

CITY OF PROSPECT HEIGHTS  
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES OF AUGUST 11, 2016

Present: Agnes Wojnarski, Chairperson  
Peter Hahn  
Ed Madden

Jill E. Moskal, Recording Secretary  
Dana Sievertsen

Absent: Dr. John Kamysz

**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 Dr. Kamysz. A quorum was present.

**Meeting Minutes of July 14, 2016**

The minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission of July 14, 2016 were approved. No corrections were noted.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Workday Plans – August/September 2016**

Following is a work schedule for now until the end of the year. What is accomplished is driven by what work needs to be completed. Currently, we have a lot of plants to be planted.

| <b>MONTH</b>        | <b><u>ComEd Prairie Restoration*</u></b>                                                                                                                                                            | <b><u>Morava Nature Preserve</u></b> | <b><u>Remnant Prairie*</u></b> | <b><u>Remnant Sedge Meadow*</u></b> | <b><u>Slough* &amp; Hillcrest Lake</u></b> |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| AUGUST              | BC, P, SC, WP                                                                                                                                                                                       | P (Saturdays)                        | SC*, P, WP                     | SC, P, WP                           | BC, P, SC, WP                              |
| SEPTEMBER           | BC, P, SC, WP,                                                                                                                                                                                      | P (Saturdays)                        | SC P, WP                       | SC, P, WP                           | BC, P, SC, WP                              |
| OCTOBER             | BC, P, SC, WP                                                                                                                                                                                       | P (Saturdays)                        | SC, P, WP                      | SC, P, WP                           | BC, P, SC, WP                              |
| NOVEMBER            | BC, WP, Burn                                                                                                                                                                                        | N/A                                  | BC, Burn                       | BC, Burn                            | BC, WP                                     |
| DECEMBER            | BC, WP                                                                                                                                                                                              | N/A                                  | BC                             | BC                                  | BC, WP                                     |
| Key to Identifiers: | BC = Brush Control P = Prairie Planting SC = Seed Collecting WP = Walking Path Maintenance<br>* = Wednesday Evenings, August – October 2016: Seed Collecting 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.; restoration site TBD |                                      |                                |                                     |                                            |

**NOTES:**

August 6, 2016 – Peter Hahn’s Special Workday – Morava Nature Preserve: Over 500 native prairie plants or plugs were planted along the steep slope south of the creek to control stream bank erosion and improve wildlife habitat. The Morava Nature Preserve has a lot more area that needs to be planted!

November 2016 – Prescribed Control Burns: A timetable needs to be developed.

Regular workdays are held every other Sunday from 9:00 a.m. to 12 Noon. However, consideration of alternating regular workdays on the weekend between Saturday and Sunday was proposed.

Also, a volunteer requested a start time of 12 Noon instead of 9:00 a.m. for the regular volunteer workday. Ed felt this could be a possible consideration when the weather turns cooler. This topic will be discussed at a regular workday to gather popular consensus.

Future discussions will include an activity planned by the PHNRC for Earth Week 2017 (April 16 – April 22, 2017) Earth Day annually falls on April 22, which is a Saturday in 2017.

#### NRC Journal

The July 2016 NRC Journal highlighted:

- The receipt of the Commonwealth Edison Green Region Program Grant of \$10,000 by the PH Park District and PHNRC, and with a match by the City of Prospect Heights and PHPD, the total award amounted to \$20,000.
- The meeting of Dr. John Hilty by Agnes and Dana and the anticipation of future articles of interest on Dr. Hilty, Illinois Wildlife organization. Dr. Hilty is with [www.illinoiswildflower.org](http://www.illinoiswildflower.org).
- An article by Daniella Sanchez, our Summer Intern, on her enthusiastic and unfailing assistance this summer.

The “What’s New Feature at the Slough” will be expanded to cover updated information on all of our project sites.

#### Library/Park District Programs

Fall 2016: Two additional bird walks are scheduled for the Fall and provided by the Bird Conservation Network.

September 27, 2016: Kurt Dreisilker, MS, Head of Natural Resources at the Morton Arboretum, will be a guest speaker at the Prospect Height Public Library on September 27, 2016 and will provide a presentation on native invasive species and how they can be controlled.

April 19, 2017: A presentation on monarch butterflies by Doug Taron, Chief Curator of the Chicago Academy of Sciences and Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum is planned for April 19, 2017. This date coincides with Earth Week.

July 2017: An announcement is forthcoming for a show at the Prospect Heights Public Library by the French landscape artist, Didier Nolet. Terri Campbell, Adult Program Coordinator at PHPL, is our contact for arranging a possible formal opening in July 2017 of Mr. Nolet’s renderings of the Slough. To Note: Didier Nolet has been a friend of Dana’s for over 20 years.

July 11, 2017: The PHNRC has committed to provide a presentation on the evolution of the Slough as one of the Nature Speaks Program on July 11, 2017

Chris Mest, Founder of Tree Guardians and a Certified Arborist, has proposed a class for children on tree care. We are looking for approval and dates. Chris lives in Prospect Heights and writes children’s books, and his wife is the book’s illustrator.

## NEW BUSINESS

### 10<sup>th</sup> District Leadership Awards

Christina Ferraro, Executive Director of the Prospect Heights Park District, nominated Agnes Wojnarski, PHNRC Chairperson, for the Friend of the Environment Award as part of the 10<sup>th</sup> District Leadership Awards managed by Bob Dold, U.S. Congressman for the 10<sup>th</sup> District of Illinois.

The Leadership Awards consist of six categories: Community Service, Entrepreneurial Excellence, Exceptional Educator, Friend of the Environment, Helping Hands and Young Leader. The Leadership Awards recognize the everyday heroes that make our community an amazing place to live, work and raise children. The Leadership Awards recognize individuals who are leaders in promoting the public good and civic service.

An awards reception was held on August 9, 2016 at the Gorton Community Center in Lake Forest, Illinois. Four Commissioners attended this first-class event.

Agnes was one of two finalists for the Friend of the Environment Award. It was an incredible honor for our Chairperson and indirectly for those of us on the Commission to be recognized in this way.

Of Agnes it was written:

Agnes spearheaded the continued restoration of wild areas in the City of Prospect Heights. She commits countless hours of her own time with no compensation or reward other than a "thank you" from local citizens. She has inspired entire neighborhoods to come out and volunteer their time to improve the local environment and beautifying local parks.

Agnes may not have won the Award this year, but she is a winner and a star to all those who know and work with her! Congratulations, Agnes, for your passion in ensuring Prospect Heights is a beautiful community to live in and for your capable, sensitive leadership.

### Prospect Heights Park District Block Party – August 13, 2016

PHNRC will be present at the PHPD Block Party to be held Saturday, August 13, 2016 from 4:00-10:30 p.m. at Lions Park. Our table will be on Elm Street, and Dana will provide a map of the Block Party configurations.

PHNRC will utilize our story board, even though it is a bit weather-worn from our use during Community Day.

PHNRC will give 6-packs of native prairie plants to those attendees who subscribe to the PHNRC Journal. Dana will bring his iPad for on-site registration.

Agnes has already prepared 20, 6 packs of native prairie plants, but Jill thought at least 50 more 6-packs would be appropriate because she was confident of residents' interest in the PHNRC.

Peter is bringing two trees for illustration. Agnes will bring the Somerset Park Presentation book by Sean McMillion. The Hay Report, Slough Master Plan and Native Plant informational sheets will be available for perusal.

Seeded Prairie: Update and Site Visit from ComEd Representative

Sara Race, Senior Environmental Compliance Specialist for ComEd, is responsible for managing environmental compliance programs related to wetlands, land use, and threatened and endangered species. Sara oversees ComEd's stewardship and biodiversity programs, including ComEd's prairie program. Sara has been with ComEd since 2005 and holds an MS Degree in Environmental Management.

Sara Race will visit the ComEd Restoration Project (Sherwood Avenue) on Wednesday, August 24, 2016 at 10:30 a.m. Agnes will guide Sara through the Restoration Project to show our progress of the prairie and our problems. We will inquire of when a controlled burn can be conducted.

The West Side of the ComEd Restoration Project was reseeded. It looks great, except for the areas that were mowed. The East Side of the Project area needs a controlled burn and then will need to be reseeded. The burn will help the seed to make good soil contact.

ComEd will conduct the controlled burn. We would have five people available to assist. The controlled Burn has to be conducted slowly because of arcing by the electrical stations. Area residents would be notified.

While Sara is here on August 24, we will inquire if she can visit the Remnant Prairie.

Resident Resolution

Although not mentioned at our meeting, it should be noted that Agnes reached a very satisfactory compromise and resolution to the concerns previously raised by neighbor Ms. Lynn Schumacher about the ComEd Prairie Restoration.

Agnes wisely learned that Ms. Schumacher's complaints stemmed from her view of the prairie restoration from her home. Therefore, Agnes suggested planting really showy plugs in the section of the prairie near Ms. Schumacher's home. Agnes provided photos for Ms. Schumacher to review and requested her choose the plants. Agnes is working on a plan to create large patches that provide a manicured look.

Agnes also addressed the paucity of mammals and allergy concerns.

Slough – Hiking Paths, Future Work and Burning

Hiking Paths: We have started to design and build the hiking paths, but they are currently in rough shape form. Stumps need to be cut. However, we have seen residents walking the paths and enjoying it!

Future Work: Our future work involves plugging and seeding. We have buckthorn re-sprouts, woody vegetation and debris that have to be removed and cleared.

Burning: We need to approach the City for permission to conduct a managed burn in the Spring along the sides of the Slough. Once you have black soil, you do not have to burn again.

Updates: Remnant Prairie and Remnant Sedge Meadow Updates

Remnant Prairie: Thistle has returned in abundance along with a 90% return of invasive purple leaf stripe. These invasives have to be managed. Peter worked an extra day to begin eradication along with Agnes and her husband.

The Remnant Prairie is the ComEd substation located north of Palatine Road and west of Wolf Road.

Remnant Sedge Meadow: We are currently managing invasive plants before they have a chance to reseed. We have covered the large thistle piles with black tarps so they sun will "cook" the cut invasive plants. We will leave it for a while and check on their deterioration.

The Remnant Sedge Meadow is located north of Camp McDonald Road, south of Old Willow Road and west of Wolf Road and is part of the 55 acre bike trail. The Remnant Sedge Meadow is considered to be in the town of Wheeling, not Prospect Heights, and is land that is leased by the Prospect Heights Public Library Park District with ComEd. This area is also under a "no mow" order.

Gary Morava Nature Preserve Green Regions Grant Execution

On Monday, August 15, 2016, Agnes, Dana and Christina Ferraro will attend the presentation at the Brookfield Zoo to accept the ComEd Green Regions Grant Award of \$10,000.

We have been in conversation with Dino and Christina on how to proceed. Dino wants to be kept informed, and he would be the approver of the Plan essentially to keep to a more expeditious way. We are not going to do anything different as stated in the Grant proposal.

Jill suggested placing an article and photos in the *Daily Herald* for advertising of this wonderful news!

Regarding the interactive bridge, Agnes has a contact working on getting an architect to do the design plan for free. This is an opportunity for contractors to be involved in building the bridge and donating their time, so we would just have materials costs.

A tremendous amount of work has been accomplished over the summer by Daniella with assistance by Agnes, Peter and Marek. Planting and restoration on the actual shoreline was accomplished to prevent further soil erosion. On Saturday, August 6, 2016, 530 plantings were installed or 110 feet of shoreline was restored. The plants are doing phenomenally well.

Our sincere appreciation to Peter for his commitment in watering prairie restoration sites during the week.

Water has been a problem as we are currently lacking in rainfall this summer season. Agnes discovered a solution: purchase of a 125 gallon water tank. The cost did not adversely affect our budget. The tank will be housed in the back of Agnes' van. When needed, it can be filled with water and then dispersed for watering prairie plantings at all the restoration sites.

In addition, Dana obtained a solar-powered turbo rain unit from his friend, Bill, which can be utilized exclusively with the water tank to pump water from the tank through a garden hose for watering.

Somerset Park – Park District Application for Chi-Cal Grant Funding

Background: The University of Wisconsin-Madison awards a Capstone Project to their Senior Landscape Architect students as their thesis project. A municipality, township, etc., can apply for the Capstone Project. PHNRC applied, and the University gave our application to Sean McMillion. They chose Somerset Park.

Sean worked on it all year long with the PHPD, PHNRC and residents who live along Somerset Park. Sean developed a comprehensive landscape design plan that incorporates all that we seek - a natural landscape that filters storm water, that cleans it, that provides habitat, etc. Sean requested the prairie plant species list from Agnes and incorporated everything we actually grow in the proposal.

Somerset Park is currently seven acres of mowed turf grass, so it currently has no ecological value. Somerset Park also sits along McDonald Creek, which is a major distribution of storm water for Prospect Heights, so the proposal includes reduction of soil erosion, flooding, a retention mark for run-off from Palatine Road, prairie plants that act as a filter, etc.

Sean's proposal also includes extension of the bike path to run through the Park and a central gathering pavilion with a fire pit.

PHNRC has a link on our website to view a .pdf copy of the Somerset Park - a Senior Capstone Project Proposal. The link is on the first page of our website under the caption "New PHNRC Presentations" or <http://www.phnrc.com/presentations.html>.

Grant Application: Agnes, Christina and Dana brainstormed with the National Fish and Wildlife Federation before the deadline for the Chi-Cal Grant. They decided to submit the Somerset Park Capstone Project Plan by Sean McMillion, Landscape Architecture, University of Wisconsin-Madison, with the Grant application because his Plan was so brilliant!

Christina Ferraro, Executive Director of PHPD, took the lead on this Grant application and submitted it on time. The date for announcing the recipients of the Grant is December 4, 2016.

The Grant is for \$600,000. The PHPD request is for \$100,000, and PHNRC requested \$200,000 along with donations of native plants and labor hours.

Each Volunteer Labor Hour is \$23.07, so a 2.5 year Grant executes more than \$200,000 in volunteer hours. PHNRC is diligent on tracking Volunteer Labor Hours so we can match funds and grants.

This year alone we grew more than \$50,000 worth of prairie plants.

It would be a shining star for the City of Prospect Heights if we received the Chi-Cal Grant!

Budget Discussion – Remaining Funds

|                                              |                  |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Original Budget Amount:                      | \$4,000.00       |
| Budget Amount before purchase of Water Tank: | \$1,971.00       |
| Current Budget Amount:                       | \$1,590.26       |
| Purchase of Water Tank:                      | \$ 216.00        |
| Plus: Freight Costs                          | \$ <u>164.74</u> |
| Total Cost of Water Tank:                    | \$ 380.74        |

PHNRC is considering the additional purchase of a steel brush cutter, like the model utilized by the Public Works. It's a great tool and gets a lot of work accomplished in a short period of time. We may also need to purchase items for the upcoming controlled burn plus seeds.

Budgeted numbers and water tank purchase cost confirmed by Peter Falcone, Assistant to the City Administrator.

The end of the current fiscal year is April 30, 2017.

Visitors Comments

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

Jill Moskal mentioned City regulations for citizens utilizing private fire pits, either store bought or homemade, and the types of wood and/or materials utilized by citizens to create a fire in their fire pit. A short discussion ensued on noxious fumes and nuisance Ordinance. However, these are items to address with the City Council.

OTHER BUSINESS

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission will be held at City Hall on Thursday, September 8, 2016 at 7:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business to come before the Commissioners, and the meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

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