

Minutes of the 945th meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners of the Columbus and Franklin County Metropolitan Park District, held at 3:03pm on Tuesday, June 25, 2024 at Spring Hollow Lodge, Sharon Woods Metro Park, 1069 West Main Street, Westerville, Ohio 43081.

Present

Commissioners: Mr. Alex, Mr. Hadden, Mr. McCue

Staff: Mr. Baugess, Mr. Billow, Ms. Boniface, Mr. Brosius, Mr. Buescher, Ms. Bunner, Mr. Domiano, Mr. Holdrieth, Ms. Huffman, Ms. Ingram, Mr. Kaderly, Mr. Kasnyik, Mr. Kaylor, Mr. Kujawa, Mr. Laughbaum, Mr. Luken, Mr. McGivern, Mr. Moloney, Mr. Neumeier, Mr. Peck, Ms. Pepper, Mr. Poole, Mr. Sloan, Mr. Studenmund

Legal Counsel: Mr. Franzmann

Guests: Ms. LeeAnn Miller, Mr. David Roseman, Guests of Park Rangers

Mr. McCue asked if all of the notice requirements of Section 121.22 of the Ohio Revised Code and the rules of the Board regarding open meetings had been met. Mr. Moloney confirmed that all of those requirements and rules had been met.

Minutes of the June 25, 2024 Board Meeting

Mr. Alex made a motion to approve the minutes of the June 25, 2024 Board Meeting. Mr. Hadden seconded the motion and the minutes were approved.

Public Comment

None.

Disbursement Resolution No. 6163

Mr. Hadden moved for the approval of the Disbursement Resolution for the May 2024 invoices. Mr. McCue seconded the motion and the Board approved the resolution. A copy of Resolution No. 6163 is attached to these minutes as part hereof.

Staff Reports

Administration

Mr. Moloney stated that Metro Parks had partnered with Dudley Edmondson, a known birder and nature photographer, to introduce Columbus City Schools students to careers in natural resources. Mr. Edmondson is a graduate of the Columbus City Schools district.

Other administrative projects are also underway. Mr. Peck met with the City of Columbus to discuss sewer and water connections at Quarry Trails Metro Park in an effort to move both several projects and Metro Parks' relationship with the City forward.

Staff also met with representatives from a developer who is planning a housing development adjacent to the Heritage Trail; this developer, whose plan is for the east side of the trail, heard Metro Parks' request for more green space planning and

considerations in that area and modified their site plan to move green space next to Heritage Trail and Heritage Trail Dog Park.

Operations

Mr. Peck first introduced Mr. Geoff Hamilton, Park Manager of Battelle Darby Creek Metro Park, who presented an award to two of his rangers (Ms. Amber Huffman and Mr. Tyler Kujawa), who responded to a report of a potentially-suicidal individual and met with the individual, ultimately talking her down from a railroad bridge over Big Darby Creek and back to her family. Mr. Hamilton thanked his rangers for their compassion and dedication to service.

Mr. Peck added that staff has increasingly been interacting with visitors who are experiencing physical, mental or emotional distress, and thanked staff for their efforts and commitment to visitor safety.

Mr. Peck provided some operational updates as well. The Canopy Walk at Blacklick Woods remains enormously popular. Over 300,000 visitors have gone up the Canopy Walk since its opening in May. The volume of visitation has prompted a “strike team” made up of rangers volunteering from other parks to help Blacklick Woods maintain normal park operations. Some issues have arisen, including issues with the elevator at the Canopy Walk and some injuries due to improper use of playground equipment in the children’s play area, but staff has responded well to these issues and is working to improve visitor safety and experience. Many visitors have come from out of town.

Several projects are underway, including paving projects at several parks, the installation of new security cameras and software for those cameras, Metro Parks’ annual summer day camp program and more. Finally, staff is preparing for Red, White & Boom celebrations at Scioto Audubon, which always draws large crowds.

Finance

Mr. McGivern provided updates from the Finance Department. Preparations for the FY2025 budgeting process are underway, with a resolution that will be presented to the Board later in the meeting. Finance staff processed three payroll periods for May and completed several new hires. The IT department is working on a migration to Windows 11 for the park district.

Human Resources

Mr. Domiano, filling in for Ms. Telfer, stated that Human Resources had no updates beyond what Mr. McGivern had shared about hiring.

Grange Insurance Audubon Center: Update

Mr. Moloney introduced the Board to Ms. LeeAnn Miller, the Director for the Grange Insurance Audubon Center (GIAC), a non-profit organization that operates out of a building within Scioto Audubon Metro Park. The GIAC and Metro Parks have worked closely together for many years, with the GIAC offering a rental space and educational programming that other parks offer through a Nature Center.

Ms. Miller provided further information; the National Audubon Society, in partnership with Metro Parks, the City of Columbus and others, helped found Scioto Audubon Metro Park. The GIAC is a partner for Scioto Audubon and has been operating under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that is nearly twenty years old.

Under the current MOU, the GIAC operates on Metro Parks property and offers rental space, educational programming and more to visitors of the park, though rental revenues are not shared between the two agencies. In return, Metro Parks has priority parking and use of the GIAC's lot. In the past, Metro Parks has occasionally provided security services and staffing to the GIAC, which has not always had hours of operation that matched the park's operational needs.

Ms. Miller and her team are working on a new MOU. Under this MOU, the GIAC would request a cost sharing arrangement, with Metro Parks providing \$75,000 a year to the GIAC to defray operating costs, with the bulk of this fee funding additional staffing so that the GIAC could match Scioto Audubon's hours of operation. This would cover reduced rental programming, as rentals often close the GIAC to the public for hours at a time.

Mr. Alex commented that he, as a park visitor, agreed that many visitors do not realize that Scioto Audubon and the GIAC are separate agencies. Many visitors view the GIAC as Scioto Audubon's nature center. He asked if there were any plans, if the MOU is updated, to improve the 'nature center experience' at the GIAC.

Ms. Miller stated that GIAC staff had been working to improve educational opportunities at the center, including upgrades to a play area, new activities, expanded hours and so on. Under the new MOU, staff would seek to balance visitor experiences and educational opportunities.

Mr. McCue asked Metro Parks' staff if Metro Parks had committed to this kind of sharing of resources with other organizations. Mr. McGivern stated that no, Metro Parks has not, though Metro Parks does pay member fees to organizations like the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission.

Mr. Hadden asked if the GIAC had also approached the City of Columbus for inclusion in the MOU, as the City was part of the initial agreement to create Scioto Audubon. Ms. Miller stated that the GIAC was in the preliminary stages of developing the new MOU and would approach the City.

Mr. Moloney added that Metro Parks' relationship with the GIAC and other groups at Scioto Audubon is unique, because the park itself is unique. The MOU has changed over the years as the park has grown and changed. Mr. Moloney stated that the relationship between the GIAC and Metro Parks has been a good one; Metro Parks has helped the GIAC with staffing needs, camps, programming, maintenance and other needs over the years.

Mr. Alex asked if adding more Metro Parks staff to the GIAC would serve as a potential solution, and also asked if Ms. Miller or Mr. Moloney knew how much Metro

Parks had invested in the GIAC over the years. Mr. McGivern stated that he could provide those numbers at a later Board meeting.

Ultimately, the Board thanked Ms. Miller for her request and stated that they would review the draft MOU at a later meeting to determine the future direction of a partnership between Metro Parks and the GIAC. No action was taken on Ms. Miller's request.

Resolutions

- #6164** **APPOINTMENT OF PARK RANGERS**
The Board swore in seven Park Rangers who had successfully completed an Ohio Peace Officer's Training program and appointed them as Park Rangers. Mr. Samuel Brosius, Ms. Lillian Bunner, Mr. Mark Holdrieth, Mr. Dylan Kaylor, Mr. Douglas Luken, Mr. Nicholas Neumeier, Mr. Brandon Poole and Mr. Clayton Sloan were sworn in and commissioned as Park Rangers for the district.
- #6165** **ADOPTING THE FISCAL YEAR 2025 PRELIMINARY BUDGET AND DIRECTING ITS SUBMISSION TO THE FRANKLIN COUNTY BUDGET COMMISSION**
The Board authorized Metro Parks to adopt a preliminary budget for 2025 and to submit said budget to the Franklin County Budget Commission, which is a necessary step in the annual budgeting process.
- #6166** **AUTHORIZING APPROPRIATION ADJUSTMENTS WITHIN THE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS FUND (FUND 29)**
The Board authorized Metro Parks to reduce appropriation levels in Fund 29 in order to maintain estimated appropriation levels by fund.
- #6167** **AUTHORIZING SUBMISSION OF ONE APPLICATION TO THE OHIO RIVER BASIN H2OHIO WETLAND GRANT PROGRAM**
The Board authorized Metro Parks to submit one application for land acquisition to the H2Ohio program, which provides funds for restoration and land acquisition projects that improve water quality within the Ohio River Basin.
- #6168** **AUTHORIZING THE PURCHASE OF REAL ESTATE OWNED BY MARY ANN MCCOY FOR PARK LAND AT BATTELLE DARBY CREEK METRO PARK**
The Board authorized Metro Parks to purchase approximately 32.5 acres of land adjacent to Battelle Darby Creek Metro Park from Mary Ann McCoy at a negotiated price of \$20,000 per acre.
- #6169** **AUTHORIZING THE PURCHASE OF REAL ESTATE OWNED BY JOSEPH ALLAN MOORE FOR PARK LAND AT BATTELLE DARBY CREEK METRO PARK**
The Board authorized Metro Parks to purchase approximately 32.5 acres of land adjacent to Battelle Darby Creek Metro Park from Joseph Allan Moore a negotiated price of \$20,000 per acre.

- #6170 AUTHORIZING ENTERING INTO A CONTRACT FOR PARKING LOT IMPROVEMENTS AT BLENDON WOODS METRO PARK UTILIZING THE STATE OF OHIO COOPERATIVE PURCHASING PROGRAM WITH THE OHIO DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
The Board authorized Metro Parks enter into a contract with Kokosing Construction Company through the State of Ohio 101G program for paving improvements at Blendon Woos using funds provided by the ODOT Road Improvement Fund Allocation.
- #6171 AUTHORIZING ENTERING INTO A CONTRACT FOR MANUFACTURE AND PLACEMENT OF PRE-CAST RESTROOMS AT BANK RUN METRO PARK
The Board authorized Metro Parks enter into a contract with Norwalk Concrete Industries for the manufacture and installation of two restrooms at Bank Run Metro Park, which is slated to open later this year.
- #6172 AUTHORIZING CONSTRUCTION AND INSTALLATION OF AN ALL-INCLUSIVE PLAYGROUND FACILITY AT THE HICKORY GROVE PICNIC AREA OF BLENDON WOODS METRO PARK THROUGH THE USE OF APPROVED COOPERATIVE PURCHASING PROGRAMS OR CURRENT PURCHASING PROCEDURES
The Board authorized Metro Parks to develop a new all-inclusive playground facility at Blendon Woods Metro Park, following requests from members of the community. The Board further authorized Metro Parks to utilize purchasing cooperatives and other strategies to purchase and install this playground.

Other Business


None.

Adjournment

Mr. McCue asked if there was a motion to end the meeting. Mr. Hadden made a motion, seconded by Mr. McCue, and the Board voted to adjourn the meeting at 4:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Approved by the Board of Park
Commissioners:



Tim Moloney
Executive Director



George McCue, Chair

