

METROPARKS OF BUTLER COUNTY  
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
Thursday, February 15, 2024

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The MetroParks of Butler County Board of Park Commissioners met in regular session on Thursday, February 15, 2024, at the West Chester Township Administration Building, 9113 Cincinnati Dayton Road, West Chester, Ohio 45069

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. by Ms. Trokhan

**I. Roll Call and Agenda**

Members present: Cynamon Trokhan, Larry Gersbach, Daryl Nelson

Staff present: Zeb Acuff, Rhiana Barrero, Tony Carpenter, Scott Gaviglia, Jaime Kimbrough, Jackie O'Connell, Amy Pellman, Suzanne Roth, Shelly Schultz

**III. Approval of Minutes**

Approval of the January 25, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes

Mr. Gersbach moved to approve; Mr. Nelson seconded.

Motion Passed. Vote: Aye: Ms. Trokhan, Mr. Gersbach, Mr. Nelson

**IV. Consent Agenda**

a. Donations – January

Mr. Nelson moved to approve; Mr. Gersbach seconded.

Motion Passed. Vote: Aye: Ms. Trokhan, Mr. Gersbach, Mr. Nelson

**V. Special Presentation**

a. Mason Arts Council Presentation

Arts Council Board members Kim Martin, Rich Bailey, Tom Huff, Karen Kilgore and other members of the Board were in attendance. Mr. Huff and Ms. Martin briefly reviewed their vision of a regional arts destination and presented a slideshow of their concepts. They envision the facility to be a destination for the arts but also available for general use. There was a question regarding budget and funding. The anticipated cost is approximately \$30 million. They anticipate funding will come mostly from the private sector with state and federal grants. Naming rights will be sold to supplement fundraising. Currently, there are only verbal commitments for funding.

There was a question on operational costs and an endowment fund. The organization will create an arts foundation to subsidize day-to-day operations that will include an operating endowment.

There was a brief discussion on the alignment of the facility with MetroParks mission and the potential concerns from the National Park Service, as their approval would need to happen first. Ms. Martin responded that they would align the mission with the mission of MetroParks. Ms. Martin stated that they want approval from the Board to move forward. The Board of Park Commissioners would like to see a business plan prior to approval of the facility to ensure the sustainability.

Ms. Martin then asked what the next steps would be. Ms. O'Connell briefly reviewed the process with NPS and paralleled the process with the recent approval of the USS Cincinnati site. Ms. Martin said that once a location is secured, their next steps would include hiring a professional fundraiser. She then showed a video of the design concepts.

The Arts Council left after the playing of the video.

## **VI. Finance**

### **a. Schedule of Payables – January 2024**

Mr. Gersbach moved to approve; Mr. Nelson seconded.

Motion Passed. Vote: Aye: Ms. Trokhan, Mr. Gersbach, Mr. Nelson

*Resolution No. 03.24*

### **b. January YTD Revenue & Expense Report**

### **c. Miami University Project Appropriation**

Mr. Nelson moved to approve; Mr. Gersbach seconded.

Motion Passed. Vote: Aye: Ms. Trokhan, Mr. Gersbach, Mr. Nelson

## **VII. Administrative Reports**

**Development:** Mr. Chad Smith shared that MetroParks will be kicking off a fundraising campaign for the Gilmore Boardwalk to fill the \$95,000 difference between community foundation funds, grant funds and the estimated \$265,000 to replace the boardwalk. The fundraiser will include donors receiving a Charlie Harper poster with their donation of \$100 or more. Mr. Smith will also seek corporate donations and naming rights.

**Planning:** Mr. Zeb Acuff commented that the construction season will be starting soon. Currently working on receiving bid requests for the Tylersville trail and the connector trail for Elk Creek - Meadow Ridge. An RFP for the design work for the Davidson Woods access project will be posted once the Clean Ohio grant funds are received.

A question followed on the additional electric cost to have electric chargers at VOA (if approved for the grant). Mr. Acuff responded that the chargers would be pay-to-use units.

**Programming & Education:** Ms. Suzanne Roth commented that her team just wrapped up the first Winter Hike Series. Hikes averaged more than 50 participants each and brought in \$2600 in revenue. The program brought awareness to people who hadn't been to some of the parks. The Journal News, Travel Butler County, and Channel 19 highlighted the series.

**Administration:** Ms. Jackie O'Connell updated the Board on the Strategic Initiatives and Values previously presented. Human Resources is working to integrate the values into hiring, recognition and performance reviews.

Eclipse planning has begun. Some parks or park areas will be closed for the event, but the majority will be open and shared on the website. Staff recently attended a countywide eclipse planning meeting. Townships that have MetroParks will be notified of park plans, signage will be at each impacted park.

Ms. O'Connell gave an update on the Antenen House RFP. Before the RFP closed, Mr. Smith received a call from Susan Antenen who asked us to assist with a gentleman who was interested in bidding. Mr. Smith advised Ms. Antenen to have the interested person contact Zeb Acuff for assistance. Ms. Trokhan was contacted by the interested party and advised the same; he did not reach out before the RFP closed. No bids were received to move the house.

Ms. O'Connell asked if the Board would like to repost the RFP for the moving of the house or post the RFP for the salvage of the structure. After a brief discussion, the Board agreed to move forward with the original plan to post the salvage RFP, but to reach out to the interested party and let him know the plan and that he may bid on this RFP.

The Board reviewed, and Ms. Trokhan signed, a letter to Representative Thomas Hall asking for reconsideration of House Bill 344 which would eliminate replacement levies.

There was a question whether there were conflicts with scheduling the VOA Athletic Complex between soccer organizations. Ms. Barrero commented that there have been no issues with scheduling and that

she will be Beta testing the new scheduling software soon. A question followed on the use of the fields at Rentschler–Line Hill. Ms. Barrero said there is an agreement with Lakota FC for daily and tournament use, and that the MASC tournament will be held at the Rentschler–Line Hill fields in 2024.

A board member asked if staff currently wear ballistic vests. Chief Gaviglia said the vests are reviewed/replaced every five (5) years. The vest currently in use will expire at the end of 2024.

## **VIII. Old Business**

### **a. New Credit Card Provider**

Ms. Schultz commented that Huntington requested a resolution in addition to the motion and contract approved at the January meeting.

Mr. Gersbach moved to approve; Mr. Nelson seconded.

Motion Passed. Vote: Aye: Ms. Trokhan, Mr. Gersbach, Mr. Nelson

*Resolution No. 04.24*

## **IX. New Business**

### **IX.a. Christmas Lights Journey Event Agreement**

Mr. Smith reviewed the draft contract included in the packet. Parksperiences has requested a 20-year contract. Legal has reviewed the contract and countered for a guaranteed 7-years with a 3-year renewal then a 10-year annual renewal pending Board approval.

Mr. Rick Seitz, who was in attendance, reviewed current bids for electric and road improvements. The light displays will last for 2-3 seasons.

There was a brief discussion and review of the cancellation clause. Parksperiences would like a 12-year initial term guaranteed, with an 8-year annual renewal pending board approval.

Breakeven total would be 20,000 vehicles per season. The display will be open Thanksgiving weekend though January 1. Mr. Seitz believes it will take 3-5 years for the display to become profitable.

The Board motioned to approve the contract with adjustment to the terms under item 19 a. to 12-year contract length with eight (8) additional one-year renewals pending Board approval and other minor changes as recommended by counsel. The Board authorizes Ms. O'Connell to sign the contract as described above.

Mr. Nelson moved to approve; Mr. Gersbach seconded.

Motion Passed. Vote: Aye: Ms. Trokhan, Mr. Gersbach, Mr. Nelson

### **IX.b. Miami University Consultancy Partnership**

Mr. Smith recently met with the faculty at the Farmer School of Business at Miami University. This is an opportunity for MetroParks to partner with Miami University for a good value. Ms. O'Connell commented that we are excited to see the deliverables of an economic impact study and key performance indicators dashboard. Students studying economics would handle as part of a class project. We would be invoiced in phases over a three-year period. The results will allow MetroParks to show our economic impact to local politicians and taxpayers.

Mr. Nelson moved to approve; Mr. Gersbach seconded.

Motion Passed. Vote: Aye: Ms. Trokhan, Mr. Gersbach, Mr. Nelson

After approving the motion for the Miami University Consultancy Partnership, the Board voted on the Appropriation that was included in the Finance portion of the packet.

Mr. Nelson moved to approve; Mr. Gersbach seconded.

Motion Passed. Vote: Aye: Ms. Trokhan, Mr. Gersbach, Mr. Nelson

**IX.c. MetroParks Community Grant Program**

With funds from the Hunnicutt donation, MetroParks would like to offer grants for public parks and recreation projects in Butler County by local governments and 501c3 organizations. This is a way to engage with the community and promote recreation in the outdoors. The review panel committee will consist of out-of-county members who will review and approve grant applications.

Mr. Gersbach moved to approve; Mr. Nelson seconded.  
Motion Passed. Vote: Aye: Ms. Trokhan, Mr. Gersbach, Mr. Nelson

**IX.d. Indian Creek Bridge Grant Application Resolution**

This grant will allow MetroParks to apply for grants for the Indian Creek Bridge as they become available. Mr. Acuff stated the most recent bridge estimate is around \$750,000. Stander Funds will cover some of the project. A group interested in seeing the bridge come to fruition has formed a 501c3; Mr. Smith will meet with them March 12, 2024.

Mr. Gersbach moved to approve; Mr. Nelson seconded.  
Motion Passed. Vote: Aye: Ms. Trokhan, Mr. Gersbach, Mr. Nelson  
*Resolution No. 05.24*

**IX.e. Resolution Ratifying Acts from January 2020 – January 2024**

Mr. Nelson moved to approve; Mr. Gersbach seconded.  
Motion Passed. Vote: Aye: Ms. Trokhan, Mr. Gersbach, Mr. Nelson  
*Resolution No. 06.24*

**Commissioner Reports**

Mr. Nelson, along with his mother, expressed their thanks for the azalea plant that was sent after his father’s passing.

**XI. Executive Session**

Mr. Nelson moved for a roll call vote to enter Executive Session, seconded by Mr. Gersbach for the purpose of discussions involving:

- I. Land Acquisition or Sale
- II. Confidential Matters

Vote: Aye: Ms. Trokhan, Mr. Gersbach, Mr. Nelson

The Board entered into Executive Session at 9:54 a.m.  
The Board returned to Regular Session at 10:30 a.m.

**XII. – Adjournment**

Mr. Gersbach moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:30 a.m., Mr. Nelson seconded.  
Motion Passed. Vote: Aye: Ms. Trokhan, Mr. Gersbach, Mr. Nelson

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jacqueline O’Connell,  
Executive Director/Secretary

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date