

METROPARKS OF BUTLER COUNTY  
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
Thursday, October 19, 2023

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The MetroParks of Butler County Board of Park Commissioners met in regular session on Thursday, August 24, 2023, at the Forest Run MetroPark – Timberman Ridge Area, Conference Room 1976 Timberman Road, Hamilton, Ohio 45013.

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 8:33 a.m. by Mr. Nelson.

**I. Roll Call and Agenda**

Members present: Daryl Nelson, Larry Gersbach, Cynamon Trokhan

Staff present: Rhiana Barrero, Joe Bruns, Tony Carpenter, Katie Ely-Wood, Scott Gaviglia, Jaime Kimbrough, Jackie O’Connell, Amy Pellman, Suzanne Roth, Shelly Schultz, Chad Smith, Ingrid Perez

**III. Approval of Minutes**

Approval of the August 24, 2023 Work Session Minutes and Regular Meeting Minutes

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

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

**IV. Consent Agenda**

- a. Donations – August
- b. Donations – September
- c. 2024 Schedule of Regular Board Meetings

A brief discussion followed regarding the donation from the John R. Honeycutt estate. There was a question on how we planned to use the money. Currently discussing using the funds to address deferred capital maintenance, vehicle repairs, and creating a community grant program.

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

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

**VI. Finance**

**a. Schedule of Payables – August**

Short discussion on the partial payment received for the VOA Country Music Festival. We have only received the downpayment not the balance.

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

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

*Resolution No. 19.23*

**b. Schedule of Payables – September**

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

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

*Resolution No. 20.23*

**c. Monthly Revenue & Expense Report – September**

**d. Quarterly Stander Report**

## **VII. Administrative Reports**

**Development:** Mr. Chad Smith shared that the Friends of Chrisholm have applied for a grant to restore the basement at the Augspuriger House. Mr. Smith stated that the Mason Arts Council will attend the November Board meeting and give a presentation.

Mr. Smith recently attended the NRAC meeting. They awarded \$5.8 mil in Clean Ohio funds. MetroParks received funds for both the Davidson Woods project and the Gilmore property acquisition from the City of Hamilton.

Work continues on the MOU with the archery group for the range at Meadow Ridge. The group would like to assess the clubhouse for an indoor range. The group will attend and present at the November Board meeting.

**Human Resources:** Ms. Jaime Kimbrough briefly discussed some upcoming all-staff training and leadership training. Currently working on moving paper processes to online processes.

Recently had a volunteer service day with Miami University Athletics to do trail clearing at Mill Race Preserve. Also had a group of staff from Butler Rural at Indian Creek clear honeysuckle around the playground. The group would like to bring their equipment and help on bigger projects.

Currently have six open positions but offers are out for all open full-time positions.

**Operations:** Mr. Tony Carpenter commented that 328 trees are to be planted in the upcoming weeks. 68 of the trees were propagated by staff in the Natural Resources greenhouse. The new assistant park manager is scheduled to start on October 30. First female in park operations management.

Waterline work is to begin soon at Rentschler Forest – Timberhill area.

**Planning:** Joe Bruns briefly reviewed the Capital Improvement Projects Summary. Commented on recently receiving the Clean Ohio grant for access at Davidson Woods. So far we have received good feedback regarding the upcoming public input sessions.

The soft opening of the bridge over Dry Fork Creek at Governor Bebb is to be announced today. One mile of the Sycamore Grove trail is open with the rest of it to be open soon. The streambank restoration project is now complete. Receiving positive feedback from visitors.

The covered bridge at Bebb is still closed. The first estimates for repairs came back very high making it not feasible to repair it to vehicular standards. Staff will review options over the winter.

**Police:** Chief Gaviglia highlighted the annual OPOTA training for the Park Officers. There was a brief discussion on the homeless encampment found along the GMRT. Officers are working with Middletown Police and local services to assist those who were in the encampment.

**Programming & Education:** Ms. Suzanne Roth stated that they are halfway through the planned fall events and field trip season. She also commented that there are some community outreach opportunities coming up, including working with the City of Fairfield to offer programs about coyotes in the city. One of P&E's goals is to be a community resource for county residents.

Planning has begun for a winter hike series to begin in January. Capacity would be 100 people per hike. Interpretive naturalists will lead the hikes, and soup and hot drinks will be served at the end.

**Visitor & Event Services:** Ms. Rhiana Barrero commented that her division is focusing on the customer journey and communications – including relaunching the newsletter and blog. Press releases are being picked up by local news stations. Working on mobile ticketing for special event parking. This will speed up entry and reduce cash handling. Updates were made to the reservation software making it mobile-friendly.

Park attendance is up. Cross-country and soccer events in September contributed to the spike in numbers at VOA. The traffic counters at Rentschler Forest may need to be recalibrated.

**Administration:** Ms. Shelly Schultz gave a brief update on a recent software demonstration that will allow MetroParks to be its own fiscal agent. This will increase productivity within the organization.

Ms. O'Connell gave a brief update on the USS Cincinnati Memorial project. The funds have been secured for the basic memorial portion. The Navy League was encouraged to look at the entire site from the new Tylersville entrance to the property line versus just the memorial site. Fundraising to begin this fall for the other amenities including access, restrooms and parking. We are working with West Chester on the property lease.

The Davidson Woods public input sessions will be held on October 28 at Twin Run Golf Course and November 2 at Hanover Township Community Center.

There are serious erosion issues on Dick's Creek, hindering Monroe's construction of the GMRT. MetroParks is partnering with MCD, Monroe, and Tri-State Trails to troubleshoot the issue and pool resources to assist Monroe in keeping the already-awarded grant funds.

Staff have been drafting standard operating procedures (SOP's) for all departments. Also reviewing policies for accuracy and consistency.

SLT has been working on vision, values, and priorities. Plan to present the budget in November.

There was a question on the bridge at Indian Creek. Staff met with Woolpert to discuss a less expensive option and are currently waiting for a quote.

The ADA Assessment has been finalized. Staff training has occurred. Staff will prioritize the items in the report and come up with a plan on what needs to be done by park location.

## **VIII. Old Business**

### **a. Antenen House Disposition**

There was a review of the options that have been discussed: repair the house for offices or rental property, sell a parcel of land with the house at public auction, tear down the house, or sell the house to be salvaged or moved.

The consensus was that it would not be a good use of taxpayer funds to rehab the structure (rehab estimates are approximately \$500k, possibly more). The property that could legally be sold contains the house, the park entrance and most of the public trails, therefore could not be considered as surplus property.

Ms. O'Connell will work with legal to draft an RFP to move the structure or salvage wood and amenities. Discussion tabled to consult with legal.

## **IX. New Business**

### **a. 2024 Amounts and Rates**

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

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

*Resolution No. 21.23*

### **b. Park Renaming Proposal**

The proposal was spurred by upcoming updates, new kiosk designs, and other projects. The focus is to make park names more customer-centered and wayfinding-based. A short discussion on naming consistencies followed.

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

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

**X. Commissioner Reports** – Discussion to move the Board meeting to November 30 and cancel the December meeting.

**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. Personnel Matters
- II. Land Acquisition or Sale

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

The Board entered into Executive Session at 10:24 a.m.

The Board returned to Regular Session at 10:43 a.m.

**XII. – Adjournment**

Mr. Nelson moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:43 a.m., Ms. Trokhan seconded.

Motion Passed. Vote: Aye: Mr. Nelson, 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:

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Presiding Officer of the Board

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date