

CITY OF PROSPECT HEIGHTS  
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION  
SPECIAL BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
February 11, 2025

Present:       Pete Hahn                   Jill Moskal  
                  John Kamysz               Dana Sievertson  
                  Ed Madden                 Agnes Wojnarski

Guests:       None.

OPENING ITEMS

Call to Order

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

Roll Call

Roll Call proceeded. All Commissioners were present except Seth Marcus. However, a quorum was present.

Meeting Minutes of the Board Meeting of January 9, 2025

The minutes of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission Board Meeting of January 9, 2025 were reviewed. No changes or additions were provided. Therefore, the meeting minutes of January 9, 2025 were approved.

OLD BUSINESS

Volunteer Workdays

Winter Projects

Volunteer workdays scheduled for January 5 and February 2, 2025 were conducted at the Slough to continue moving the riparian buffer toward the north and stripping brush to put down seed. Our volunteer workday scheduled for January 19, 2025 was cancelled due to the extreme cold temperatures.

Volunteer workdays continue to show a high level of interest, enthusiasm, and attendance from our volunteers, new and ongoing.

East Leyden High School

Megan Michorczyk, coordinator of the East Leyden High School Service Club, contacted Dana with a request to schedule two workdays for her 67 students with the PHNRC in March and April. Therefore, two workdays have been scheduled as follows: March 16, 2025 – removal of invasive woody species at the Remnant Prairie; 67 students anticipated. ComEd has agreed to pick up the debris. April 12, 2025 – transplanting grasses at 9 East Marion, Prospect Heights; 40 students anticipated.

### Local Cub Scouts

Dana received an e:mail message from a local Cub Scout Leader seeking service hours for 15 Cub Scouts to work on March 2, 2025.

### Prospect Heights Public Library/Park District Events

#### Sierra Club

The Sierra Club is interested in working with us, again, this year, Therefore, a workday at the Remnant Sedge Meadow is anticipated on either Sunday, April 13 or Sunday, April 27, 2025 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Good attendance of between 60 and 100 people from the Sierra Club is expected this year. The work area will be the west side of the bike path to the fence to remove buckthorn, woody species, and cattails, and along the railroad tracks to remove buckthorn and woody species.

Coordination, participation, and planning are expected from the Sierra Club. Activities of set up and clean up are necessary. No additional work is expected or scheduled because the two dates selected are regularly scheduled PHNRC volunteer workdays.

#### Nature Speaks Program

The next scheduled Nature Speaks program is slated for February 13, 2025 from 7:00 – 9:00 pm Central Time and features “Live from Scotland: Flo Blackbourn – Why Not Scotland? Lessons Learned on My Rewilding Journey.” Please register with the Prospect Heights Public Library to attend this event.

The spring Nature Speaks Program is slated for April 2025.

Dana mentioned that the Manager of the Library’s Adult Programs has left and moved on to another job. Therefore, until this position is filled, Kim Murphy will be the Library’s Coordinator for the Nature Speaks Program.

#### Spring Bird Walks

Spring Bird Walks have been scheduled for Saturday, May 10, 2025 and Saturday, May 24, 2025 from 7:30 – 9:30 a.m. The Bird Walks will be led by Cyndi Lubecki and begin at the Izaak Walton Pavilion and traverse the perimeter of the Slough, concluding at 9 East Marion.

### Projects – Update/Status

#### Public Service Commons (Fifth ComEd Green Regions Grant)

Dana was contacted by Mark Roscoe of Public Works on February 10, 2025, informing Dana that the concrete bids that we proposed in the Green Regions Grant were at a fixed price, and we added \$1,000 and placed it in the budget to ensure we were covered. The bids received have doubled; therefore, how do we proceed? In the meantime, the Fire Department passed a referendum and received funding to increase the size of their facility and must have compensatory

storage for water. Their thought is to dig out the east side of the property to place the water because it would be a deeper space. Everything is uncertain.

The impact of this could be no impact. The fire department may elect underground compensatory storage for water and relocate parking spaces to the east side of the Police Station. Dana suggested digging out the front part of the Police Station and place a culvert between the two areas and run it around the east side for the Fire Department's compensatory water storage. This must be accomplished by engineering teams. A meeting is scheduled on February 18, 2025 with the experts to discuss possible scenarios. Mark Roscoe will be present. The PHNRC cannot have representation with no input from us, so this placed us in a vacuum.

The gazebo and concrete slab do not get built and with us digging out the detention pond deeper and end up with simply a naturalized setting. Dana said this is not the context of the Grant; this is not what was approved. If so, we must inform ComEd, who may say "forget it," and we must return the funding, or they say otherwise. Or Mark said we would do something with the Fire Department, who would pay the additional cost for construction of the concrete slab. Everything is negotiable.

It would be a shame to lose the Grant. We had two years to do the Grant, and the original goal was to have concrete platform and trees installed before the first snowfall. This current situation is either an opportunity to modify the project or ComEd may state it is unacceptable.

#### Seed/Greenhouse Program

Agnes reported that all the seeds are down and ready to germinate. The Greenhouse is ready. All the seeds are not yet outside, but Agnes accomplished the past few days and will place down more seed soon. All the specialty short species' seeds we purchased for the ComEd Project are outside and germinating.

#### Education Update

##### MacArthur Middle School

Agnes stated nothing new to report with the MacArthur Middle School.

##### Wheeling High School

Agnes reported Wheeling High School may be planning field trips to the Slough in the spring.

##### District 214

Agnes reported that three female High School students (one junior and two seniors; one from Hersey, Elk Grove, and Wheeling) have signed up for the Micro Internship Program, a program that is part of the District's Career Paths Program. All are smart and enthusiastic.

The first educational class will be conducted at 9 Marion Place on Friday, February 14 at 4:30 p.m. The Micro Internship Program is 30 hours and consists largely of education and some work. The timeframe is February 14 – May 9, 2025 with time for make-up program days typically during our scheduled volunteer workdays and Wednesday Transplanting days. High School students have active schedules including sports engagements, after-school activities, etc., that must be considered. Initially, the hours are 4:00-5:30 p.m. but will change to 4:30 – 6:30 p.m. after Daylight Saving Time.

John inquired if the students receive credits for participation in the Micro Internship Program. Dana was unsure, but Agnes said participants are typically interested in entering the naturalized area field. If so, the Micro Internship Program is a benefit when placed on resumes and college entrance applications.

#### Prescribed Burns and Permit Renewal Update

Dana reported that prescribed Spring burns are coming soon!

Agnes received a communication from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) who burn cattails in the winter. The fire is started with a propane torch, and it is a safe maintenance activity because snow and ice are present on the ground. Burning the cattails in the winter is advantageous because you can reach the cattails easier than during the growing season when the ground is wet and muddy.

Agnes will monitor the weather. The ideal timeframe is mid-March to early April and when low relative humidity is present.

#### CONTINUOUS REPORTING

##### NRC 2024-2025 Budget

John Kamysz did not have anything new to report on the City of Prospect Heights 2024-2025 NRC Budget. No new expenditures to report; however, Dana said Agnes and Dana are compiling a large order for spring needs, such as hand and feet warmers, seed, soil and planting cups.

##### Proposed 2025-2026 Budget and Comprehensive Equipment List

Agnes and Dana submitted the PHNRC operational budget request for the fiscal year of 2025-2026 to the City of Prospect Heights on January 29, 2025. The budget request reflects our priorities to meet the projected workload and projects for the year. Our submission reflects a sensitivity towards fiscal responsibility; therefore, we are only requesting a slight increase in the amount of our budget from 2024-2025. This was accomplished by cutting a few line-items to compensate for higher prices of supplies. Last year's funding request was \$13,544. This year, the PHNRC is requesting a slight increase to \$13,789.00.

Agnes and Dana noted that 2024 was the PHNRC's most productive year with volunteers logging 4,482 hours of labor. Also, the impact of the Greenhouse Program provides the NRC with plant inventories in excess of 30,000 plugs per year at an average cost of \$3.75 per plant. The PHNRC seeks to build on and maintain the successes of our 11-year history.

Our top priority is funding the summer intern position. Our summer internship program provides the single most important asset for our organization, and the dividends it has paid and the impact on the lives of the interns has been priceless.

Tool maintenance has remained the same with no new line items for equipment. We are fiscally conservative and wish to maintain what we have as opposed to buying new equipment.

The Prospect Heights Park District budget has been approved, and they are funding the PHNRC by \$1,000 more than 2024.

#### City Civic Meetings and PHNRC Representation

Jill reported on the following:

Planning and Zoning Board of Appeals: At the January 28, 2025 PZBA meeting, Dan Peterson reported that the chicken ordinance is before the City Council for review. The city's website and e:newspaper will announce the meeting date when the Chicken Ordinance will be discussed and voted upon by the City Council.

The PZBA February 2025 meeting will not be held due to lack of applications. The next scheduled PZBA in March is March 19, 2025.

City Council: Supplemental Design Engineering Services for Willow Road improvements with GEI Consultants: The Department of Transportation requested additional geotechnical analysis of the soil due to the poor soil conditions underlying Willow Road. For the project to progress, additional soil testing is required.

Our new Chief of Police is Milo Derman as of February 2025.

Prospect Heights Park District Board Meeting: NRC prescribed burns for 2024/2025 were approved. Agnes inquired if we have received approval from the City of Prospect Heights for prescribed burns. Dana will check and confirm.

A community meeting was held on January 30, 2025 at 6:30 p.m. at the Gary Morava Recreation Center to present the revised plan and budget for Tully Park. Staff presented the revised proposed plan for the district's newly-acquired parcel at 214 South Wheeling Road: construction of a horseshoe driveway with geogrid, trees planted between the home located north of the parcel and Tully Park, and installation of a fence was proposed and approved at a cost of \$38,000. Construction will begin as soon as weather permits.

The Prospect Heights Park District Block Party is scheduled for Saturday, June 21, 2025.

### Friends of the PHNRC

Jill reported that the Friends of the PHNRC held a meeting on Thursday, January 23, 2025 where roles were designated and committees established. Discussions centered on the definition of the Friends of the PHNRC, business tasks outlined, such as, establishing a bank account, business plan and domain name; goals and objectives setting; mission statement; and book publishing opportunity.

John reported that members of the Mission Statement Committee met to brainstorm on the Friends of the PHNRC Mission Statement. Results and suggestions will be presented at the next Friends of the PHNRC Meeting of February 17, 2025.

### Summer Intern 2025

An extraordinary candidate was interviewed by Agnes, Dana and Seth on January 21, 2025, and her name is Sawyer Schnell.

Sawyer is mature beyond her years with a great deal of work experience and tasks completed beyond the bounds of volunteerism reflecting trust, knowledge, and accumulated experience. Sawyer confirmed that she has the ability to seek out knowledge, incorporate it, and turn it into practical experience.

Sawyer has attended PHNRC volunteer workdays where her work ethic was demonstrated. Her problem-solving and people/conflict resolution skills are mature and exceptional.

Agnes, Dana, and Seth felt Sawyer Schnell is appropriate for the role of Summer Intern.

The PHNRC typically posts our request for a Summer Intern in March. However, Sawyer contacted Agnes and Dana in January to ensure she did not miss the deadline.

Commissioners approved hiring of Sawyer Schnell as the PHNRC Summer Intern of 2025. Sawyer will start either May 16 or June 1 depending on her school schedule.

Also, Dana said another candidate, Isabelle Sparreo, who is a super decorated athlete at DePaul University majoring in Environmental Science and minoring in Political Science, is scheduled for an in-person interview on February 27, 2025 at 4:30 p.m. Dana said Isabelle is a strong candidate on paper. Isabelle applied last year but missed the deadline. Therefore, she said she did not want to miss the opportunity this year!

### NEW INITIATIVES

#### Tree Initiative

Dana said he has approached Brent of the River Trails Park District but have not held a discussion on the Tree Initiative. Further, Dana said no one in our area seems interested, unless we approach the high schools.

Pete Hahn suggested approaching East Leyden because they fall into the area of the grant requirements. Dana felt this was a terrific suggestion; therefore, he will contact Megan Michorczyk, coordinator of the East Leyden High School Service Club and see if there is any interest.

Agnes suggested approaching Wheeling High School. Pete said that Rolling Meadows High School has land available, but said you almost need someone on the inside to have a contact, like we did with MacArthur Middle School. Pete's sister, Mary Hahn, is available to assist in submitting grant paperwork.

### Wild Things Conference

The Wild Things Conference, organized by the Friends of the Illinois Nature Preserves, is scheduled on Saturday, March 1, 2025 at the Donald E. Stephens Convention Center, 5555 North River Road, Rosemont, Il 60018. The Wild Things 2025 Conference invites nature enthusiasts from across Illinois and beyond to learn about the flora, fauna, and natural history of the Prairie State. The program offers an exciting lineup of workshops, presentations and sessions from regional and natural experts. This year, Maria Garrison, author, biologist, researcher, and renowned expert on dragonflies and damselflies, will be the keynote speaker. Botanist and science educator, Joey Santore, and host of the YouTube channel "Crime Pays But Botany Doesn't" will speak during the closing plenary and social hour scheduled on March 1 at 5:00 p.m.

John and Dana have developed a different approach for their presentation entitled Giant Ants and Butterflies Bring Nature and Community Together. Also present are Kate Tully, Mara Lovisetto, and Cathy O'Shea. The description of the presentation on the Wild Things website is as follows:

The Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission has a thing for the Fourth of July parades. Marching ants, a giant praying mantis, a floating egret, great blue Herons, a twelve-foot Monarch butterfly, a trumpet playing turtle, a trombone playing squirrel, twirling milkweeds, cicadas, and a twenty-foot Monarch caterpillar are just a few of the creatures from PHNRC Commissioner John Kamysz's mind to the pavement. Working with artists Kate Tully and mara Lovisetto of the Sunflower Group and Puppeteer Heather Lillian, they oversaw an army of PHNRC regular volunteers to bring magic to the streets and elevate the natural world. Come learn how this award-winning restoration organization has earned the "BEST IN SHOW" in the Arlington Heights parade three years running and the admiration of the hometown folks in Prospect Heights.

The presentation is not scientific but a story about the PHNRC and how our success with the ecological restoration work connects our community, so more of a social experiment rather than a nuts-and-bolts botany story. Input from Cathy O'Shea and Mara Tully, our parade artists, will be incorporated.

John presents minimal information about us in the beginning and then shows how Covid created an opportunity for us to do something different and then how the rise of the Sunflower Group with their integrated enthusiasm made incredible things happen in our community. The presentation is a good background on what we do and our community outreach, like education but culminating with our collaboration with the artists and the rest of the community with the parade floats. Ed strongly recommended mentioning the PHPD Block Party and our plant giveaways.

The PHNRC presentation is scheduled on March 1, 2025 at 1:15 pm in Room 43 of the Convention Center. Must purchase tickets.

#### Sierra Group Presentation

Dana and Agnes will be providing a presentation on invasives to the Sierra Club on April 10 at the Schaumburg Spring Valley Nature Center.

#### Arlington Heights Garden Club

Dana and Agnes will be providing a presentation on our organization and general information to the Arlington Heights Garden Club on April 28, 2025. We see look forward to providing our presentation and the opportunity to strengthen our relationship with the Arlington Heights Garden Club.

#### ChiliFest

The PHNRC Annual ChiliFest will be held at the home of John and Kristen on Sunday, February 16, 2025 from 3:00 to 7:00 p.m. This festive event is open to all volunteers. Dana will be providing a slide show.

John said this could be an opportunity to see if any of our volunteers would wish to wear any of the Fourth of July Parade costumes at the Wild Thing Conference. Jerome is interested in wearing the Caterpillar costume, but the costume requires five people. John mentioned that it would be a challenge to transport and assemble the costumes.

#### Announcements to the Public

None.

#### Visitors' Comments

No visitors were present at the meeting.

#### OTHER BUSINESS

##### Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission will be held on Thursday, March 13, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. Central Time in City Hall Chambers.

#### ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business to come before the meeting. Therefore, the meeting was adjourned at 7:38 p.m.

Jill E. Moskal, CPS  
PHNRC Commissioner and Recording Secretary