

Other conversation groups are conducting workdays. Wearing multiple layers and hand warmers plus once we start working normally dispels the cold feeling quickly along with the fire for the brush pile providing warmth. We may also consider conducting winter workdays for two instead of three hours. Volunteers always have the option to depart the workday whenever they feel it is necessary.

Agnes said we welcome feedback from our volunteers.

Nature Preserve and McDonald Creek Bank Erosion

Agnes and Dana reported that they met with Dino Squiers, Superintendent of Facilities, Prospect Heights Park District, regarding the area of McDonald Creek in the Nature Preserve experiencing bank erosion and our safety concerns. Dino agreed that a problem exists, and he will speak with Christina Ferraro.

We reiterated that correcting the problem is beyond our scope; therefore, professional intervention is necessary.

Prospect Heights Public Library/Park District Events

Nature Speaks Program

Dana reported that the Nature Speaks Program with Chris Helzer on January 28, 2021 was absolutely spectacular! Attendance was 109 people, the highest attendance for one of our Nature Speaks Programs.

Chris Helzer was delightful. Chris is extremely interested in what we do as an urban residential nature of our work. We have made a good friend and gained a fellow compatriot.

Five encore performances of Chris' presentation will be provided. The Library modified access to the encore performances to an access link. Therefore, one may view the encore at the day and time of their choosing. All that is necessary is to please register.

The next speaker is Dan Shilling, and his presentation will be during our Earth Week activities on April 22, 2021 (Earth Day). Dan's presentation is entitled "Aldo Leopold: Founding Voice of Environmental Ethics."

Mary Lou Mellon of the Bird Conservation Network will now have a birding presentation series presented through the Prospect Heights Public Library. The series is a regularly occurring monthly and unbelievable presentation series. Mary Lou's series is recorded. Every presentation series has more people in attendance.

Mary Lou's next presentations are scheduled as follows: Monday, February 22, 2021 at 1:00 p.m. - "Cruising the Seychelles Islands in the Indian Ocean;" Monday, March 29, 2021 at 1:00 p.m. - Birds of Britain; and on April 19, 2021 at 1:00 p.m. - "Birding Columbia: A 4WD Adventure in the Andes." Mary Lou's presentation of April 19 is part of our Earth Week activities.

Prospect Heights Park District Summer Programs

Dana will advise Marci Glinski, CPRP, Supervisor of Recreation with the Prospect Heights Park District, that outside of the Nature Camps typically held in the month of August, the PHNRC currently does not have any plans, ideas, or intentions for summer programs.

District 214 Internships

Dana reported that two High School students, Allison Biewenga (John Hersey High School) and Lauren Steininger (Prospect Heights High School), will be interning with the PHNRC from March 31 to May 26, 2021 on Wednesday and Friday mornings for two hours (8:00-9:30 a.m.). This is a micro-internship with us (30 hours). A regular internship is 60 hours. Allison and Lauren are part of the senior program of which Colin and Felix participated in and will receive class credits.

Allison and Lauren also have the option to attend our regularly scheduled volunteer workdays on Sunday mornings.

Dana and Agnes interviewed Allison and Lauren via Zoom Meeting. Both young ladies are excited to learn about nature, are smart and are interested in natural areas management.

NEW BUSINESS

Earth Day (April 22, 2021) and Earth Week Activities (April 18-24, 2021)

The Earth Week Activities for this year are currently planned as follows:

April 18, 2021: PHNRC Volunteer Workday (9:00am – 12:00 pm)

April 19, 2021: Birding Columbia: A 4WD Adventure in the Andes (Mary Lou Mellon)

April 22, 2021: Nature Speaks Program: “Aldo Leopold – Founding Voice of
Environmental Ethics” (Dan Shilling)

Other Dates: Weathering permitting, tours of PHNRC worksites.

Jill suggested conducting a tour of the Remnant Sedge Meadow. This worksite is located by the Arlington Heights Bike Path, which regularly has walkers, cyclists, etc. on the path. Signs like the Burma-Shave advertising signs could be posted along the path for advanced advertising of the event. Agnes felt this was a good place to show and many prairie plants show early.

Slough Boardwalk Project

Dana said this Project is well down the road.

Minor hiccup – Felix and his Dad just contacted us and advised that Scout Leadership has placed a hold on this Project. Do not want to do anything until the Project is formally approved, which is after the grant application is submitted in April.

Consensus was received from Commissioners and presented to the City and Park District who stated we should proceed with the Slough Boardwalk Project presentation to the City Council and reference the Scout Project. Dana will prepare the presentation. The presentation will occur during the City Council Meeting of February 22, 2021 and the Prospect Heights Park District Board Meeting of February 23, 2021.

The plan is basically what we proposed in 2018 when Larry Rosenthal and the City Council requested us to devise a plan for improved access to and enjoyment of the Slough. The Slough Boardwalk Project is part of this plan.

Christina provided the Prospect Heights Park District Comprehensive Master Plan. Their plan states increasing public use and access and a trail system. Their project compliments our Slough Boardwalk Project.

How wide is the design? They have a different idea to economize on materials. We are figuring 32" wide. Should be wider rather than narrow. Four feet would be preferable per John but understands about cost.

Seth asked what is the width of a stroller? Agnes felt that 33" would accommodate a stroller, but 24" would be tight.

ADA requirements and compliance are already present. Dana said the way it is written and the research we initially did shows that a nature trail is governed by the terrain; therefore, the boardwalk falls outside the ADA compliance regulations. Agnes said that people can access the trail via the sidewalk or the street and essentially do not need to take the path.

What cost increase would be from 33 to 38 inches? The bridge is 24 inches because it was based on the ladder underneath the structure, so the bridge surface is narrow. Agnes said we could take pictures, take measurements, and make a visual for comparison.

Ed said to add a factor: Costs are an issue. However, the wider it is, the safer it is. From that perspective, if we could do it, all the better. However, two feet would not be advisable.

Wheeling High School Prairie Update

Dana and John met via Zoom with the Wheeling High School Principal, the teacher, and the grounds staff. The project is on hold.

Wheeling HS is planning construction in the area that would be right by the prairie project. The grounds staff are concerned about manpower and managing the project should the project become their responsibility instead of the students. The grounds staff consists of just a few people.

The project is planned for this summer and tabled until they configure construction logistics, such as switching one parking lot to be available for the other, where material will be staged, access through the construction site, etc. They are unsure of the ramifications of putting the prairie where we talked about it vs. parking lot renovation.

Seth: We tried to alleviate their concerns on managing the prairie project stating that once established, the prairie requires little upkeep. John said Dana and he reiterated this plus what to expect in year one, two and three. The prairie becomes self-sufficient. Only the path would need a lawn mower to keep it trim.

Ultimately, the goal is to have the project sustainable by the students. Therefore, students participating in year one would marry up to the project and be involved until year four. The project is also a theater for internships and volunteers for the PHNRC. The Principal was concerned about student attention span and if realistic.

John said we suggested start smaller and increasing in size. However, the reconfiguring of the parking lot takes precedence. Agnes advocated to reduce the prairie footprint. They agreed with this, if proven to be sustainable, we could increase as we move along.

Peter: When starting the parking lot renovations, perhaps low maintenance prairie plants, like Dropseed, could be planted by the islands and curb areas showing the appeal of prairie plants and providing an opportunity on a small scale of what to expect from the project.

ComEd and the Remnant Prairie

Stantec advised that a Stantec crew will be at the Remnant Prairie the next few days (after February 8) to mow brush. The Stantec crew will start at the north end of the site and work south, and they will primarily focus on areas outside of the two transmission lines.

Work under the lines is planned for another crew through ComEd's Vegetation management Department.

The crew will access the prairie via the Prospect Heights Bike Path on ComEd's parcels.

The equipment utilized for this work by the Stantec crew is a brush hog, which is a large, motorized vehicle that can rip the tops off trees and shrubs of several inch diameter. It is very destructive. That is why performing this type of work when the ground is frozen affords minimal disturbance to the ground plants.

Agnes said we must follow-up with herbicide applications on the cut invasives. Dana said this work caused an increase in amount of herbicide listed in the proposed budget.

Seth: Any thoughts of connecting the Remnant Prairie to the Remnant Sedge Meadow? Agnes said the work involved would entail another 10 years due to the amount of invasives currently growing in that area. Fields of Teasel currently exist between the two prairies. To execute this hope would take an eternity to connect the two areas.

Seed/Greenhouse Program

Agnes reported that 78 species have been sowed into planting pots. The species are some PCPS species, a lot of species we collected, Agnes purchased some and also provided from the Pollinator Park Project. The collected seeds were combined for a mixture, and the mixes consist of 52 species collected from our own worksites.

The total seed quantity equals 147 pounds of which about 60 pounds was purchased for the Pollinator Park Project.

We collected 90 pounds of seed in 2020. This is a huge quantity, especially considering the restrictions in 2020 due to the Pandemic. Dana and Agnes said Peter Hahn collected one-third of this amount!

Dana said about 70% has been spread out or resting in pots. Thirty pounds is remaining to put down after a prescribed burn.

John said what we thought of Chris Helzer's comments about burning and over-burning. Are we burning too often?

Dana said we have not burned in four seasons. Agnes said we have conducted just patchy burns over time. You do not want to burn everything off. The Forest Preserve does this method, too. We have never accomplished a 100% prescribed burn anywhere. If we have adequate fuel and good weather conditions, then we would only burn half of an area. We leave habitat patches, as recommended by conservationists. We have had a cold freeze. However, nature has not allowed us to conduct a burn.

We will start putting things into the Greenhouse first week in March. We will go back to planning and zoning to reup the permit. A phone call is only necessary and completing paperwork. No presentation is required.

Comprehensive Equipment List and 2021 Budget

Dana previously sent the proposed 2021 Budget to Commissioners via e:mail message. No discussion was necessary at the meeting. Therefore, the motion for a final 2021 Budget was approved by a roll call vote.

Dana will provide the 2021 Budget to Peter Falcone to provide to the City Council and for discussion at the City Council meeting of April 22, 2021.

PHNRC Treasurer's Report

John Kamysz did not have anything new to report on our current budget. No new money in or out.

City Civic Meetings and PHNRC Representation

Jill summarized her notes from the following two January meetings:

City Council of Prospect Heights, Illinois – January 25, 2021 Meeting

Mayoral Appointment of Danielle Dash as Alderman Ward 4: Danielle has been a life-time resident of Prospect Heights since 1978. Danielle received her primary education from District 23 schools, is a graduate of John Hersey High School and received a bachelor's degree in civil engineering with a secondary degree in soil mechanics from the University of Illinois in 2004. Danielle and her husband, Jeff, along with her two teenage children reside in Prospect Heights.

Danielle has been a member of the City of Prospect Heights Planning and Zoning Board of Appeals for 10 years and became Chairman in 2015.

Danielle feels her education and business experience have been instrumental in serving on the Board of Appeals. Danielle looks forward with great enthusiasm to be Alderman of Ward 4.

Danielle will run for the Alderman Ward 4 position in April 2021.

John Hess reported that the Chicago Executive Airport is running well. In 2020, despite COVID-19, operations were up 4% from year to year (2019-2020). People are staying away from commercial aircraft.

An ongoing Project is the new Customs building with an anticipated completion in 3Q 2021 and open for business in 4Q 2021.

The residential sound installation program for 10 homes has been delayed due to COVID-19. Over 420 residents have gone through the program to soundproof their home.

Atlantic is building a new hangar on the north side of the airport.

Sales Taxes from the newly opened cannabis shop are better than expected the first few weeks of opening.

Mark Roscoe of Public Works reported the sewer lining project is nearing completion with 3,000 feet of pipe repaired. Public Works is in winter maintenance mode.

The Finance Director stated the report for December 31 of eight months of revenue and expenses is looking stronger at this time of the year; 50 to 60 percent of expenditures were held back. Budgets were conservative. We are right where we expected to be.

Property taxes were higher. Revenue has been strong and expected to continue to be so. No significant shortages. February 1 will start a new year with revenue falling right into place. The Finance Director commended the staff in the front office for diligent oversight.

Prospect Heights Park District – Board Meeting of January 26, 2021

The PHPD Budget has been publicly available on their website. At the January 26, 2021 meeting, a Public Hearing was conducted for public comment or questions. None were provided. Therefore, the PHPD Budget was passed.

The Mount Prospect State Bank will merge with the First Busey Corporation. The Mount Prospect State Bank is an Illinois local bank and needs FDIC approval.

Consideration of Agreement for Exchange of Land at/adjacent to Muir Park: Executive Director Christina Ferraro reviewed the agreement. Additional binding agreements are required about the park development budget, construction, shared use parking and detention pond logistics. Discussions will be required with Wheeling park District, PHYBS and the Muir neighbors. Lexington will be withdrawing their petition for the 61-unit proposal from PZBA later January 28.

Acceptance of the Urban & Community Forestry Grant Award Superintendent of Finance and Planning, Annette Curtis, stated that the park district will be working with Great Lakes Urban Forestry to conduct the tree inventory and develop the management plan for the park district. The grant includes all parks except for OOC. The Board approved acceptance of the Urban & Community Forestry Grant Ward in the amount of \$11,375.00.

The PHPD Board will have a Board vacancy as of March 1, 2021 because Vicki is moving to Florida. Therefore, the PHPD Board will have two spots open and must determine how best to manage.

Announcements to the Public

None.

Visitors' Comments

None.

OTHER BUSINESS

Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission is March 11, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. Central Time.

ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business to come before the meeting. Therefore, the meeting adjourned at 7:48 p.m.

Jill E. Moskal, CPS
PHNRC Commissioner and Recording Secretary