

CITY OF PROSPECT HEIGHTS  
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES  
January 9, 2020

Present:        Agnes Wojnarski                                Ed Madden  
                     Peter Hahn    Jill E. Moskal, Recording Secretary  
                     John Kamysz     Dana Sievertson

Absent:         Seth Marcus

Attendees:     Peter Falcone, Assistant to the City Administrator

OPENING ITEMS

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. CST by Agnes Wojnarski.

Roll Call

Roll Call proceeded. All Commissioners except Seth Marcus were present. A quorum was present.

Meeting Minutes of Regular Meeting of November 21, 2019

The minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission of November 21, 2019 were approved. No corrections or additions were noted.

OLD BUSINESS

Volunteer Workday Schedules and Fall Prescribed Burns

Volunteer Workdays: Our volunteer workdays were limited due to the wet weather, causing very soggy conditions. Therefore, we do not work at mature project sites, like the Slough, where trampling would hinder growth of native seeds and plants and promote the growth of invasive species. Trudging through soggy areas degrades the soil and encourages disturbance weeds. We hope to work at the Nature Preserve soon.

A volunteer workday is scheduled for this Sunday, January 12, and the weather forecast is ice, snow then rain, so the conditions may be slippery. If a physical workday is impossible, then we will perform tool maintenance and seed propagation.

Fall Prescribed Burns: The weather was unpredictable. We attempted to burn over two days, but unfortunately, it did not work. The Forest Preserve District was only able to burn over a two-day period. Therefore, we look to burn in the spring and hope for better conditions.

Agnes expressed appreciation to all who participated in the burns and took time off from work to assist.

#### Lycee Francais de Chicago

Dana exchanged e:mail messages with Lycee Headmaster, Eric Veteau, and Patrick Balson, Founding President with the Board of Trustees, to arrive at a consensus of the programs under consideration, which could be a combination of PHNRC providing one or two lectures, our assisting them in managing a prairie strip or Greenhouse Program at their location, and Lycee conducting field trips to our area.

Another possibility is our offering a small section of one of our project sites that they could adopt and manage a project from beginning to finish by visiting the site three to five times a year.

The program development with Lycee Francais de Chicago is still in the idea/concept stage. Once a decision is finalized, we will speak with the City and Park District.

#### Prospect Heights Public Library/Park District Program

##### Nature Speaks Program

The scheduled Nature Speaks Program on January 30, 2020 on “A Natural Fortress Against Climate Change: Building a Healthy, Resilient Urban Green Space” has been cancelled. Ms. Katherine Moore Powell, Climate Change Ecologist, Keller Science Action Center (Ecology) of The Field Museum, has accepted a position with the Federal Government and will be moving to Florida.

Ms. Powell was extremely apologetic and provided a possibility to provide the Climate Change presentation at a future date when business brings her to our area. Therefore, Dana will work with Ms. Powell to see if we may be able to reschedule. Possible spring dates are April 22 (Earth Day), April 23 (alternate date). Possible summer dates are June 24 and June 25 (alternate). Fall dates are October 20 and October 22 (alternate). Dana wishes not to book anything on these dates until we learn of Ms. Powell business travel schedule.

Dana met with Ryan Anderson at Midwest Grows Green (MGG). Midwest Grows Green is a collective of community-based lawn and landscape care initiatives, which are identified by their distinctive orange MGG stamp and unified by a single message: Protect people, pets and the environment by proactive natural lawn care. MGG’s distinct programs are point-of-purchase, pesticide-free parks and community engagement. MGG has an entire new program they are unveiling to park districts, municipalities and the public of an actual kit that you work through and provides a comprehensive app for how to manage, lawns, parks, city spaces, etc., naturally. It is a live on-line, too.

Ryan Anderson provides presentations on Natural Lawn Care and could possibly present as a Nature Speaks Program in the spring and then perhaps conduct a workshop on Natural Lawn Care for the Park District in the summer.

Fly A Kite Day – April 11, 2020 (Prospect Heights Park District)

The PHPD Fly A Kite Day will be held on April 11, 2020 from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and involve seed bomb preparations. The Fly A Kite Day is part of the PHPD Spring Fling. Three photos looked like last year logo put something together

Dana provided Commissioners with three photos on how the kite looked like in 2019. The logos will be rearranged to include our logo on the Kite. Our contribution for this effort is around \$140. We have money from our budget to cover this promotional cost.

The Prospect Heights Park District 2019-2020 Winter/Spring catalogue has been circulated.

Spring Fling, April 11, 2020 from 9:00 am to 12 Noon is detailed on page 7. Following the Egg Hunt scheduled at 10:00 am Sharp, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Prospect Heights Kits & Kids will be held in Lions Field. Attendees are encouraged to join the Prospect Heights Library along the New Spring Story Walk trail (located in the Nature Preserve) and then make a Seed Ball with the PHNRC. The seed ball may be planted in one's own garden.

Spring Bird Walks hosted by the Park District and PHNRC will be held on Saturday, May 16, 2020 and Saturday, May 30, 2020 from 7:30-9:30 am. Further details may be found on page 22.

Native Landscaping Presentation or Program

Dana spoke with Ryan Anderson of Midwest Grows Green and the possibility of Ryan conducting a workshop in the summer. Peter suggested the spring or summer. Ryan is interested, and Marcie Glenski agreed that paying a stipend of \$175 was possible. Ryan will be traveling to Prospect Heights from Rockford.

Jill suggested Midwest Grows Green securing a booth at either Community Days or the PHPD Block Party in June.

Seed/Greenhouse Program

Agnes reported that only two seed trays need to be stratified, but everything else is ready. We already distributed a lot of seed, and when we can get to certain areas, we can distribute the estimated 30% seed left to be distributed.

The ComEd Prairie has been seeded.

Dana has asked the Zoning Department about a variance for the holding greenhouse. It has been two weeks, and Dana has not received communication from Dan. Therefore, he will follow-up with Dan and arrange a meeting.

Agnes said we only require the holding Greenhouse for six to eight weeks. We are unable to grow as many native plants without use of a holding Greenhouse given the volume of plants we grow.

#### Seed Processing and Volunteer Appreciation Day – November 23, 2019

November is the month when the PHNRC processes all the seed collected over the course of the year, as well as to show appreciation to our dedicated volunteers. Our Seed Processing and Volunteer Appreciation Day includes a luncheon and the presentation of the prestigious Golden Loppers.

The seed processing day is a special event that always brings the volunteer community closer together and reminds us what good friend we have all become. This year's annual event was a huge success as we processed over 75 pounds of locally-collected native seed.

It is important to the PHNRC to express sincere thanks to all the volunteers, as well as the Commissioners, for their service to the habitat, the community, the wildlife, the environment and the planet. The environment has core issues, and our volunteers and Commissioners are working on them.

This year, the PHNRC presented the Volunteer of the Year Award to two recipients, Maria Ampulski and Linda Waycie. Maria Ampulski is one of the original volunteers, and Maria has worked quietly behind the scenes from her position at the Public Library to elevate the profile of the PHNRC and recruit potential volunteers. Linda Waycie has brought in an abundance of new opportunities for outreach.

Both Maria and Linda have unlimited energy and are regular participants at nearly every workday.

#### Seedolator

Separating Common Milkweed Seed from the fluff is a laborious task. Enter Jim McKay, friend of Maria Ampulski and one of our volunteers. In December, Jim approached PHNRC with his interpretation of the milkweed gin.

Prior to retirement, Jim McKay was an engineer. Maria stated that Jim is a wizard with anything mechanical and can fix anything. Commissioners have discussed building a Seedolator or milkweed gin. Processing all the milkweed seed we collect in an average year encompasses typically 20 to 30 hours of volunteer labor. It is fastidious hand work.

Jim devised his version of the Seedolator by adding a vacuum, producing miraculous results when processing the seed. As the system rotates, fluff becomes airborne. The vacuum captures the lighter, pure fluff. When you remove the lid, only the heaviest material remains. The seed processing is conducted twice resulting in pure live Common Milkweed Seed.

Thirty (30) hours of labor was reduced to two (2) hours!

Jim maintains possession of the Seedolator because of safety concerns.

Our sincere and heartfelt thanks to Jim for saving the day!

#### Path Maintenance at Work Sites

We have not taken any action to shore up the Nature Preserve path. Seth shared good literature encompassing information from French drains to basic path building and maintenance. John said the information has good ideas on how to structure our paths and keep them high and dry. In general, the idea is to dig troughs along the side of the path, raise your path and install a culvert underneath.

It is winter, and we cannot yet incorporate some of the ideas, but Path Maintenance will remain a meeting Agenda topic.

In general, the paths are in good shape. Nothing is growing, and no path is under water.

#### NEW BUSINESS

##### Winter Workdays – North Slough and Hillcrest Lake

Dana submitted our proposal to Mayor Helmer and the City Council on the invasive removal of buckthorn at Hillcrest Lake and the North Slough. PHNRC will attend the January 27, 2020 City Council Meeting to answer questions. Presenting is not necessary.

The plan draws from our Master Plan of 2016 where we incorporate the recommendations from the Hey Report. Our plans are also part of the 2016 Implementation Plan for the Wetlands.

The Hey Report identifies the main problems as shoreline erosion, high nutrient loads, excessive native aquatic growth, large goose population, shallow water depth and invasive plant species.

The main solutions identified in the PHNRC 2016 Implementation Plan are removal of turf grass at the shorelines, re-vegetation of shorelines with native plants, reduction of goose populations, removal of invasives, community outreach and education, detain, retain or filter incoming storm water and controlled burns.

The dense canopy of buckthorn inhibits the growth of native plants and secretes a chemical called Emodin that makes it impossible for any new growth to occur. This contributes greatly to erosion, causing the soil to lose the integrity and structure created by long-rooted native plants. Further, Emodin has a 50% mortality rate on Amphibian embryos.

Buckthorn degrades wildlife habitats and alters the natural food chain, disrupting the balance of the ecosystem.

During the 2020 winter season, PHNRC and volunteers would begin the invasive removal of buckthorn along with a few invasive Siberian elms, trees of heaven and mulberry trees once the Lake and Slough are frozen. The work area is the north end of the Slough, the south end of the Lake and in random concentrations around the perimeter of the Lake.

Some of the shoreline around Hillcrest Lake has become severely eroded and is contributing to sediment and nutrient deposit into the Lake. The land is washing away into the Lake. Therefore, after invasive removal, PHNRC would work in areas identified in the Hey Report as “significant” and “severe” erosion and stabilize the shoreline through use of plugs. Shorter, deep-rooted plant species would be planted in direct sightlines of residents to the Lake while taller more stabilizing species placed in-between.

#### Fish Study – Hillcrest Lake and Management Plan Protocol – North Slough & Lake

Clarke Aquatic Services, Inc. provides aeration services along with weed and algae management for lakes, ponds and various waterways.

Clarke approached the City with an offer to provide a Fish Study at no cost. Clarke submitted the Hillcrest Lake Fishery Management Plan and received a Fishery Service Report on November 22, 2019. Dana received a copy of the Report from Joe Wade and Peter Falcone.

Dana said the Report confirms what we said would happen in removing the Elodia: A complete override of invasive plants is present and now requires herbicide, which is unfortunate.

Grass carp was mentioned to populate the Lake. However, grass carp require an open water system. Therefore, it would not be permitted, especially since the grass carp would head down the Des Plaines River.

John said the Lake does not have a healthy fish population. The lake houses immature fish, and the lake water is not deep enough. The lake would have to be dredged to make it a healthier environment for the fish. Therefore, the community must decide what the lake should be.

John feels the lake is shallower. Agnes said the lake has pretty much been in this condition, and it is recommended to improve it in a natural way and prevent bad things from happening, like erosion, sediment, etc.

Peter Falcone said Clarke will provide treatment recommendations of the Lake to the City as a presentation. All recommendations must be passed by the Board. At that time, a case may be made on other beneficial, natural solutions.

### Prospect Heights Park District Decision on Funding

Agnes produced a PHNRC Year in Review and Budget Proposal for presentation to the Park District Board of Directors. The Proposal was a spreadsheet with an overview for each of the six (6) natural area sites that we helped to create and maintain in Prospect Heights, as well as programs that we are currently engaged in. The spreadsheet provides Volunteer Hours and Costs, Intern Hours and Cost, Budget Supplies, Donated Supplies, Donated Plants/Seeds and Greenhouse, Budget Request to the City of Prospect Heights 2020 and Budget Request to the Park District 2020. The volunteer and intern hours spent in 2018 and 2019 may also serve as a forecast for the hours anticipated to be spent in 2020.

No official ruling has been made because the Board has not yet voted. However, Agnes received notice from Christina that we likely will be funded for the amount requested.

Ed complimented Agnes on the extensive information she produced for the budget proposal. Ed said it was prudent to highlight all the services we provide to the City, as well as the volunteer hours (almost 67,000 hours in 2019) and charitable donations.

Jill noted that almost half of our expenses in 2019 were managed with Commissioners' personal money.

### City Budget Presentation

The document produced for the Park District Board funding request and presentation will also be utilized as our budget presentation to the City because it provides complete information. It reflects and represents where we work, what we're working on and the costs. It shows we are doing what we have proposed to do.

Our funding request to the Park District is more than the funding request to the City because most of our sites are on Park District property.

John encouraged Commissioners to continue to utilize the Google Docs spreadsheet to track our hours and our work. The spreadsheet provides data for an audit. We started the spreadsheet in October 2019. Commissioners discussed having the spreadsheet according to the calendar year or fiscal year. Either way, specific reports can be produced.

### New Summer Programs for the Park District

Marcie Glenski informed Dana she is creating the summer catalogue and inquired of ideas for new summer programs from us.

Commissioners agreed to coordinate and manage a nature program for the 10<sup>th</sup> Week (Summer) Camp in August 2020.

Dana also said Ryan Anderson of Midwest Grows Green would conduct a natural lawn care workshop in the summer.

Jill cautioned against overextending the Commission, and Commissioners agreed that suggesting two summer programs to the Park District would be adequate.

Agnes said with Midwest Grows Green providing a Nature Speaks presentation in the Spring and summer workshop, we are providing a lot of education to residents on responsible lawn care.

#### ComEd Update

Dana reported that we provided a year-end review of the joint projects we work jointly with ComEd in Prospect Heights on December 31, 2019. This is not a routine occurrence but something that Sara Rice specifically requested. We were pleased to provide an update on the Green Regions Grant Program and across our sites; namely, the Com Ed Prairie Conversion and Restoration, the Nature Preserve at the Morava Center, the Remnant Prairie and the Remnant Sedge Meadows. We also outlined our strategic plans and recommendations that ComEd could possibly fund. We provided both a written report and photographs.

Dana has not had an opportunity to contact Stantec about the fall burns that were postponed and the possibility of their providing prescribed burns in the Spring.

#### PHNRC Treasurer Report

John Kamysz reported that there were no new draws on the budget since the last meeting; therefore, he has nothing to add.

Our current budget number is \$1,691, which includes a donation from the Garden Club of \$100.

Agnes said we should expend our funds because we have many legitimate items needed for the upcoming season, such as tools, gloves, herbicide, potting soil, carp fencing, aquatic plants, etc. – basic needs. We would not spend the budget money frivolously. Potting soil cannot be purchased early because it cannot be stored in the winter. However, we can order it but must have delivery of it by May 1, 2020.

Agnes will conduct a tool count and prepare a listing of basic items to be purchased, which information will be shared with Commissioners.

#### Comprehensive Equipment List and 2020-2021 Budget

Our City Budget was discussed under Park District Funding on page 7 of the January 9, 2020 meeting minutes. Commissioners agreed that the detailed document provided to the Park District can be adequately submitted to the City.

City Civic Meetings and PHNRC Representation Reporting

Ad Hoc Willow Road Project Committee (Hillcrest Lake)

The Ad Hoc Willow Road Project Committee met on January 8, 2020 to review correspondence from the City Engineer, Patrick Glenn, concerning elevation of Owen Street; to discuss and formulate a recommendation of Project Scope to be considered by the City Council at their January 27, 2020 meeting; and discuss next steps for the proposed project and committee. John Kamysz and Peter Hahn attended the meeting.

The meeting was basically a reiteration of what the Committee's suggestions are to the City Council: (1) Raise Willow Road; (2) raise Owen Street up to Owen Court; and (3) no changes to Hillcrest Drive.

Discussion on how high to raise Owen Street – 651 feet or 652 feet – was held. The higher number -652 feet – meets the 100-year flood category.

Willow Road is under the direction of Cook County.

A few residents in attendance provided comments. Some do not want Willow Road raised; however, funds are already in place.

Guard rails on Willow Road will be installed to make it aesthetically pleasing.

No artist renderings or illustrations have been produced until a decision to proceed on the Project is final; however, cross-sectional diagrams or architectural drawings were presented at the MWRD initial presentation to the City Council.

In general, the residents on Hillcrest Drive do not want the road raised. This is a tough situation because you cannot predict rain events 10 years' from now. The contractor will place stipulations or disclaimers that Hillcrest Drive is not part of the current project. The funding is there now, so Hillcrest Drive can be part of the project.

Also, other disclaimers concerning citizens desires for the Lake, such as cleaning out the Lake, silt prevention, etc., will also be placed in the project contract.

The Hillcrest Lake Homeowners Association's representative was present at the meeting, but it is unclear if the data presented is well-representative of all the residents that live on the Lake. Either way, the data presented is being taken as fact.

Peter Hahn inquired if an alternative travel way, bike path or pedestrian walk would be installed in the area where Willow Road would be raised. A safe walkway will be installed around that area.

Is that stretch of road open for sidewalk improvements? Building sidewalks in Prospect heights is very difficult because of the ditches. Currently, sidewalk installation is only possible with Grant money, and Grant money can be achieved for public schools or public transit transportation necessities. If no funding, the City must pay the full amount. It is not impossible, just currently difficult.

#### McDonald Creek Commission Meeting

Jill reported that the McDonald Creek Commission scheduled a meeting on November 24, 2019 but were unable to conduct the meeting due to lack of a quorum.

The next scheduled McDonald Creek Commission Meeting is January 28, 2020.

#### Proactive Nature Management Plans

Dana has begun updating the Plans and is making progress.

#### Announcements to the Public

The PHNRC 2016 Implementation Plan for the Wetlands and The Hey Report of October 2015 mentioned on pages 5 and 6 of the PHNRC Meeting Minutes of January 9, 2020 may be located at the following web address: <https://www.phnrc.com/presentations.html>.

#### Visitor's Comments

None.

#### OTHER BUSINESS

##### Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission is scheduled for Thursday, February 13, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. in City Hall Chambers.

#### ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business to come before the meeting. Therefore, the meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Jill E. Moskal, CPS  
PHNRC Commissioner and Recording Secretary