

**MINUTES
GLENVIEW NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
November 15, 2004**

Call to Order by the Chairman

The November 15, 2004, meeting of the Glenview Natural Resources Commission was called to order by Chairman Fuller at 7:00 p.m. in the Lunchroom of the Village Hall.

Roll Call and Declaration of a Quorum

Roll call was taken and Chairman Fuller noted a quorum was present.

PRESENT: Commissioners Beck, Blomquist, Freeman, Glennemeier, Chairman Fuller, and Ms. Robyn Flakne, Nat. Res. Manager and Staff Liaison

GUESTS: Ms. Libby Hill, Author
Ms. Nancy Halliday, Naturalist
Mr. Anders Ahlberg, Nominee for Student Member of NRC
Mr. Alex Barnas, Boy Scout
Mr. Zach Avila, Boy Scout
Mrs. Patty Avila

Approval of Minutes

Chairman Fuller asked for corrections or comments to the October 18, 2004 minutes of the Natural Resources Commission meeting.

Page two, second paragraph, second line "plain" should be "plane".

Commissioner Beck moved to approve the October 18, 2004 minutes as amended. Commissioner Blomquist seconded the motion. Upon voice vote the motion carried.

General Communications

None.

Consideration of Cases on the Agenda

None.

New Business

Focus Group on Downtown

Commissioner Beck was asked to participate in a focus group meeting on Glenview's downtown held on Wednesday, November 10, 2004. It was facilitated by a consulting group, headed by Mr. Steve Freeman, who explained they would be doing some studies of

the river. Meeting participants were concerned about the river and Sleepy Hollow Park. Some participants expressed interest in having more nature in downtown and not just development. Commissioner Beck thought it prudent to share information between that group and the NRC. The river goes through downtown and the Village is not taking advantage of it nor taking care of it. There may be an opportunity to get the West Fork Green path along the river in good shape. Commissioner Beck sent an e-mail message to Ms. Flakne regarding the above, who then forwarded the message to Ms. Mary Bak, Director of Development, and Mr. Jeff Brady, Village Planner. Ms. Flakne will find out what is their interest in the river. In February this focus group will present their ideas.

Controlled Burns

Chairman Fuller and Ms. Flakne have identified two likely places for controlled burns: 1) a portion of the southern end of the Prairie, adjacent to where the Interpretive Center will be built, which is infested with loosestrife; and 2) North Navy Ditch. It is unlikely that the North Navy Ditch will have a controlled burn because the moisture level will be high, the wind will be low because of the number of trees, and it has a lot of Eurasian cool grasses. On Monday, November 8 a portion of loosestrife was burned. Commissioner Freeman requested notification of the next controlled burn date to photograph it. The Grove also has an annual burn in the Spring.

Guest Presentation on History of the Chicago River

The speaker, Ms. Libby Hill, is author of the book entitled, “The Chicago River: A Natural and Unnatural History of our Natural and Unnatural River”. Ms. Hill received a draft copy of the comments on the ecological assessment of the river which will be converted into a report for the community on the West Fork.

Ms. Hill looked at the river and found the West Fork particularly interesting because it has more of a slope to it and is shorter than other parts of the river. Maps from the Lake County Storm Water Management District show there is a pond on I94 and shows a stream coming out of it. However, when Ms. Hill walked the area, she found no connection between this pond and the ditch that was downstream. One of the engineers Ms. Hill worked with, Mr. Ted Anderson, said if a pond has an even bottom it may indicate the bottom was scalped off for fill for the bridge that is right next to it. If the pond has an uneven bottom, it would indicate a natural floor. This pond was consistently 11 feet deep. Interestingly, the pond was there after I94 was constructed, and not before. Ms. Hill canoed the pond, which has three P.I.N. numbers. The pond’s top and bottom parts are owned by Granger; the middle is owned by Medowa. Studies were conducted for the Village of Lincolnshire and determined the headwaters out of the West Fork actually come from the west across River Woods Road, through the southern part Granger land.

The West Fork in Northbrook was in bad shape, but many improvements have been made. Ms. Hill reminded the Commission if one doesn't know what goes on upstream, one cannot know how downstream is impacted. One must always remember that all parts of the river are connected together.

The restoration of the river on the area south of Willow Road is marvelous. Ms. Hill was disappointed there is a sign saying "Willow Creek" and not "West Fork of the Chicago River". She had submitted a C-2000 grant proposal to the Lake County Storm Water Management system to establish signs along the entire river system that would identify it as the West Fork of the Chicago River. The grant request was denied. Ms. Hill believes all communities adjacent to the river should identify the river--how else would someone know what it was.

On page 160 in Ms. Hill's books is a map of downtown Glenview showing Frog Town and slews.

The development off of Waukegan Road north of Lake Street and Valley Lo Park (the east end of Lot 16) is called Strawberry Hill. There is an area that had seven or eight species of ducks in the water although sometimes the pond is dry.

At the Valley Lo Golf Course there are large snapping turtles by the overflow area. The ditch along Valley Lo is unattractive.

Along Grove Street there are houses with grass lots leading to the river. Perhaps these homeowners would be receptive to planting something appealing that would keep the soil from eroding. It may be easier to get private property owners to improve the riverbank than it would be to get public approval. Ms. Hill believes that if property owners by the river received assistance in terms of education and financing, they might work toward river restoration, and the public sector may follow their lead.

Ms. Hill said Mr. Gullen indicated he worked very hard to improve the area south of Willow Road.

When Ms. Hill visited Tall Trees, she was upset that parents were not interested in showing their children the river. She then visited Sleepy Hollow Park and noticed it is not connected to a flood plain. In Middle Fork Savannah there is an ecologically concerned landscape architect who has worked for the Lake Forest or Lake Bluff Conservancy and the Lake County Forest Preserve District (LCFPD) in charge. The LCFPD's objective is to keep the river in a ditch and separated from their flood plain because residents don't want to spread seeds from alien plants (like loosestrife and canary grass).

Commissioner Beck said by state law a community is allowed to tax residents for open space and recreation. Generally, there is not much money for extra benefits, so if a village purchases a five-acre lot it is because it may need a ball field. If agencies worked together, much could be accomplished. For instance, if the recreation side of the Park District and an agency in charge of flood plains worked together to purchase a larger piece of open land, when the land was dry, would be all recreation; and when the land was wet would be more flood plain. People who use the ball field want them dry and available all the time. Ms. Hill suggested the Commissioners visit Gompers Park, which is the “jewel in the crown” of the Chicago Park District. It is a park that has a ball field, tennis courts and naturalized river banks and flood plain.

Ms. Hill visited Riverside Park. Friends of the Chicago River said it was difficult to renovate Riverside Park because residents were not happy about losing their tree cover/privacy regardless of whether it was buckthorn or not.

Ms. Hill walked in a park in Northbrook and could see the West Fork. This is not possible in Glenview. It is a lost opportunity that can be rectified. When she asked residents where there is an access to the Chicago River, they were unable to respond but they knew where the “ditch” was.

The North Branch (which was never reversed) is the major feeder for the river. The South Branch is relatively small, and the main stem is tiny, and both were reversed. Signs are an important part of education that the river is there. Lake County signs should be the same as Cook County signs. It is Ms. Hill’s opinion that the sign along the Edens Highway misidentifies the East Fork of the North Branch of the Chicago River as the Skokie River. There are more signs now in Northbrook as a result of an initiative from the Friends of the Chicago River.

Commissioner Glennemeier said it would be good if Glenview residents were able to see the river from the parks. Commissioner Beck said the Commission has a huge challenge in getting people to feel differently about the river. Ms. Hill said that by showing Glenview residents the river area by the Northbrook Library where people picnic, parents shouldn’t be afraid to make the river visible to children. It is probably more dangerous the way it is now. Commissioner Freeman will take photographs to promote the Commission’s ideas. Ms. Hill was unsure what the Commission’s vision is: to stabilize the bank; scoop out the bank; or integrate the river and the community.

There are low banks on the Glenview Club that are buckthorn, which is not stable. It could be stabilized with proper vegetation. Chairman Fuller said the slopes can be made gentler. The West Fork was converted into a drainage ditch. It has eroded because of episodic flows of the quick run off. The channel is now eroded some distance deeper, which has

resulted in steep banks. Because it eroded past the top soil down into the subsoil, now even where it is a bit gentle there is a band of clay between the channel and where vegetation could grow. Consequently, it is difficult to grow plants. Maybe the NRC can give some demonstrations on how to fix the banks in terms of grading them out where there is enough space, where it doesn't get to someone's patio door. If the river is in this ditch form, we can encourage people to widen out the stream banks on their private property. There are management practices the Commission could encourage upstream that would benefit the river.

Ms. Hill said the North Shore Channel was an artificial ditch which was dug in a swale. It would be beneficial to meander the stream. She said Glenview is a developmentally oriented community (i.e., The Glen) and that the Wagner Farm was barely saved. Ms. Hill suggested encouraging and educating homeowners north of The Grove to take a bit of their yard and make it into something ecologically sound. Educate all residents about the wonderful resource that is the river.

Commissioner Beck said New York City determined that in order to protect their drinking water they needed to control the watershed. They could have either spend billions of dollars making a treatment plant that would clean up the water after it arrived or they could control of the water as it made its way to NYC, which is what they did. They bought the watershed in order to control it. The Commission is allowed to do conservation easements and maybe the Village needs to develop something called the Conservation Watershed Easement. The quickest way to get homeowners along the river to respond is to say we need to have your river bank not in turf, and if you'll do that you'll get a tax break.

Chairman Fuller said the Commission can establish some photo images of the river in Glenview to help explain the range of treatments the river is receiving: broken concrete, grass, and a regraded yard to taper into the river.

Ms. Hill said there is a volunteer steward and crew at Gompers Park. Having stewardship opportunities might be advisable. Take 'before' and 'after' pictures of the buckthorn removal. If people took 'psychological ownership' of each of the parks, things would get accomplished. Commissioner Fuller said Glenview has taken ownership of the Techny Basin, ownership of the river as it comes south of Willow including the reconstructed wetlands along the banks, Lot 16, and the five-acre piece by Valley Lo. If the Commission can show residents photographs and create an awards program, it would make an impression on people. Commissioner Beck suggested a photo-imaging video and a virtual tour of the river as the river looks now and show the river reconfigured and the banks coming down and the vegetation, flora, and fauna that would come back.

Commissioner Freeman said there are towns whose tourism is based on their portion of the river. If the Development Committee can work on the riverfront, it would benefit all. Commissioner Beck suggested having greenspace along the triangle made up of Glenview, River, and Waukegan Roads. There will be hearings in February of the downtown plan meeting and perhaps the NRC could recommend an opportunity and not dictate what they ought to do. The Commission could give them some criteria that might be done like an open space path which would make the river healthier and to avoid the things that would be damaging to the river.

Commissioner Fuller asked Commissioners to walk around the downtown and look at the river and think about long-term possibilities.

Ms. Hill suggested when the new Interpretive Center is designed, to consider the way glass is used to prevent birds from flying into the windows. Ms. Flakne said there is a large overhang that will cast a shadow. Mr. Dan Clem from Pennsylvania is an expert in this area. The Calumet Interpretation Center is designed to be a bird-friendly building. Commissioner Freeman suggested using the window covering that is used on buses. There might be some sources on the City of Chicago's web page for the Migratory Bird Treaty. Ms. Hill said there will be a conference in March, 2005 whose objective is to put it in the hands of the designers, architects, interior designers. The birds that strike the windows are migrants, palm warblers, brown creepers, and thrushes.

Ms. Flakne will confirm the next date of the downtown plan meeting. She distributed the brochure prepared which outlines what the Natural Resources Commission does.

Old Business

Summary of NRC Work Day at Sleepy Hollow Park

Chairman Fuller explained that the work day to clear buckthorn along the river by the bridge at Sleepy Hollow Park was sponsored by the Park District and Park Commission on Saturday, November 13, 2004. Commissioner Blomquist said the Park District work crew, headed by the Maintenance Supervisor Mike, shared their expertise by acquainting people to the site and explaining what buckthorn was, which was very helpful. Mr. Fred Gullen gave Ms. Halliday handouts and on November 8 she delivered the information to the houses that border the river and houses on Church Street, as well as pasting posters at the grocery store, train station and River Trail Nature Center. The event was well attended. The Park District crew chipped up the brush and now much more sunlight is reaching the riverbank. The Commission is interested in receiving feedback from Mr. Gullen to see what direction should be taken. Commissioner Beck will attend a Park District meeting on Thursday, November 18 and will express the Commission's gratitude for Park District support and that the Commission will be happy to co-sponsor another clean-up day in the Spring or sooner.

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Update on Student Member of NRC

One of the provisions that establish the Natural Resources Commission calls for a student member. Ms. Flakne has had conversations with Glenbrook South High School (GBS) and invited a nominee, Mr. Anders Ahlberg a junior at GBS, to the meeting. Chairman Fuller explained he will be an official voting member of the Commission after his swearing in by the Village President. Mr. Ahlberg's participation in the Commission is welcome.

Adjournment

Commissioner Freeman moved to adjourn. Commissioner Glennemeier seconded the motion. Upon voice vote the motion carried. Meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sheri Scott
Recording Secretary