

Minutes of the 911<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners of the Columbus and Franklin County Metropolitan Park District, held at 3:04pm on November 16, 2021 at the Banquet Room, Blacklick Woods Golf Course, 7309 E. Livingston Ave, Reynoldsburg, OH 43068.

**Present**

Commissioners: Mr. Hadden, Mr. McCue, Mr. McGregor

Staff: Mr. Moloney, Mr. Peck, Mr. McGivern, Ms. Telfer, Ms. Hanley, Ms. Fronk, Mr. Studenmund, Mr. Laughbaum, Ms. Boniface, Mr. Sorgini, Ms. Stiles, Mr. Kitts, Mr. Salmulski, Mr. Williamson, Ms. Ingram

Legal Counsel: Mr. Kibbey

Guests: None.

Mr. McCue 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.

**Public Comment**

None.

**Minutes of the October Board Meeting**

Mr. McGregor made a motion to approve the minutes of October 19, 2021 Board Meeting. Mr. Hadden seconded the motion and the minutes were approved.

**Disbursement Resolution #5938**

Mr. McGregor asked two clarifying questions regarding items on the disbursement resolution. First, Mr. McGregor asked if the stormwater credit program started several years ago, in which Metro Parks has received reimbursement from the City of Columbus in return for stormwater credits, is still ongoing. Mr. Moloney confirmed that this program does still exist, though Metro Parks only has three parks (Scioto Audubon, Blendon Woods and Quarry Trails) that are located within City limits and are therefore eligible for the program.

Second, Mr. McGregor asked about a disbursement regarding movie rights. Ms. Boniface, a Manager of Park Operations, provided information about Metro Parks' recent "Movies in the Parks" programs, which were free to the public and were hosted at several parks. Movie rights were purchased for these events.

No further questions were asked. Mr. Hadden made a motion to approve the resolution. Mr. McGregor seconded the motion and the motion was approved.

## **Staff Reports**

### **Administration**

Mr. Moloney updated the Board on several ongoing administrative projects. Staff met with Senator Shaffer, representatives from Hocking County (including the County Engineer's Office, business developers and township trustees) and other involved parties regarding property taxes in Hocking County.

Approximately one-third of all land in Hocking County is owned by public entities, including local (Metro Parks), state (Ohio Department of Natural Resources) and federal (U.S Forest Service) entities. Some local municipalities are concerned that publicly-owned lands, which may be tax-exempt, do not support economic growth for local governments and townships. Senator Shaffer has been apprised of these concerns, as some local entities have considered exploring ways to increase property tax revenue. Mr. Moloney brought Senator Shaffer, Hocking County employees, Good Hope Township trustees and others to Clear Creek Metro Park to hear their concerns and explain Metro Parks' role in land stewardship.

Administrative staff has also worked with several other agencies, local governments and stakeholders on a submittal for the next round of State Capital Improvement funds. Metro Parks has applied for \$5,000,000 in funding for land acquisition and development of several miles of Greenway trail along the existing Norfolk-Southern Rail Line. Metro Parks hopes to connect the Heritage Rail Trail, currently ending in Old Hilliard, to the Olentangy Trail in downtown Columbus. This will be a multi-year project undertaken in partnership with several other entities, including city governments and private developers.

Mr. Moloney also shared with the Board an initiative undertaken by Metro Parks' Social Media team. Working with a contractor, the Social Media team created a two-minute video spot showcasing Metro Parks' vision and the values its properties can bring to Franklin County residents. This can be used at recruitment events, by media and during presentations. Mr. Moloney thanked the Social Media team, Ms. Tina Fronk and Ms. Peg Hanley, for their work.

### **Operations**

Mr. Peck introduced the Blacklick Woods Golf Course staff, including Mr. Danny Sorgini, recently promoted to Golf Course Manager, Ms. Cassie Stiles, Mr. Jay Williamson and Mr. Mike Salmulski. The Golf Course has had a challenging year as staff has adjusted to Covid-19 operations, high attendance and continued efforts to reimagine the Golf Course, but has also had a successful year.

Several projects and initiatives, including a renovation of the Pro Shop, expanded programming and partnerships with local school districts, have been completed. Staff at the Golf Course continues to look for ways to innovate and draw more residents of and visitors to Franklin County to the course.

Mr. Peck also updated the Board on park operations. The parks remain busy. Quarry Trails is hosting a "soft opening" on November 30, 2021 and will welcome members of the public to the park as regular visitors for the first time. Several projects at Quarry Trails, including paving, creating trails, planting trees and finishing the playground, are underway. A more formal grand opening for Quarry Trails is planned for Spring 2022.

Several other projects across the District are wrapping up as the year ends. Paving has been completed at Slate Run. The WRRSP project at Clear Creek is nearly finished. The Army Corps of Engineers has expressed interest in funding further restoration of Clear Creek.

Metro Parks' Resource Management team received a \$500,000 grant from the H2Ohio program to build a series of wetlands and other water quality improvement measures on the Crawford property near Walnut Woods Metro Park. This is a \$1,000,000 project that will be reimbursed up to \$500,000 by the State of Ohio upon completion and will have many positive impacts on the Little Walnut Creek watershed.

The dog park at Scioto Audubon is in the process of relocation, with ground on the new site broken and contractors working to prepare it. Finally, talks with Invenergy and other stakeholders regarding the proposed Pleasant Township Solar Project are ongoing. Metro Parks is pursuing an easement with Invenergy.

### **Finance**

Mr. McGivern provided the Board with updates from the Finance Department. Metro Parks continues to be in a strong position financially, with higher revenues than projected and lower expenditures than expected.

A draft budget has been prepared for the Board ahead of the annual budget meeting, which has been rescheduled for November 29, 2021 at 8:00am. The Finance Department is working hard to ensure that the budgeting process remains as transparent as possible to both the Board and to taxpayers.

### **Human Resources**

Ms. Telfer updated the Board on several HR initiatives. HR staff is examining pay scales and planning adjustments as necessary to remain a competitive employer, addressing pay in a four-pronged approach:

1. Immediate need
2. High-need or high-turnover classifications (i.e. Park Technicians, Park Rangers)
3. Other classifications, including administrative staff
4. Internal equity between classifications

HR does not yet have a final document or formalized plan, but is working closely with Director and Operations staff to formulate one with the end goal of "recruit, retain and

reward" employees. Pay increases, including merit pay and other adjustments, have already been budgeted for in the 2022 budget.

Ms. Telfer also updated the Board on the popular Breakfast with Santa program, which will return this year as an in-person event, and on an incentive program through Franklin County. Franklin County received funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and will be distributing \$1,000 incentive payments to employees who are fully vaccinated by program deadlines. Metro Parks has decided to opt in to this program and will be distributing information to employees about how to qualify. This program is voluntary.

### **Resolutions**

- #5952     **AUTHORIZING ENTERING INTO A CONTRACT FOR AGRICULTURAL SERVICES**  
The Board authorized Metro Parks to enter into a contract with Robert McCarley for agricultural services across four sites. This contract is for the 2022-23 Farm Rental Program.
- #5953     **AUTHORIZING ENTERING INTO A CONTRACT FOR SITE LIGHTING AT QUARRY TRAILS METRO PARK**  
The Board authorized Metro Parks to enter into a contract with Jess Howard Electric Company to install eleven poles and lights in the Basin Area of Quarry Trails Metro Park ahead of the park's opening.

### **Other Business:**

None.

### **Adjournment**

Mr. McCue asked if there was a motion to end the meeting. Mr. McGregor made a motion, seconded by Mr. Hadden, and the Board voted to adjourn the meeting at 3:43 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Approved by the Board of Park  
Commissioners

  
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Tim Moloney, Executive Director

  
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Chair