

METROPARKS OF BUTLER COUNTY
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
November 24, 2020

The MetroParks of Butler County Board of Park Commissioners met in regular session on Thursday, November 24, 2020, and, because of the Coronavirus Public Health Emergency and the social distancing orders in effect, the meeting was held as a *Zoom Virtual Meeting* pursuant to recent amendments to Chapter 121 of the Ohio Revised Code temporarily allowing remote participation at a public meeting of the Board.

I. - Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at **8:33 a.m.** by **Vice President Daryl Nelson.**

II. - Roll Call and Agenda

Members present for purposes for roll call were **Mr. Daryl Nelson and Ms. Cynamon Trokhan.** Mr. Greg Amend was absent for this meeting.

The Board worked from the following agenda:

AGENDA

- I. Call to Order –8:34 a.m.**
- II. Roll Call**
- III. Public Comment Regarding Agenda Items ***
- IV. Approval of Minutes- October 15, 2020, Regular Meeting**
- V. Consent Agenda ****
 - a. Financial Reports
 - (1) Cash Summary Report
 - (2) Cash Summary and Forecast
 - b. Schedule of Payables
 - c. Employment Activity Report
 - d. Special Event Contracts and Athletic Field Use Licenses
 - e. Notice of the re-opening of a previously closed Park Area-VOA Athletic Complex
- VI. Old Business**
 - a. Monthly Public Safety Activity Summary Report
 - b. Monthly Community and Enterprise Initiatives Summary Report
 - c. Monthly Operational Services *with* Status Chart, Park Connections and Visitor Services Summary Reports
 - d. Monthly Workplace Talent Management Summary Report

- e. Bi-Monthly Capital Project Update
- f. Updated/Extended VOA Maintenance and Use Agreement with West Chester Twp.
- g. Other-Miscellaneous from Board or Administration

VII. New Business

- a. Resolution Authorizing the Purchase of Road Salt-Winter 2020-21
- b. Request for Participation in GMRT Feasibility Study Costs
- c. Adjust MetroParks Non-Resident Motor Vehicle Permit Fees
- d. Elimination of MetroBucks Marketing Program
- e. Other- Miscellaneous from Board or Administration

VIII. Executive Session

- a. Land Acquisition/Purchase and/or Sale of Real Property
- b. Personnel Matters – Employment and Compensation
- c. Pending Litigation

IX. Miscellaneous Relative to Executive Session

X. Adjournment

III. - Public Comment Regarding Agenda Items

As there were no more public comments at this point the Board moved forward on its stated agenda.

IV. - Approval of Minutes
October 15, 2020 Meeting

MOTION: To approve the minutes of the October 15, 2020 Meeting as presented by staff to the Board.

Ms. Trokhan moved, seconded by Mr. Nelson.

Motion No. 84.20

Vote:

- Mr. Amend - Absent
- Mr. Nelson - Aye
- Ms. Trokhan - Aye

The presiding officer declared the motion carried unanimously.

V. - Consent Agenda

MOTION: Following discussion, to enact the blanket approval, acceptance, acknowledgment of receipt, and/or ratification of all items listed in the Consent section of

the meeting agenda for the November 24, 2020, Board meeting which have not previously or more specifically been approved or accepted, acknowledged, and or ratified otherwise by the Board; including, but not limited to, motions listed and any modifications to those motions made during this meeting; including any actions on budget modifications (account transfers within a Fund) and/or changes to employee status or compensation previously taken by the Executive Director and the Executive Director's previous actions related to payments and/or contracts all as recorded in the minutes adopted by the Board or on documents referred to in these minutes hereinafter, including Agenda Items **V.a. through V.e.** (a.k.a. the Consent Agenda); and finally, instructing the Executive Director to take such actions as are necessary to implement the intent of the Board in any and all of these matters. (See documents in Proceedings Book)

Discussion During the Meeting: Yamini Patel, Supervisor of Financial Services made mention that the 2021 Draft Budget Schedule that was separately provided to the members of the Board of Park Commissioners. A Board Member inquired that in light of the pandemic and the ongoing State regulations designed to combat it, if MetroParks had seen many special events or Athletic Complex events over the last few months. Deputy Director, Chad Smith, indicated that apart from recent Cross Country meets and a few tournaments at the Athletic Complex in October and early November, MetroParks has not seen many events over the past few months.

Ms. Trokhan moved, seconded by Mr. Nelson.

Motion No. 85.20

Vote:

Mr. Amend - Absent

Mr. Nelson - Aye

Ms. Trokhan - Aye

The presiding officer declared the motion carried unanimously.

V.a. - (1) Donations Report - Approved - no separate action.

V.a. - (2) Summary of Transfers and Budget Modifications - Approved - no separate action.

V.b. - Schedule of Payables - Approved - no separate action.

V.c. - Employment Activity Report - Approved - no separate action.

V.d.- Special Event and Contracts and Athletic Field Use Licenses - Approved - no separate action on items in the V.d. section below.

To ratify and place on file:

- (1) Special Event Contracts and/or Associated Sales or Commercial or Other Permits
Pending Board Action-NONE
- (2) Approved Special Event Contracts- Information ONLY
 - a. Lakota East Cross Country-GMC Championships-Saturday, October 17, 2020 -VOA
(Repeat)
 - b. Lakota East Cross-OHSAA District Championships-Saturday, October 24, 2020 -VOA
(Repeat)
- (3) Approved VOA Athletic Complex License Contracts- Information ONLY
 - a. Kings Hammer Blue Chip Invitational-Friday, October 9-Sunday, October 11, 2020-
VOA (Repeat)
 - b. Cincinnati United Fall Finale-Saturday, October 31-Sunday, November 1, 2020- VOA
(Repeat)

In written information about this agenda item above that had been prepared and provided to the

Board in the current pre-meeting information packet, Executive Director, Mr. Granville wrote that action reflecting Board approval, ratification and/or acknowledgment of receipt is required for most items included on the Consent Agenda section of the meeting agenda if only so that the official record reflects Board intent and/or compliance with internal and external rules or policies. However, any Consent agenda item may be removed from group approval at the request of any Board Member and considered separately.

V.e. – Notice of the Re-opening of a previously closed Park Area-VOA Athletic Complex

Approved as part of the blanket Motion above: To acknowledge receipt of a Notice of the Reopening of an area of the VOA Athletic Complex which had previously been ordered closed by the Executive Director to accommodate construction work.

In written information about this agenda item that had been prepared and provided to the Board in the current pre-meeting information packet, Mr. Granville wrote that MetroParks Rules and Regulations require that the Executive Director notify the Board whenever he/she has ordered a closure of a park area or the reopening of an area which he/she has ordered closed. Board acknowledgement serves to provide an official record that notice was provided pursuant to the policy and help ensure that such orders are enforceable if enforcement is ever necessary.

VI. - Old Business

VI.a. Monthly Public Safety Activity Summary Report

Discussion During the Meeting: Chief Ranger, David VanArsdale provided a monthly Division of Public Safety Report which had been included in the Board's meeting packet prior to this meeting and offered no additional comments. See documents in the Proceedings Book of the Board.

VI.b. Monthly Community and Enterprise Initiatives Summary Report

Discussion During the Meeting: Division of Community and Enterprise Initiatives Supervisor, Kelly Barkley, submitted the monthly Division Report which had been included in the Board's pre-meeting packet for the meeting.

Additionally, Ms. Barkley, mentioned that she and Park Planner/Project Manager Matt Latham reached out to the National Park Service (NPS) by letter regarding the possibility of allowing outside contractors/concessionaires to manage the Ronald Reagan Lodge through an RFP process. NPS gave MetroParks a few options on contracting out Lodge operations, but outside contracting will not be permitted on a permanent basis. NPS permission for some functions is

required by virtue of deed restrictions that come with ownership of the property. See Ms. Barkley's report in the Proceedings Book of the Board.

VI.c. Monthly Operational Services with Status Chart, Park Connections and Visitor Services Summary Reports

Discussion During the Meeting: In addition to the monthly report summarizing the activities of the Divisions which had been included in the pre-meeting packet that the members of the Board had received, Deputy Director Chad Smith stated that the MetroParks Division of Operational Services has been continuing to work on annual winterization procedures within the parks.

Mr. Smith also noted that the primary season is coming to a close at the VOA Athletic Complex, with the last scheduled tournament having taken place earlier in November. Mr. Smith noted that he is working on filling a current vacancy in Visitor Services.

A Board Member asked if MetroParks reaches out to people living near park areas to advise them of any conservation work scheduled in nearby parks. Mr. Smith advised that whenever significant conservation and invasive management initiatives are occurring, the relevant neighboring areas have been notified. Mr. Smith and Mr. Granville advised that controlled burns had been conducted at Forest Run, Timberman Ridge Area in October, although the preferred timeframe for controlled burns is usually spring. A Board Member mentioned the importance of educating the public when conservation efforts are underway. Mr. Smith mentioned that Ms. Barkley and Community and Park Connections staff have been working closely to make sure that the public is notified when conservation initiatives are planned, and that Community and Park Connections uses conservation initiatives as an opportunity to engage in programming and community education. See Mr. Smith's report in the Proceedings Book of the Board.

VI.d. Monthly Workplace Talent Management Summary Report

Discussion During the Meeting: Supervisor of Workplace Talent Management Jaime Kimbrough had submitted the monthly Report for the Workplace Talent Management Division which had been included in the Board's pre-meeting packet for this meeting.

A Board Member inquired if volunteer hours were up compared to last year. Ms. Kimbrough responded that although more projects continue to be scheduled, volunteer hours are down overall due to the impact of COVID-19 which prevented any projects from occurring in Spring 2020. See Ms. Kimbrough's report in the Proceedings Book of the Board.

VI.e. Bi-Monthly Capital Projects Update

Discussion During the Meeting: MetroParks Park Planner/Project Manager Matt Latham had submitted a Bi-Monthly Capital Projects Update which had been included in the Board's pre-meeting packet for the meeting. Mr. Latham stated that construction of the VOA North Athletic Field Project has been completed Phase 1 which involved the creation of new grass Playing

Field #25. Currently Mr. Latham is working on planning for growing grass on the edges of new Field #25 since sod was installed only on the playing surface pursuant to the construction plan. Phase 2 of the VOA North Athletic Field project will start after the Presidents Cup event in June 2021 is over.

Mr. Latham stated that the Voice of America Museum Walkway project is now also complete. The walkway was officially opened with a small ceremony in October.

Concerning the construction of the Miami2Miami Trail at Gilmore MetroPark, soil test borings have been completed. Construction is scheduled to start in the Spring of 2022, Mr. Latham stated.

Finally, Mr. Latham also recounted that MetroParks was awarded a \$5,000 grant from the Duke Energy Foundation to construct a firefly interpretive area at Elk Creek MetroPark and that work on this project will occur in 2021. See Mr. Latham's report in the Proceedings Book of the Board.

VI.f. Updated/Extended VOA Maintenance Use Agreement with West Chester Twp.

MOTION: Following discussion, **to approve the VOA Maintenance and Use Agreement between West Chester Township and MetroParks of Butler County** as presented to the Board of Park Commissioners by MetroParks Administrative staff to be effective beginning November 1, 2020 or another Agreement which the Executive Director deems to be substantially similar. And further, to instruct the Executive Director to take such action(s) as he deems necessary to implement to intent of the Board in this matter. See documents in Proceedings Book.

Discussion During the Meeting: Mr. Granville stated that he recommended that the Board approve the proposed agreement between West Chester Township and MetroParks. Mr. Granville said the proposed 5 year agreement would allow MetroParks to be in more complete operational charge of the VOA Memorial Tree Gove area, and that under the new agreement MetroParks would now reimburse West Chester Township for the actual cost of utilities used at the maintenance building as apposed to the past when estimates were used. But that otherwise the new Agreement was very similar to the contract that expired in October 2020.

Ms. Trokhan moved, seconded by Mr. Nelson.

Motion No. 86.20

Vote:

Mr. Amend - Absent

Ms. Trokhan - Aye

Mr. Nelson - Aye

The presiding officer declared that the motion carried unanimously.

In written information about this agenda item that had been prepared and provided to the Board in the current pre-meeting information packet, Mr. Granville wrote the attached

draft Agreement was composed by MetroParks Legal Counsel John Reister. It is very similar to the recently expired Maintenance and Use Agreement, except the proposed new Agreement would place MetroParks in complete operational charge of management of the VOA Memorial Tree Grove area and allow MetroParks to make some improvements there at its option so long as those improvements are in compliance with the new VOA Vision Master Plan which is attached as an Exhibit to the new Agreement. Another change is that MetroParks would be required to reimburse the VOA Museum for the actual cost of utilities used at the maintenance building by MetroParks, rather than an estimated cost.

VI.g. Other-Miscellaneous from Board or Administration

Discussion During the Meeting: Mr. Granville commented that Mr. Latham has worked on installing car counters at various parks to allow for the compiling of more accurate data on the numbers of visitors that the parks see overall. In 2020 so far, MetroParks has seen over 1,000,000 visitor occasions throughout the park system according to these counters. Mr. Latham noted that overall, people are visiting MetroParks on an increasingly frequent basis.

A Board Member inquired about car counters in some parks other than VOA, specifically Forest Run MetroPark. Mr. Latham said that three out of the four vehicle entrances at Forest Run MetroPark presently had counters installed and that there will be future opportunities to install more car counters in some of the additional entrances at other parks. Mr. Latham also stated that there may be future opportunities to add trail counters to track how many people are using specific trails as well. Mr. Granville mentioned that MetroParks will be working on a press release announcing the 1,000,000 visitor benchmark in the next few weeks.

VII. – New Business

VII.a. Resolution Authorizing the Purchase of Road Salt-Winter 2020-21

MOTION: Following discussion, **to adopt the resolution as presented by MetroParks Administration authorizing the purchase of rock salt from the Butler County Engineer** for use on park roadways, drives, and parking lots during the winter of 2020-2021 at the price(s) and up to the maximum amounts contained in the aforementioned resolution. Further, that the Executive Director is instructed to take such actions as are necessary to implement the intent of the Board in these matters. See documents in Proceedings Book of the Board.

Discussion During the Meeting: Mr. Smith commented that although the price of salt has gone up about \$1.00/ton since 2019, that acquiring salt from the Butler County Engineer's Office is the most cost-effective solution for most of the MetroParks' Operational Zones. Mr. Granville added that the salt will cover needs in the North, South and West Zones, and that salt for the East Zone will be purchased from and picked up at West Chester Township.

Ms. Trokhan moved, seconded by Mr. Nelson.

Motion No. 87.20

Vote:

Mr. Amend - Absent

Mr. Nelson - Aye

Ms. Trokhan – Aye

The presiding officer declared the motion carried unanimously.

In written information about this agenda item that had been prepared and provided to the Board in the current pre-meeting information packet, Mr. Granville wrote the County Engineer has requested that the policy Boards of all political subdivisions wishing to purchase from the supplies he stockpiles approve an official standard resolution to obtain rock salt each year. An arrangement with the County Engineer offers a lower overall price and a more dependable source over other possible vendors in the volumes needed by the MetroParks at most of its park locations.

VII.b. Request for Participation in GMRT Feasibility Study Costs

MOTION: Following discussion, **to approve a request from Tri-State Trails for a contribution of \$5,000.00 payable in 2021 as a share of the expenses to complete a feasibility study** to determine likely costs to close the gaps in the Great Miami River Trail in Butler County, Ohio. And further, to instruct the Executive Director to take such action(s) as he deems necessary to implement the intent of the Board in this matter. See related documents from Mr. Wade Johnston, Director of Tri-State Trails in the Proceedings Book of the Board.

Discussion During the Meeting: Wade Johnston, Director of Tri-State Trails was recognized and presented the details of a feasibility study Tri-State Trails is spearheading that will help determine the costs to close gaps in the Great Miami River Trail. Mr. Johnston's proposal will assess costs to close the 4.7 miles of combined gaps in the Great Miami River Trail between Middletown and Rentschler Forest MetroPark, including assessing a 1.6 mile gap in Lemon Township, and a 3.1 mile gap in Lemon, Liberty and Fairfield Townships. Mr. Johnston noted that once the assessment is complete, a grant application to the OKI Regional Council of Governments requesting federal transportation funds to build the new trail sections needed to close current gaps will be submitted in June 2021. He asked that MetroParks contribute \$5,000 toward the study. Mr. Johnston noted that many other organizations that have been approached to make contributions towards the study have done so.

A Board member mentioned how important pedestrian and bicycle trails and trail development are to the MetroParks strategic plan. The other Board Member present agreed with her. Mr. Granville noted that participation in this feasibility study would be a financially prudent opportunity for MetroParks.

Ms. Trokhan moved, seconded by Mr. Nelson.

Motion No. 88.20

Vote:

Mr. Amend - Absent

Mr. Nelson - Aye

Ms. Trokhan - Aye

The presiding officer declared the motion carried unanimously.

In written information about this agenda item that had been prepared and provided to the Board in the current pre-meeting information packet, Mr. Granville wrote that as one of our most popular facilities efforts to close the local gaps in the Great Miami River Trail deserve the support of MetroParks of Butler County. Wade Johnson, Director of Tri-State Trails, will join the virtual Board meeting to explain the plan to create a feasibility study.

VII.c. Adjust MetroParks Non-Resident Motor Vehicle Permit Fees

MOTION: Following discussion, **to approve the recommendations of Kelly Barkley provided in a memo to the Executive Director dated November 16, 2020 in regard to non-resident motor vehicle permit fees** and further to instruct the Executive Director to take such actions as he deems necessary to implement the intent of the Board in this matter. See the documents about this presentation in the Proceedings Book of the Board.

Discussion During the Meeting: Ms. Barkley described the rationale behind the suggestion to increase the Non-Resident Motor Vehicle Permit Fees starting January 2, 2021. Mrs. Barkley stated that the analysis of data MetroParks has collected recently through the Division of Public Safety and car counters has revealed a high number of out of county residents visiting both Rentschler Forest and VOA MetroParks. Ms. Barkley stated that currently, MetroParks charges non-residents \$5 per day and \$10 per year for motor vehicle permits, although staffing the entrance gates has been impossible due to safety considerations during most of this pandemic year. Ms. Barkley proposed increasing the motor vehicle fees to \$8/day and \$15/year for non-residents. Additionally, the current three-day pass option for non-resident use at tournaments would no longer exist. Ms. Barkley stated that if the non-resident motor vehicle permit fees are increased, MetroParks would anticipate as much as a \$165,000 increase in revenue from this source in 2021.

A Board Member inquired if anything has been done to reach out to Warren County residents who reside next to VOA to see if the price increase would be significantly detrimental to them. Ms. Barkley responded that such action has been taken, and that several non-residents have indicated that a price increase will not impact their want or ability to visit the parks. Chief VanArsdale also indicated that many other MetroParks park areas are seeing large numbers of non-resident visitors, outside of VOA and Rentschler Forest MetroParks. Ms. Barkley also recommended that non-residents be offered an “early bird” sale option, which will offer the 2021 non-resident motor vehicle permits at a discounted rate of \$10.00 until December 31, 2020.

A Board Member mentioned that he would consider raising non-resident motor vehicle permit fees higher than the proposed \$15 annually if deemed beneficial in the future.

Ms. Trokhan moved, seconded by Mr. Nelson.

Motion No. 89.20

Vote:

Mr. Amend - Absent

Mr. Nelson - Aye
Ms. Trokhan - Aye

The presiding officer declared the motion carried unanimously.

In written information about this agenda item that had been prepared and provided to the Board in the current pre-meeting information packet, Mr. Granville wrote that he supports the recommendations regarding adjustments to the non-resident MVP fees made by Kelly Barkley, Supervisor of Division of Community and Park Connections for the same reasons as she detailed in her memo, and because recent roadway and parking improvements made in the park system during the past few years require increased revenue to maintain. Although the MetroParks has a means to pass on the costs to residents, it does not otherwise have a way to share such costs with non-residents who use park facilities.

VII.d. Elimination of MetroBucks Marketing Program

MOTION: Following discussion, **to eliminate the MetroBucks Marketing program and to provide for the closure of the program** as recommended in a Memo to the Executive Director from Kelly Barkley on this topic which was dated November 13, 2020. And further, to instruct the Executive Director to take such action(s) as he deems necessary to implement the intent of the Board in this matter. See the documents referenced above in the Proceedings Book of the Board.

Discussion During the Meeting: Ms. Barkley noted MetroBucks program has been in place for a number of years and has not been actively utilized. Only a few MetroParks staff have MetroBucks in their possession and are enabled to issue them, and all visitors who have been issued them during the last year have been contacted and were advised the program will probably be eliminated. There were no further comments.

Ms. Trokhan moved, seconded by Mr. Nelson.

Motion No. 90.20

Vote:

Mr. Amend - Absent
Mr. Nelson - Aye
Ms. Trokhan - Aye

The presiding officer declared the motion carried unanimously.

In written information about this agenda item that had been prepared and provided to the Board in the current pre-meeting information packet, Mr. Granville wrote that since the Board authorized the MetroBucks program, proper procedure indicates that only the Board can end it.

VII.e. Other-Miscellaneous from Board or Administration

Discussion During the Meeting: Mr. Granville suggested moving the December Board Meeting to December 17, 2020 as the annual Employee Vision Meeting and holiday lunch has been

cancelled due to COVID-19 this year. The date change to December 17, 2020 was confirmed as viable by both Board Members present at the meeting.

VIII. - Executive Session

MOTION: To enter into Executive Session at 9:30 a.m., Ms. Trokhan, called for a roll call vote, seconded by Mr. Nelson, for the purpose of discussions involving:

- a. Land Acquisition/Purchase and/or Sale of Property
- b. Personnel Matter – Employment Compensation
- c. Pending Litigation

The Board returned to regular session at 10:50 a.m.

IX. - Actions Relative to Executive Session

No Board action was taken in this section of the agenda other than adjournment which follows.

X. - Adjournment

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting at 10:51 a.m.

Ms. Trokhan moved, seconded by Mr. Nelson.

Motion No. 91.20

Vote:

- Mr. Amend - Absent
- Mr. Nelson - Aye
- Ms. Trokhan – Aye

The presiding officer declared the motion carried unanimously.

Adoption: The above minutes are a true and accurate record of the meeting as adopted by the Board of Park Commissioners, MetroParks of Butler County.

Approved:

Attest:

Presiding Officer of the Board

Title

Executive Director/Secretary

Date

Unless rescheduled or relocated, the next regular business meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners is scheduled for December 17, 2020, at 8:30 a.m. via Zoom.