

CITY OF PROSPECT HEIGHTS
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 14, 2019

Present: Agnes Wojnarski, Chairperson Seth Marcus
 Peter Hahn Jill E. Moskal, Recording Secretary
 Ed Madden Dana Sievertson

Absent: John Kamysz

Attendees: Peter Falcone, Assistant to the City Administrator

OPENING ITEMS

Call to Order

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

Roll Call

Roll Call proceeded. All Commissioners were present. A quorum was present.

Meeting Minutes of Regular Meeting of November 8, 2018

The minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission of January 10, 2019 were approved. No corrections or additions were noted.

OLD BUSINESS

PHNRC 5th Anniversary

The Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission (PHNRC) celebrated five years on February 10, 2019. It is amazing to reflect on how we began with the vision of Agnes Wojnarski and Kari Spiegelhalter and where we are today. We are proud of the many good things we have accomplished in our town.

Volunteer Workday Schedules

A volunteer workday was scheduled on Sunday, February 10, 2019, and the number of volunteers' present was great. We also accomplished a great deal of work, cutting and burning all fallen snags and invasive brush on the west side of the Slough by Marion Avenue.

The next volunteer workday of Sunday, February 24, 2019 will, again, be held at the Slough but further down on Hillside in the basin. Plans are to continue brush control by removing buckthorn resprouts on the shoreline and lay down seed. We will return to the Nature Preserve when the ground has thawed to install the interpretative signage.

Ed recommended that we inform volunteers to wear shoe or boot grips when working on ice. For general safety, do we have or are we able to secure a first aid kit? Agnes said a first aid kit is in her van, and Dana said we have a doctor on staff (Agnes).

Presentation to the Prospect Heights Park District Board of Directors

Seth and John will be making a presentation to the PHPD Board of Directors regarding the PHPD dump site in the Nature Preserve at their meeting of February 26, 2019. John plans to make a few slight modifications to the slide presentation.

It would be nice for all Commissioners to review the slide presentation before February 26; however, it is understood that this may not be possible, especially due to everyone's busy schedule.

Dana encouraged all Commissioners to be present, if possible.

Library/Park District Program

Nature Speaks Program

Dana stated that the next speaker for the Nature Speaks Program on April 16, 2019 is Terry Miesle of Fermilab, and his presentation is "Chasing the Rusty-Patched Bumblebee." Once very common throughout the Eastern United States, the Rusty-Patched Bumble Bee (*Bombus affinis*). Populations have dramatically decreased in the past few decades. Added to the U. S. Endangered Species List, this bee has become the recipient of substantial attention. Terry Miesle will discuss the reason for this decline, how we may help, and how we may report information as Citizen Scientists.

Terry Miesle's presentation will be the lead event for Earth Week.

Nature Summer Camp for Prospect Heights Park District

PHNRC (Commissioners and Interns) will be managing a nature camp for the Prospect Heights Park District during the 10th week or last week of summer camp in August for three days from morning until 3:00 p.m. Three to 11 children are anticipated to attend.

PHPD sent a course description, and Dana added ideas to it. The Nature Camp will be a nature-driven curriculum for five to 11-year-old children. We felt visiting more than one site would be a well-rounded experience, but the PHPD prefers to hold it just at the Nature Preserve. We do not have complete concepts yet, but the birds are at the slough; the Com Ed Prairie would be a completely different and interesting experience.

Bird Walks

The PHNRC and the Prospect Heights Park District will, once again, host two bird walks in the Spring. Expert birders Mary Lou Mellon and Lee Ramsey from the Bird Conservation Network will lead a walk around the Slough for us to experience the wonder of birds and learn how to spot and identify birds, learn where to look for birds in our community and, also, how to adjust binoculars for your eyes.

The Spring Bird Walk dates are Saturday, April 27, 2019 from 7:30-9:30 a.m. and Saturday, May 11, 2019 from 7:30 to 9:30 a.m.

This is a free class, but registration is necessary.

Nature Preserve – Interpretative Signage

Dana said the interpretative signs have been delivered, and he is anxious to get them installed. Once the signs are installed, the project at the Nature Preserve is complete.

Dana sent photos of the actual interpretative signage to all Commissioners. Dana stated they are a high-quality product, the same size as the interpretative signage at Volo. Dana also felt that the interpretative signs are a prototype for future projects.

The exact location of each of the interpretative signs will be determined when we are on-site. Naturally, a sign will be installed at the beginning and the end of the trail, but other sign placement will be decided on-site. However, before then, Dana will send photos of the signs and a map of the trail and requested Commissioners to review and give our opinion

NEW BUSINESS

Increased Public Access Plan for Hillcrest Lake and the Slough

Agnes said that although we have discussed our previous budget, she has been thinking about the Increased Public Access Plan, which includes a boardwalk, a great addition to the Slough, especially on wet days. Agnes' idea is to either add or modify our budget proposal to include a Grant application. Commissioners were e:mailed information.

The grant is the Open Land (Matching) Grant of \$6,000, which is a very small grant because in the past, we have applied for grants of \$20,000. Dana said we would be asking the City for \$3,000 in our budget and reducing our interns from three to two. The Grant would generate approximately 466 linear feet (450 feet) of boardwalk (width about 33 inches). Even if we receive some money, it would assist in our building a partial boardwalk. Further, the manpower resource would be an Eagle Scout Project to build the boardwalk. The Grant money would be received in June.

Seth's idea is to keep it a floating boardwalk. Dana stated the plan is to build the boardwalk in modular sections and set it on metal posts in the Slough to prevent the boardwalk from floating away when the water rises.

Agnes said there is sure to be permitting requirements to consider.

Boardwalks are common in all wetland areas.

Ed said the more we can leave it up to whomever that person is with the Eagle Scouts to build the project, we want to make sure there are leadership roles that person would need to do. Agnes said they could have other materials donated, maybe part of it could be funded with interpretative signage and lumber with present funds and whatever they could come up with.

Seth said he has had a very good response from Wheeling High School, and they are very enthusiastic in getting students involved. Wheeling High School would like to do a field trip in early Spring and have the students come out, sort of like a recognizance to get ideas on what they could be doing. They hope to do a program this Spring, but they are very confident to have a bigger program in the Fall.

Wheeling High School has an environmental studies class that would be involved starting in the Fall. Seth said it looks promising.

Agnes requested Seth to let us know what he needs so we have time to organize this objective. Seth said perhaps the Wheeling High School students could be involved with the building of the Slough boardwalk. Agnes said if we receive the Open Land Grant, it takes two years to execute.

Ed inquired if there were restrictions of a Grant going to the same organization? Agnes said no, not any more. In fact, PHNRC has been encouraged to keep applying because our projects have been successful. They view our projects as models or a gold standard, if you will.

Agnes said we really use the Grant money to the best advantage. We also use our own resources, too.

2019 PHNRC Budget

Dana said our remodified PHNRC 2018-2019 budget reflects a reduction in the number of summer interns from three to two in anticipation of receipt of a \$3,000 in Grant funds for the Slough boardwalk. Should we put a qualifier (either/or language) that if we do not receive the Grant funds, may we reinstitute our need for three summer interns? We cannot submit two budgets,

The Grant application deadline is March 15, and the Grants are awarded in June.

We will submit one budget proposal and state the first line item a request for \$9,000 for three summer interns and add a line item for \$4,500 for the Open Land Grant. Next, we would state in our cover letter for the proposed budget that we are submitting an Open Land Grant application for \$9,000; however, if we are not successful in receiving Grant funds, we wish to fund a third summer intern.

Commissioners approved the budget as drafted and modification. Dana will revise the budget and send to Commissioners for their reference.

PHNRC Strategic Plan

The PHNRC Strategic Plan is still a work-in-progress and will be further addressed after the Wild Things Conference.

City Civic Meetings and PHNRC Representation Reporting

Ad Hoc Willow Road Project Committee (Hillcrest Lake)

Mayor and Joe Wade requested Dana to apply to become a member of the Hillcrest Lake Committee so that the Slough was represented. However, the City Council refused stating that Dana did not live on the affected area. Dana felt the argument would have been better made to from the perspective of having someone who has an eye on the bigger picture. Everyone who has anything to do with Prospect Heights will be affected by the project. Even people who do not live here but drive up and down Willow Road all the time.

Dana lives on Marion and does not touch one of the streets affected by the Project. However, being a member of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission and having worked here every single day, we are affected by the Project.

In Dana's opinion, not having representation on the Committee by the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission is short-sighted.

The Mayor approved the five-member Committee comprised of two residents (Tim Kupczyk and Nick Colombe), who live on Hillcrest Lake, two Aldermen (Alderman Patrick Ludvigsen and Alderman Scott Williamson) and Joe Wade. One of the residents is the gentleman who purchased Aaron Peterson's home.

What is their task? They are to be a liaison between the Project and the public: answer questions, disseminate information, give recommendations, etc.

PHNRC's objective is to look at the overall impact of the Project on the watershed, the environment and wildlife and feels the necessity to attend the meetings. Perhaps John Kamysz could attend, especially since he lives on Hillcrest Lake.

The Ad Hoc Willow Road Project Committee will hold their first meeting on Wednesday, February 27, 2019 at 6:30 p.m. in City Hall Chambers.

McDonald Creek Commission Meeting – January 22, 2019

Jill Moskal, as PHNRC representative for the McDonald Creek Commission (MCC), listened to the official recording of the McDonald Creek Commission (MCC) meeting of January 22, 2019.

Update on Beavers: The beaver situation in our area received a lot of social media commentary plus Cathy Brady, Chairperson of MCC, received e:mails and phone calls.

MCC would have liked the situation to play out a bit, at least for one year. They also felt creation of the beaver dams could have created a wetland to slow down the velocity of the creek flow, helping the creek downstream. A wetland holds more water than turf grass. However, MCC understood the time commitment of PHPW staff to continually remove the dams and understood PHPW's priorities. It is a balancing act of nature.

MCC 2019 Goals and Plans: MCC's main responsibilities are McDonald Creek, erosion and flooding. MCC's concerns also involve sewer, roads and stormwater. MCC wishes to be proactive in reducing flooding in our town.

Ann Arbor, Michigan provides credits to residents for installing rain barrels, creating a rain garden, cistern and/or dry well; and commercial properties receive a credit on their sewer bills for installing pervious surfaces. The City of Prospect Heights could also take this approach and provide vouchers to residents who install a rain barrel, rain garden, native plants, etc.

MCC identified that reducing the amount of run-off longer term is a concern. No dams and blockages in the Creek from now into the future. The City could charge a permit fee of, say, \$500 for an asphalt driveway installation or \$200 for a pervious surface driveway. The City could subsidize a permit for establishing a green infrastructure.

MCC also felt that newer residents are not aware of City Codes, such as, residents cannot drain sump pumps and gutters into the swales. The water should stay on resident's property.

MCC discussed initiating a Creek Clean-Up Week the week of April 21 – 28-, 2019. Residents would be requested to clean-up the creek on their property, such as trimming vegetation and removing garbage. If a resident needs assistance, MCC would assist. For larger tree limb trimming, PHPW could assist.

MCC would also request residents to take before and after photos of the debris removed and photos of the creek and e:mail the photos to MCC.

An exact date would be confirmed after Rick Hartke and Jon Kindseth meet with Mark Roscoe of PHPW.

PHNRC Cooperation: MCC said they share a similar vision with PHNRC and would like to have a cooperative relationship, but it is important to be a separate entity and maintain a separate identity.

Jill felt this was a great idea, and perhaps we could schedule a meeting to discuss our interest in supporting one another. After a brief suggestion and guidelines by Peter Falcone, Jill will contact Cathy Brady and ask if the PHNRC could be placed on their March meeting agenda to discuss this objective openly.

Next Meeting: February 26, 2019 at 6:00 p.m.

Somerset Park

Agnes would like to leave the subject matter of Beavers on our meeting agendas for a while because although they are gone, we should keep this current and find a solution for the next time. For example, we should have a plan in place over the next several months or year. We could look at permitting for PVC pipe, the bypass valve, the flow devices, we could reach out to Council and Public Works. We could be looking for more options and be proactive.

Ed said if another beaver occurrence happens, a beaver management plan would be in place.

Should we monitor the Creek? We could raise this with McDonald Creek Commission.

Agnes and Dana reached out to Christina Ferraro of the Park District to see if we could naturalize a portion of the creek at Somerset Park for multiple reasons. A large project for that area did not go through previously because of the expense/funding. But even if we could naturalize 10 or 20 feet to prevent soil erosion, filters and absorbs, etc. Christina would ask the Pastor of the neighboring church and then present it at the next PHPD Board of Directors Meeting.

Ed asked if that was private property? Agnes said twenty feet (20') by the creek is owned (and mowed) by the Park District, and the rest of the property (land that is higher) is owned by the church. Ed felt if we applied for the Grant, this would be a quality area to utilize the Grant funds.

Seth said members of the public who have concerns about flooding would probably be interested in our naturalization objective.

Agnes felt it would be an excellent opportunity to engage the community, educate the public and build community.

Wild Things Conference

Dana said he has progressed on the Wild Things Conference Power Point Presentation and previously sent an outline to Commissioners. Starting this weekend, rehearsals should be scheduled. Dana will send an e:mail with rehearsal dates.

Dana has almost all of the illustrations for the presentation, some great photographs, and the presentation talks about how you can start a volunteer project and what you can do to make it successful.

Dana's approach is an outline that supports the abstract then illustrations for the topic on that outline, so speakers are telling a story. The speaker will be able to look at the photo and tell a story.

Each speaker presents for eight (8) minutes.

Dana is also constructing a 3' x 4' Poster with photos illustrating our project.

PHNRC must arrive by 7:00 a.m. on Saturday, February 23, 2019.

Earth Week Structure (Earth Day is April 22, 2019)

Jill suggested to start planning for Earth Week and contact Kids' Care organization, MacArthur Junior High School, Wheeling High School, Master Gardeners of Cook County, and others who have visited our projects to see if they are interested in participating in Earth Week activities and have an educational component. Also make these organizations aware of the Bird Walk on April 27, 2019.

We have a workday scheduled on Easter Sunday, April 21, 2019, so we could consider moving the workday to the following weekend or start the workday at 10:00 a.m. instead of 9:00 a.m. Dana also mentioned that Wednesdays are a fine day to do something with the kids.

Agnes mentioned the Next-Door Neighborhood and the PHNRC Facebook page, so we can post notices and snippets of the PHNRC Journal on these two social media venues. We could also ask one of our volunteers, such as Maria Ampulski, to post PHNRC information on social media for us.

Also, our Calendar of Events on the PHNRC website is always current.

A suggested Earth Week schedule is: Nature Speaks Program with Terry Miesle, presenter, Thursday, April 16, 2019; PHNRC Workday, April 21, 2019; something with the kids on Wednesday, April 24, 2019; Bird Walk on Saturday, April 27, 2019. Also, a proposed Creek Clean-Up by MCC during Earth Week.

Volunteer Workday Management

Jill suggested at the March 14 PHNRC Meeting to discuss Commissioners assisting Agnes with future volunteer workdays as Dana recovers from his surgery currently scheduled at the end of March.

Visitor's Comments

None.

OTHER BUSINESS

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission is scheduled for Thursday, March 14, 2019 at 7:00 p.m. in City Council Chambers.

ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business to come before the meeting. Therefore, the meeting adjourned at 8:09 p.m.

Jill E. Moskal, CPS
PHNRC Commissioner and Recording Secretary