more community outreach possible.

The application deadline is July 27, 2016, and the Grant Funding is awarded in November.

The original interview with Sean McMillian created an article for the PHNRC Journal. Sean then requested his e:mail address is placed in the article so viewers would contact him. Sean spent one year collecting residents' thoughts and issues and put them together.

We need at least \$250,000. For every single plant chosen, we will collect seeds. For every single shrub, we will propagate additional shrubs. The project would have to be accomplished in phases.

We would probably be overstretched if we were to take on a new project. Christina wants to build in more labor in the application for the National Fish and Wildlife Federation's Chi-Cal River Funds Grant.

Resignation of Marcia Jendreas

The Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission has accepted the resignation of Marcia Jendreas. It was a mutual parting of the ways.

Marcia served on the PHNRC from February 2014 to June 2016 and brought a lot to the Commission. The Commissioners felt honored to serve with her. The PHNRC wishes Marcia only the best!

Review and Approval of New Commissioner – Jill Moskal

The PHNRC has accepted the application of Jill Moskal to join the Commission. Jill introduced herself at the meeting and informed the Commissioners of her desire to join and also provided her background.

Jill submitted a letter to Mayor Helmer outlining her request and background. Jill's request will have to be approved by the City Council. It was recommended that Jill attend the July 25 City Council Meeting so that the Mayor and Aldermen could meet Jill in person.

Visitors Comments

The July 14 PHNRC meeting did not have any visitors present to comment.

OTHER BUSINESS

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission will be held at City Hall on Thursday, August 11, 2016 at 7:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business to come before the Commissioners, and the meeting adjourned at 8:43 p.m.

Jill E. Moskal, CPS
Recording Secretary
Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission