

Minutes of the 915th meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners of the Columbus and Franklin County Metropolitan Park District, held at 3:00pm on February 15, 2021 at the Nature Center, Blendon Woods Metro Park, 4265 E Dublin Granville Rd, Columbus, OH 43230.

Present

Commissioners: Mr. Hadden, Mr. Alex, Mr. McCue

Staff: Mr. Moloney, Mr. McGivern, Mr. Peck, Ms. Telfer, Mr. Studenmund, Ms. Ingram, Ms. Williamson, Mr. Kaderly, Mr. Laughbaum, Ms. Moheimani, Mr. Neeley, Ms. West, Mr. Romaker, Ms. Krueger, Ms. Klamek

Legal Counsel: Mr. Franzmann

Guests: Mr. David Roseman, Ms. Kristin Studabaker, Mr. Mark Ferenchek

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 January 19, 2022 Board Meeting

Mr. Alex made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 21, 2021 Board Meeting. Mr. McCue seconded the motion and the minutes were approved.

Public Comment: Mr. David Roseman, a regular user of Metro Parks' parks and trails, introduced himself and asked about the potential impacts of the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) work slated to begin at Scioto Audubon Metro Park in late February. Mr. Roseman asked if this work would close a portion of the Scioto Greenway Trail and the Scioto Mile. Mr. Peck stated that access to the trail would be closed for a period of two weeks while staff built a detour around ODOT's construction site. Once the detour is finished, access to the trail from Scioto Audubon Metro park will resume.

Mr. Roseman also thanked staff for their work on trail improvements near Cherry Bottom Road. Paving improvements for trails at Cherry Bottom and behind Annehurst Elementary School are slated to begin in 2022.

Disbursement Resolution #5974

Mr. Alex moved for the approval of the Disbursement Resolution for the January 2022 invoices. Mr. McCue seconded the motion and the Board approved the resolution. A copy of Resolution No. 5974 is attached to these minutes as part hereof.

Metro Parks Private Development Strategy and Direction

Mr. Moloney gave a brief presentation to the Board regarding Metro Parks' current strategy for managing private development near Metro Parks land. Metro Park owns over 28,000 acres of land and as Central Ohio grows, Metro Parks is fielding an increasing number of requests from private developers who have purchased property near or adjacent to a Metro Park and are looking for easements, utility access, road right-of-way and items or services to aid in development.

Metro Parks' general policy has been to handle each request individually, on a case-by-case basis. In general, Metro Parks does not grant easements or exclusive use of park land to an external entity without clear and demonstrated benefits to park visitors and taxpayers, as Metro Parks' focus is on conservation and on maintaining its lands for public use. Metro Parks does try and facilitate partnerships between developers and other agencies, such as the City of Columbus, where appropriate.

Mr. Moloney provided the Board with several examples of requests that have come before the administration in the last few years, including:

- A request from a private developer adjacent to Pickerington Ponds Metro Park, asking for permission to run utilities underneath Pickerington Ponds. This request was denied by Metro Parks' administration, citing little benefit to users of Pickerington Ponds Metro Park
- A request from Rockford Homes to run sanitary sewer line around the edge of Homestead Metro Park, tying into the City of Hilliard's sewer line. Metro Parks granted this request, as Rockford Homes will also connect Homestead Metro Park, which currently uses a septic system, to the sewer line at no cost to the taxpayer
- A request from a private developer adjacent to Metro Parks property on Ulry Road. The developer wanted to develop two of his parcels, but could not as Metro Parks' land was between his two parcels and Metro Parks cannot grant easements on this property as part of an agreement with Clean Ohio, which funded the purchase
- The ongoing Zimmer development project adjacent to Scioto Audubon Metro Park. Developers have asked Metro Parks for permission to build an access road off the main park entrance to access the site, which may have up to 800 residential units when completed, and has asked for stormwater easements as well. Metro Parks has several concerns regarding this project, including an unsustainable increase in vehicular traffic through the entrance area of the park

Mr. Moloney stated that Metro Parks carefully considers each request as they are received, as each park, project and parcel is different and may have different factors, including roadway right-of-ways, Clean Ohio or other grant restrictions, public trail access and others. He then asked the Board if they had any suggestions for future direction, as the rate of easement, access and similar requests is increasing.

Mr. McCue thanked Mr. Moloney for his presentation. He does not believe that providing Metro Parks' administration with more restrictive guidelines for interacting with private

developers will help Metro Parks' staff. Mr. McCue stated that Metro Parks' current policy for handling private development requests allows staff to meet Metro Parks' mission and that more restrictive guidelines may complicate the already-unique circumstances surrounding each request.

Mr. Alex also weighed in on the matter. He stated that he would prefer to defer to Metro Parks' staff, which has the expertise and experience to handle development requests. He also stated that Metro Parks' core mission is the conservation of natural areas, but that the focus should also be on allowing guests to experience those natural areas.

Mr. Alex further stated that the Board should be involved in development requests when Metro Parks' staff needed additional guidance or expertise, but that such involvement should be determined under the current case-by-case model. Mr. Moloney added that the Board is always involved whenever Metro Parks either acquires or gives up a land right, such as a conservation easement, and that in general Metro Parks does not grant easements without a clear public benefit and compensation for the taxpayers.

Staff Reports

Administration

Mr. Moloney thanked the Board for their attention regarding private development requests and asked if they had any questions about his staff report, which was delivered to the Board in the monthly Board packet. There were no questions.

Operations

Mr. Peck introduced Blendon Woods' manager, Heather Williamson, who in turn introduced the Board to other members of her staff.

Ms. Williamson updated the Board on projects that Blendon Woods had completed in 2021, including updates to the Nature Center, updates to playgrounds, swing sets, new concrete pours, ADA-compliance updates to shelters and picnic areas and staff efforts with programs, events and the Winter Hike Series. Ms. Williamson also outlined Blendon Woods' upcoming 2022 projects, which include further updates to recreational areas, a water line replacement to bring Blendon Woods into compliance with the City of Columbus and further work updating the Nature Center.

Mr. Peck expanded on Ms. Williamson's report. Several of the older parks in the district – Blendon Woods was the second Metro Park to open its doors – are in need of utility and facility updates to meet public demand and public use of the parks.

Scioto Audubon Metro Park will close for two weeks beginning February 28, 2022, to allow ODOT to begin work on the I-71/I-70 project. ODOT will be moving in several hundred thousand tons of dirt and other materials and equipment. Access to Scioto Audubon will be limited during this time; the Grange Insurance Audubon Center and the businesses along Maier Place will be open, but the park itself will be technically closed.

The north-end dog park will be permanently closed and the new dog park near the park office will open after this period of closure. Access to the Scioto Mile and the Scioto Greenway Trail from Scioto Audubon Metro Park will also be restricted during this period, with a detour trail built and opening to grant access during the ODOT project. Mr. Peck responded to a question from Mr. Alex regarding how the public shall be notified of this closure; ODOT will be placing signs at the park entrance to notify users of the upcoming closure, and Metro Parks will also be posting about the closure on its social media pages. Closures and other effects on the Greenway trails will be communicated via the Greenways text alert system.

Mr. Peck also thanked Mr. Hadden for his assistance in facilitating a meeting between Metro Parks and American Electric Power (AEP) regarding Metro Parks' plans to develop parkland in the Far South Side of Columbus. Metro Parks and AEP discussed trails, site access and other factors.

In the parks currently, winter weather has brought visitors out to enjoy sled hills, ice skating ponds and cross-country ski trails in high numbers. When the weather permits, Quarry Trails Metro Park is still very busy. Staff there continues to manage parking and other visitor concerns on nice days. Mr. Alex asked a question about trail conditions and Mr. Peck stated that most parking lots, roadways, paved trails and Greenway trails are paved, but that Metro Parks does not salt its trails often due to environmental concerns, so some trails, particularly unimproved trails, may be icy while winter weather persists.

Mr. Peck closed his report with a list of upcoming projects. Metro Parks has posted two Requests for Qualifications (RFQs); one for wetland mitigation work as part of the H2Ohio grant Metro Parks' Resource Management staff received in 2021 and one for a "via ferrata" climbing feature at Quarry Trails Metro Park. Metro Parks is also continuing work on the Blacklick Woods Canopy Walk, and is now considering ways to provide access to the Canopy Walk.

Finance

Mr. McGivern reported that the Finance Department had a busy January. Several purchase orders were opened to allow the parks to begin 2022 operations and a new Payroll Administrator, Ms. Amy Klamek, has been hired to fill Ms. Lynn Krueger's position. Ms. Lynn Krueger is retiring after over forty years of service with Metro Parks.

Human Resources

Ms. Telfer stated that HR staff has begun the annual process of seasonal recruitment and is visiting many career fairs, college programs and other events. HR staff is also seeking to fill several part-time and full-time vacancies within the parks.

Mr. Alex asked if Metro Parks was experiencing the staffing shortages common in many industries as the economy recovers from COVID-19 disruptions. Ms. Telfer stated that while Metro Parks was experiencing some shortages, Metro Parks' staff has done a

good job anticipating needs and is working to fill any critical vacancies or operational gaps.

Resolutions

- #5975 HONORING LYNN D. KRUEGER**
The Board thanked Ms. Lynn D. Krueger, retiring this month, for over forty years of service with Metro Parks and passed a resolution honoring her for her work.
- #5976 AUTHORIZING THE PURCHASE OF FAIRWAY MOWER FOR GOLF COURSE**
The Board authorized Metro Parks' Operations Department to purchase a mower for the Blacklick Woods Golf Course to assist in park operations.
- #5977 AUTHORIZING THE PURCHASE OF VEHICLES FROM COUGHLIN AUTOMOTIVE GROUP**
The Board authorized Metro Parks' Operations Department to purchase four vehicles from Coughlin Automotive Group, a local business, to support the Operations Department, the Camp & Special Events Team and the Information Technology Team.
- #5978 AUTHORIZING THE PURCHASE OF VEHICLES FROM GSA AUTOCHOICE**
The Board authorized Metro Parks' Operations Department to purchase four vehicles from GSA Autochoice, a local business, to support park operations at Clear Creek, Slate Run and Quarry Trails, and also to support the operations of the Resource Management team.

Executive Session: Land Acquisition

At 3:34 pm, Mr. Alex made a motion to call for a vote to enter into executive session for the purpose of discussing land acquisition. Mr. McCue seconded the motion and a vote was called. The Board voted to enter into executive session.

The Board returned from executive session at 3:53 pm and voted to end executive session in order to pass a resolution.

- #5979 AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF AN INTERIM AGREEMENT AND A JOINT STIPULATION AND RECOMMENDATION BEFORE THE OHIO POWER SITING BOARD REGARDING THE PLEASANT PRAIRIE SOLAR PROJECT**
The Board authorized Metro Parks' administration to enter into an interim agreement with Pleasant Prairie Solar Energy, LLC, regarding a proposed project adjacent to Battelle Darby Creek Metro Park. This agreement provides Metro Parks with protection for its interests while Pleasant Prairie Solar Energy's project is reviewed by the Ohio Power Siting Board. This resolution

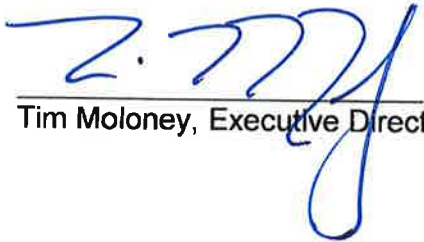
is an interim agreement. Further resolutions regarding the Pleasant Prairie Solar Project may be brought before the Board in the coming months.

Adjournment:


Mr. Hadden asked if there was a motion to end the meeting. Mr. Alex made a motion, seconded by Mr. McCue, and the Board voted to adjourn the meeting at 3:57 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Approved by the Board of Park
Commissioners:



Tim Moloney, Executive Director



Chair