

METROPARKS OF BUTLER COUNTY
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, June 18, 2025

The MetroParks of Butler County Board of Park Commissioners met in regular session on Wednesday, June 18, 2025, at Timberman Ridge MetroPark, 1976 Timberman Road, Hamilton, Ohio 45013

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 8:28 a.m. by Ms. Trokhan

I. Roll Call and Agenda

Members present: Cynamon Trokhan, Larry Gersbach

Staff present: Zeb Acuff, Rhiana Barrero, Tony Carpenter, Jaime Kimbrough, Katie Ely-Wood, Gabe Haverkos, Jackie O'Connell, Amy Pellman, Scott Reeve, Suzanne Roth, Shelly Schultz

III. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the April 17, 2025 Board Meeting Minutes

Mr. Gersbach moved to approve; Ms. Trokhan seconded.

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

IV. Consent Agenda

a. Donations – April & May

Motion to approve items on the Consent Agenda

Mr. Gersbach moved to approve; Ms. Trokhan seconded.

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

VI. Finance

a. Schedule of Payables – April 2025

Mr. Gersbach asked about the purpose of two charges – it was explained that one was for GMRT design consulting services and the other was the monthly credit card bill.

Mr. Gersbach moved to approve; Ms. Trokhan seconded.

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

Resolution 14.25

b. Schedule of Payables – May 2025

Mr. Gersbach moved to approve; Ms. Trokhan seconded.

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

Resolution 15.25

c. April & May YTD Revenue & Expense Report

d. Approval of Then & Now payment

There was a brief discussion regarding the then and now payment. The purchase order was opened on April 18., 2025; however, the invoice received from the vendor reflected a service period beginning April 1, 2025.

Mr. Gersbach moved to approve; Ms. Trokhan seconded.

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

Resolution 16.25

VII. Administrative Reports

Finance: Ms. Schultz shared that MetroParks is now serving as its own fiscal agent. She noted that there were some challenges due to how the data was exported and then imported, they have all been addressed and the software is very user-friendly. One issue was that the County Auditor only provided General Ledger (GL) data, not the Project Ledger (PL) data where MetroParks budget details were kept. Ms. Schultz updated all of the budget lines. The new system improves efficiency by allowing managers to enter their own purchase orders, invoices, receipts, and related items. Reporting is expected to significantly improve in 2026.

Ms. Schultz outlined a new investment plan - funds will be transferred to a Huntington Trust account. Meeder, who previously managed MetroParks' investments under the County, will continue to manage the investments. Ms. Schultz proposed wiring \$7,000,000 to the trust account, leaving a balance of \$3,000,000 in the Huntington checking account. She also recommended opening a Huntington Insured Cash Sweep (ICS) account, which offers a higher interest rate and daily liquidity.

She reported that checks are now issued twice a week, with approximately 75% of payments processed via ACH. She will remain on the County's email distribution list in case any ACH payments are mistakenly sent to the Auditor's Office. All MetroParks funds previously held by the County Auditor have now been transferred.

MetroParks has assumed responsibility for its own payroll. Under MetroParks' new payroll system, income taxes are being taken out for all employees. The first payroll processed went relatively smoothly.

Planning: MetroParks recently applied for federal grant funding for the Gilmore boardwalk through Senator Husted's office but was notified this week that the application was not selected. This leaves a funding shortfall of approximately \$300,000 for the project. Ms. O'Connell shared that MetroParks has recently launched merchandise sales, with profits designated to support bird habitat improvement and maintenance. Initial revenue will be earmarked for the construction of the boardwalk at Gilmore Ponds MetroPark. While alternative boardwalk options have been considered, the proposed design remains the most stable and lowest maintenance option.

Programming & Education: Ms. Roth shared that MetroParks staff attended the Hamilton Pride Festival for the first time. Both organizers and attendees expressed appreciation for MetroParks' presence. Staff and volunteers engaged with over 300 individuals, and community feedback gathered at the event will help inform MetroParks' strategic planning efforts.

There is a wide variety of free programming provided at this time of year. MetroParks staff will also participate in Hamilton's free/reduced lunch program by offering on-site programming for participants.

At Chrisholm Historic Farmstead a new, walk-in chicken coop was constructed with funds from the Friends of MetroParks of Butler County to allow staff easier access for cleaning and care. New varieties of chickens have been acquired, along with the addition of ducks. There is a naming campaign for the ducklings underway on social media. The Farm received a tractor from the Natural Resources team to assist with operations.

Staff met with the City of Middletown regarding the Community Garden and future changes in the garden's operation and additional MetroParks programming.

Visitor & Event Services: Staff and volunteers are currently transitioning trail information from OuterSpatial to All Trails. All Trails offers a free public lands component. At present, 48 MetroParks trails have been mapped. Ms. Barrero noted that the back-end data provided by All Trails will be valuable for monitoring trail usage and identifying potential issues to share with operations staff, and MetroParks will also have access to user-posted photos.

Ms. Barrero introduced Gabe Haverkos as the new part-time Social Media Coordinator.

In response to a question about weather impacts at the Athletic Complex, Ms. Barrero shared that this spring was unusually wet, resulting in the cancellation of one tournament at the start of the season.

Administration: Ms. O'Connell shared an update on the 70th Anniversary video, noting that Katie Ely-Wood and Rhiana Barrero provided valuable assistance with its production.

The pole barn at Angst Farm has been removed, opening the vista.

Ms. O'Connell noted that staff have been actively collecting public input at recent tabling events. Targeted public input sessions will be held later this summer and will be facilitated by Human Nature as part of MetroParks' ongoing strategic planning process.

The Miami University student project, which includes the development of data dashboards and an economic impact report are nearing completion. The final report is expected to be available in July, in conjunction with Parks & Recreation Month.

VIII. Old Business

a. Intergovernmental Agreement for new Tylersville Entrance Construction

The bid process for the project is complete, and West Chester Township has approved the intergovernmental agreement. Questions were raised regarding potential cost overages and how they would be handled under the agreed-upon 25/75 funding split, as well as MetroParks' experience with the selected contractor and their ability to adhere to bid pricing. It was noted that the grant funding for the project was awarded directly to West Chester, and that West Chester conducted reference checks on the contractor, Kelchner, and all feedback received was favorable.

Mr. Gersbach moved to approve; Ms. Trokhan seconded.

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

IX. New Business

a. Authorization to purchase Bypass Wetlands parcel at Gilmore Ponds MetroPark

Mr. Gersbach moved to approve; Ms. Trokhan seconded.

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

b. Authorization to submit NatureWorks Accessibility Grant Application – Resolution

Mr. Gersbach moved to approve; Ms. Trokhan seconded.

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

Resolution 17.25

c. Approval of 2026 Tax Budget - Resolution

Mr. Gersbach moved to approve; Ms. Trokhan seconded.

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

Resolution 18.25

d. Approval of Virtual Public Meeting Policy

Mr. Gersbach moved to approve; Ms. Trokhan seconded.

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

e. Approval of Sportsman Solutions Consultancy Agreement

Ms. Barrero presented a proposed 12-month agreement with Sportsman Solutions. Upon approval, MetroParks will provide the company with a list of items for which sponsorship assistance is requested. Potential opportunities include naming rights for the Fieldhouse, field groupings, and other park facilities.

Ms. Trokhan raised concerns about their lack of local connections, as the company is based in Iowa. Ms. Barrero noted that Sportsman Solutions had provided her with references from clients in the Midwest, which she offered to share. She also confirmed that MetroParks could request a focus on securing local sponsors. There are no upfront costs—Sportsman Solutions would be compensated only from the sponsorship revenue they generate.

Mr. Gersbach moved to approve; Ms. Trokhan seconded.

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

X. Commissioner Reports

XI. Executive Session

Mr. Gersbach moved for a roll call vote to enter Executive Session, seconded by Ms. Trokhan for the purpose of discussions involving Personnel Matters & Legal Matters

Vote: Aye: Ms. Trokhan, Mr. Gersbach

The Board entered into Executive Session at 9:26 a.m.

The Board returned to Regular Session at 9:48 a.m.

XII. Adjournment

Mr. Gersbach moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:48 a.m., Ms. Trokhan seconded.

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

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