

Minutes of the 734th meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners of the Columbus and Franklin County Metropolitan Park District held on January 7, 2009 at 9:00 a.m. at the Spring Hollow Lodge, Sharon Woods Metro Park.

Present

Commissioners: Ms. Tripp, Mr. Jeffrey, Mr. Lashutka

Staff: Mr. O'Meara, Mr. Peck, Mr. Ruff, Ms. Burchfield, Ms. Hanley, Mr. Studenmund, Ms. Boggs, Ms. Martin, Mr. Dudley, Mr. LaJeunesse, Mr. White, Mr. Malinowski

Legal Counsel: Mr. Franzmann

Guests: Ms. Litt, Mr. McNealey, and Mr. Saperstein

Mr. Jeffrey asked if all of the notice requirements of Section 121.22 of the Ohio Revised Code and the rules of this Board regarding open meetings have been complied with for this meeting. The Executive Director responded that yes, all of those requirements and rules have been met.

Planning Discussion

The Director introduced Marty Saperstein of Saperstein Associates, Inc. who was contracted by Friends of Metro Parks to perform a survey of registered voters in Franklin County. Mr. Saperstein presented a PowerPoint program highlighting the results of the survey. He covered the methodology, survey questions and conclusions.

Mr. Saperstein stated overall, seven out of ten voters supported a ten-year Metro Park levy at 0.75 mills and that three out of five voters see value in expanding the Metro Park system.

Mr. Saperstein indicated that the data supported proceeding with plans to place on the ballot in May a ten-year levy at 0.75 mills. Though a troubled economy is likely to weaken support, he indicated that it should not threaten an electoral victory.

The Board asked several questions regarding the need to focus communications on reinforcing positive attitudes and on turnout. Discussion followed on how to explain to the voters that the levy is needed to: 1) maintain and improve the existing Metro Parks 2) keeping the parks free, 3) expand programs and services for children, seniors, and other special populations, and 4) continue protecting Big Darby Creek.

The Director presented a PowerPoint program on the Ten Year Plan. The program summarized the existing park district, an overview of the environmental, educational, health, and economic benefits that Metro Parks contributes to Central Ohio. It also covered the promises fulfilled as part of the 1999 levy, the current funding situation and the anticipated growth in Central Ohio.

The Director outlined the ten-year levy proposal:

- The first priority is to take care of existing Metro Parks, this is to ensure that we are able to maintain the existing parks to our current standards

- Create three new Metro Parks – 1) in northeast Franklin County (along Rocky Fork Creek in Plain Township), 2) along Little Walnut Creek in southeast Franklin County (the recent purchase of the Eastside Nursery property will form the core of this park), and 3) along the Scioto River in southern Franklin County (Grove City will donate over 200 acres to help get the park started)
- Continue to work to complete the Greenways trail system. We will also manage more of the existing system, particularly in the City of Columbus
- Expand our programming for school children and senior citizens
- Make a strong commitment to continue our efforts, along with our partners, to protect Big Darby Creek
- Expand Scioto Audubon Metro Park to include additional land and additional outdoor recreation activities
- Make a strong commitment to efforts to restore wildlife habitat, with goals to restore 1,000 acres of wetlands, 1,000 acres of forest and 300 additional acres of prairie over the next ten years
- The proposed levy is structured as a 0.65 mill replacement and an additional 0.1 (one-tenth) additional for a total of 0.75 mill. This is an increase above the amount the homeowners currently pay. The levy, if approved, will cost homeowners \$23 per year per \$100,000 of home value.

Discussions concerning the amount of the levy request, list of proposed projects and structuring how to present the proposal followed. The Board expressed the need to increase the millage and how important the passage of the levy is, given our struggling economy. All agreed that a total of 0.75 mill levy is needed to accomplish the intended goals for the next ten years.

No official action was taken.


The meeting adjourned at 11:02 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



John R. O'Meara, Executive Director

Approved by the Board of Park Commissioners:



Tad Jeffrey, Chair