

Minutes of the 904th meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners of the Columbus and Franklin County Metropolitan Park District, held on April 20, 2021 at the Nature Center, Battelle Darby Creek Metro Park, 1415 Darby Creek Drive, Galloway, OH 43119.

Present

Commissioners: Mr. Hadden, Mr. McGregor

Staff: Mr. Moloney, Mr. Peck, Mr. McGivern, Mr. Kasnyick, Mr. Studenmund, Ms. Ruppensburg, Mr. Hamilton, Ms. Shaffer, Ms. Downing, Ms. Ingram, Mr. Jones, Ms. Morrow, Ms. Hall, Mr. Domiano, Mr. Biegler

Legal Counsel: Mr. Franzmann

Guests: Ms. McGregor, Mr. Anthony Sasson

Mr. Hadden asked if all of the notice requirements of Section 121.22 of the Ohio Revised Code and the rules of the Board regarding open meetings had been met. Mr. Moloney confirmed that all of those requirements and rules had been met.

Minutes of the March 16, 2021 Board Meeting

Mr. Hadden made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 16, 2021 Board Meeting. Mr. McGregor seconded the motion and the minutes were approved.

Public Comment

Mr. Anthony Sasson, a member of the Darby Creek Association (DCA), presented a letter from the Darby Creek Association in cooperation with the Columbus Audubon Society to the Board regarding their concerns and comments for the Invenergy solar facility. The DCA has provided comments to Invenergy directly as well. The DCA wishes to make the Board aware of several concerns they have regarding the proposed solar project, including aesthetic impacts to Battelle Darby Creek Metro Park, impacts to bird populations, impacts to native vegetation, habitat and ecological function and stormwater concerns.

The letter further addressed potential mitigation, including wildlife-friendly fencing and ensuring Invenergy take steps beyond compliance, that could be taken to manage impacts to Battelle Darby Creek if the Invenergy project moves forward. The DCA wishes the Board to take formal written effort with Invenergy to track concerns and strategies.

The Board thanked Mr. Sasson for his comments. A copy of Mr. Sasson's letter is attached to these minutes.

Disbursement Resolution #5898

Mr. Hadden moved for the approval of the Disbursement Resolution for the February 2021 invoices after clarification of one item involving a payment to the Columbus Foundation as part of the multi-agency Rapid5 project. Mr. McGregor seconded the

motion and the Board approved the resolution. A copy of Resolution No. 5898 is attached to these minutes as part hereof.

Staff Reports

Administration

Mr. Moloney opened his report by sharing Metro Parks' continuing increase in visitation. Attendance numbers are still rising as the weather improves. Current 2021 attendance is up over 2020 attendance for this time last year.

Mr. Moloney provided an update on the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) I-70/I-71 project, which is proceeding and will have impacts to park operations at Scioto Audubon Metro Park for several years. A resolution will come before the Board at this meeting authorizing the agreement between ODOT and Metro Parks, including ODOT funds to relocate the Scioto Audubon dog park and other concessions.

Another energy company is interested in a solar energy project near Heritage Trail, a Metro Parks-managed bike trail in the Hilliard area.

Mr. Moloney also updated the board on the status of House Bill #63, which would limit the ability of park districts to utilize eminent domain in land acquisitions. HB #63 has not yet had a second reading in the State legislature. Discussions are continuing between lawmakers, lobbyists and park districts.

Mr. Moloney closed his report by sharing a potential trail expansion with the Board; the City of Plain City is interested in growth and development and has approached Metro Parks about expanding the Heritage Bike Trail into Plain City.

Operations

Mr. Peck introduced the Board to Mr. Kevin Kasnyick, Park Manager of Operations and Resource Manager, and to Mr. Geoff Hamilton, Park Manager of Battelle Darby Creek. Mr. Kasnyick introduced his staff in attendance and updated the Board on several Resource Management projects, including invasive species control and ground squirrel reintroduction.

Mr. Hamilton introduced his own staff in attendance and updated the Board on current projects underway at Battelle Darby Creek. The salamander monitoring project developed to assess the success of the salamander tunnels underneath Jack McDowell Way has been completed and data is being reviewed. Reservable shelters and lodges are slated to open soon for the first time in a year. The new Backpacking Trail at Battelle Darby is scheduled to open May 1, 2021 and will offer visitors over ten miles of backpacking trail and four backpacking sites. Several of Battelle Darby Creek's bison are pregnant, with the first calves expected within the next few weeks.

Mr. Peck updated the Board on Operations. A visitor at Sharon Woods experienced a medical emergency while in the park and passed away. Covid-19 operations are still in

place, with the parks still operating in Incident Command Management, but more normal operations are returning, including day camp registrations for the Summer 2021 season and the reopening of reservable facilities. The Federal Bureau of Investigation is proceeding with charges against individuals involved in vehicle break-ins that have occurred in the parks.

Mr. Peck discussed the renovations at the Golf Course Pro Shop, which are still ongoing, and development at Quarry Trails Metro Park. The Metro Parks Roving Crew and several contractors are onsite. Metro Parks is also preparing to accept a contract for a canopy walkway as part of the Blacklick Woods Nature Center. Metro Parks accepted Statements of Qualifications from interested contractors this month.

Finance

Mr. McGivern provided updates to the Board on the Finance Department. Real estate taxes for the year have come in above budget. Metro Parks is preparing to renew its insurance coverage. The fiber optic project at Blacklick Woods Metro Park is well underway and will support park operations there.

Human Resources

Mr. Domiano updated the Board on the status of Metro Parks' seasonal employment initiative; Metro Parks will be onboarding up to sixty seasonal employees starting May 1, including seasonal technicians, naturalists, rangers, interns and camp staff.

Other Business

None

Resolutions

- #5899** AUTHORIZING THE RENEWAL OF METRO PARKS INSURANCE COVERAGE TO BURNHAM & FLOWER INSURANCE GROUP
The Board approved the renewal of Metro Parks' insurance coverage with Burnham & Flower Insurance Group.
- #5900** AUTHORIZING THE EXPENDITURE TO MARBLE CLIFF CANYON, LLC FOR THE OHIO ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY'S VOLUNTEER ACTION PROGRAM FOR ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION OF QUARRY TRAILS METRO PARK
The Board authorized the expenditure to Marble Cliff Canyon, LLC pursuant to Resolution #5688 and in anticipation of receipt of a Covenant-Not-to-Sue from the Ohio EPA.
- #5901** AUTHORIZING THE PURCHASE OF A BOARDWALK SYSTEM FOR QUARRY TRAILS METRO PARK
The Board authorized Metro Parks to purchase a boardwalk system for Quarry Trails Metro Park.

#5902 GIVING GENERAL DIRECTION TO STAFF REGARDING THE POTENTIAL SOLAR FARM LOCATED ADJACENT TO BATTELLE DARBY CREEK METRO PARK
The Board authorized the Executive Director to develop and provide a framework for Metro Parks staff for discussing, investigating and working with Invenergy as the Invenergy Solar Project adjacent to Battelle Darby Creek Metro Park moves through discussions. Metro Parks has several concerns regarding the project, as does the Board, and this resolution will allow Metro Parks to take a measured, comprehensive approach to interacting with Invenergy, LLC.

#5903 AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH THE OHIO DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FOR PROPERTY AT SCIOTO AUDUBON METRO PARK
The Board authorizes Metro Parks to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) regarding their I-70/I-71 construction project. ODOT will be permitted to stage construction efforts from Metro Parks property in return for funds to help relocate the Scioto Audubon dog park and other concessions.

Executive Session

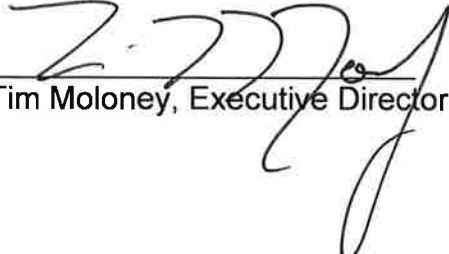
The Board entered Executive Session at 3:37 pm to discuss personnel matters. The Board returned from Executive Session at 4:03 pm.

Adjournment

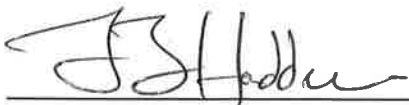
The meeting adjourned at 4:03 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Approved by the Board of Park
Commissioners



Tim Moloney, Executive Director



Chair

To: Metro Parks Board

From: Anthony Sasson, Darby Creek Association

Date: April 20, 2021

Hello. I am Anthony Sasson. I represent the DCA, who provided comments to the solar facility applicant Invenergy on January 29 and April 7, 2021.

In its comments, DCA, in cooperation with Columbus Audubon, has emphasized the following. We encourage Metro Parks to do the same. We think this needs to happen in the near future, as these applications can move quickly.

This solar facility proposal will permanently shape the future of Battelle-Darby Metro Park and part of the Big Darby Creek watershed. This is one of the most outstanding parks in central Ohio and the entire state of Ohio, with 60 years of efforts to establish and preserve an impressive example of Ohio's natural heritage. Therefore, we believe the proposed solar facility must go beyond compliance with Ohio Power Siting Board, Ohio EPA and other state and local requirements.

Given the recent track record of reviews by the OPSB, our comments assume that the OPSB will certify the Invenergy application. OPSB already has certified several comparable solar facilities in central Ohio, such as in Madison and Pickaway Counties. This action would mean it is approved by the OPSB, to move forward it would only have standard hurdles such as an Ohio EPA stormwater permit to address.

The DCA/CA comments have included the following topics:

Aesthetic impacts related to setback distances from the road and parkland -

Setbacks are only 100 feet from the roads (US 40 and Darby Creek Drive) and parkland, including the Darby Creek Greenway trail. Therefore, the solar facility will be highly visible to park visitors and shape their impressions and experience of this outstanding natural area.

Bird impacts –

The area is a great attraction for birds and birders, so how would the facility avoid impacts and ensure limited impacts to birds?

Native vegetation -

The solar facility needs to use native vegetation, such as along the perimeter of the solar panel area. The preference is that this vegetation be from the local Darby Plains genotype so that the park can avoid genetic contamination and maintain the effort practiced since the 1970s of using species with only local plant genetics for plantings in this park.

Wetlands -

There are some very unusual wetlands on the solar facility site. Metro Parks might want to encourage connections between the solar facility and Metro Parks' wetlands, continuing the excellent effort to protect and enhance wetland-dependent species in the park.

Hydrology -

I mentioned the stormwater permit that would need to be approved by Ohio EPA. Large volumes of rainwater will come from the solar panel area. How much can the solar facility enhance natural hydrology in the area and help protect the park's wetlands and Big Darby Creek and Hellbranch Run?

Other areas include things like invasive species and wildlife-friendly fencing -

The solar facility, at about 1000 acres, is likely to be in an area where invasive species grow and could easily migrate to the parkland.

Fencing around the solar facility should allow predators to move through the fence and prey on animals within the solar facility, helping avoid population explosions of the prey within the facility. Wildlife-friendly fencing also would be much more aesthetically pleasing to park visitors than the proposed chain-link fence alternative.

Thank you for your time. I encourage Metro Parks to establish a formal written effort with Invenergy to track issues like these and their progress. The Darby Creek Association and Columbus Audubon would like to be informed of progress and are willing to provide more on our perspective to Metro Parks.