

Minutes of the 928<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners of the Columbus and Franklin County Metropolitan Park District, held at 3:00pm on February 21, 2023 at the 4265 East Dublin Granville Road, Columbus, OH 43081.

**Present**

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

Staff: Mr. Moloney, Mr. McGivern, Mr. Peck, Ms. Telfer, Mr. Studenmund, Ms. Ingram, Ms. Boniface, Ms. Snyder, Ms. Christian, Ms. Williamson, Mr. Kelly, Ms. West, Mr. Ramsey

Legal Counsel: Mr. Franzmann

Guests: Mr. David Roseman

Mr. Alex 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 17, 2023 Board Meeting**

Mr. McCue made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 17, 2023 Board Meeting. Mr. Hadden seconded the motion and the minutes were approved.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Disbursement Resolution #6060**

Mr. McCue moved for the approval of the Disbursement Resolution for the January 2023 invoices. Mr. Hadden seconded the motion and the Board approved the resolution. A copy of Resolution No. 6060 is attached to these minutes as part hereof.

**Staff Reports**

**Administration**

Mr. Moloney stated the parks are very busy, with several well-attended Winter Hikes events taking place over the weekends. Staff is busy as well. Staff plans to submit an application to the Clean Ohio Greenspace Conservation Fund for future parkland in Hilliard, Ohio, near Homestead Metro Park. Staff also helped RAPID5 facilitate five meetings in late January and February with local stakeholders.

Metro Parks is working with several other businesses and agencies near the site of Great Southern Metro Park, including Shelley & Sands, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), American Electric Power (AEP), Lowes and the City of Columbus on site plans and amenities for Great Southern Metro Park, which will serve the Far South Side of Columbus once opened. Planning has begun for this park. A behind the

scenes walk for members of Friends of Metro Parks has been scheduled for March to start introducing Metro Parks' constituents to this property.

Metro Parks is also working closely with other park districts and municipalities, including the City of Groveport, the City of Hilliard and the City of New Albany to preserve green corridors and open space as the Central Ohio region continues to grow.

### **Operations**

Mr. Peck first introduced the Board to Ms. Heather Williamson, Park Manager of Blendon Woods and Rocky Fork Metro Parks, who in turn introduced her staff. Blendon Woods had record attendance in 2022 (excluding 2020 COVID-inflated attendance), with over 645,000 visitors enjoying the park over the course of the year. Blendon Woods also completed several projects, including the installation of a popular new playground and trail resurfacing, hosted many well-attended programs and is beginning the process of refurbishing an office space at Rocky Fork Metro Park, planning spring events and preparing to expand the Blendon Woods Nature Center.

Mr. Peck added that the Blendon Woods Nature Center is very popular and that an expansion is needed within the next few years. Blendon Woods also serves as a main location for Metro Parks' Second Shift Supervisors, a team of rangers that manage the parks during the second operational shift in the afternoon and evenings. Rather than be based out of just one park, these rangers move around the park district throughout their shifts based on operational needs.

Mr. Peck stated that the parks are busy and that rangers have had an interesting start to 2023, with staff responding to multiple incidents at multiple parks. Parks are preparing for the summer season. Summer hours start April 1.

Other major projects underway for the Operations team include the construction of a park office and a maintenance shop at Quarry Trails Metro Park, both of which are coming along, work at the Quarry Trails Dog Park and construction of the fire tower at Scioto Grove. The dog park at Quarry Trails is anticipated to open this year. Operations staff also reached an agreement with First Tee, which will allow First Tee to maintain programming at the Blacklick Woods Golf Course through August of this year, after which the relationship will be reevaluated.

### **Finance**

Mr. McGivern updated the Board on the Finance Department's current projects and priorities. 130 new purchase orders were opened in January 2023, signaling the start of a busy year. Due to an increase in phishing attacks and other scam schemes faced by government agencies all over the country, the Finance and IT teams are working to train staff on scam prevention and phishing awareness. Staff is also implementing new safety features to make it harder for scammers to impact Metro Parks.

## **Human Resources**

Ms. Telfer stated that the HR Department has begun summer seasonal recruitment. HR staff has attended several job and career fairs in the region. Staff is also preparing for the 2023 CSI internship program, which Metro Parks hosts in partnership with Columbus City Schools.

Mr. Alex asked if HR knew how many students who have participated in the CSI program have gone on to accept part- or full-time employment from Metro Parks. While HR did not have an exact number available on hand, Ms. Telfer stated that several interns each year are offered part- or full-time employment.

## **Deer Management**

Continuing the theme of showcasing a different department or initiative each month, Mr. Peck and Mr. Kasnyik, Resource Manager and Manager of Park Operations, presented information on Metro Parks' deer management program.

This program, an annual effort to manage Metro Parks' overall deer population for the biodiversity and ecological health of the parks, the deer herds and the environment, grew out of early management efforts in the 1980s and 1990s. Several Metro Parks, most notably Sharon Woods, which has no natural predators for deer within park boundaries, had become overrun with deer populations. Hundreds of deer lived within the park, straining the park's resources. Over 250 species of plants and flowers were lost at Sharon Woods due to overgrazing.

Metro Parks tried a variety of non-lethal methods for deer management, including relocations, fertility management and education to keep park visitors from feeding or interacting with the deer. None of these methods were successful, so in the 1990s Metro Parks began a management program that focused on culling deer from the herd. This approach was guided by a multi-faceted understanding of Metro Parks' ecosystems, including a scientific approach, a cultural values approach, media outreach and public education.

Despite initial pushback from the public and the media, Metro Parks kept up its deer management program, expanding it to ten parks. Public hunting, including lottery hunts, controlled bow hunts and use of a public hunting area at Battelle Darby Creek were added to the program.

Since the program's start in the 1990s, Metro Parks has successfully removed thousands of deer from the parks, which has allowed overgrazed areas to recover, native vegetation to reestablish and surviving deer to enjoy more resources with less competition. Metro Parks donates deer culled by park staff to the Mid-Ohio Food Bank and other collectives for distribution to food banks and community pantries. The deer

management program is evaluated and adjusted on a ten-year basis to continue serving the needs of the park district.

Mr. Alex asked if the public had changed its mind about the program from the hostility of the 1990s. Both Mr. Peck and Mr. Kasnyik stated that the public no longer complains about the deer management program and enjoys benefits of the program too, including fewer deer-vehicle accidents and fewer deer spilling out of the parks into neighborhoods in search of food. Mr. Roseman, a park visitor and volunteer, added that before the program began, there were so many deer at Sharon Woods that conflicts between deer and humans were common, and that the program reduced the deer population to a safe level for both deer and park visitors.

### **Resolutions**

- #6061** AUTHORIZING INCREASES IN APPROPRIATION AUTHORITY FOR THE GENERAL FUND (FUND 27) AND CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS FUND (FUND 29) FOR THE BLACKLICK WOODS CANOPY WALK AND ACCESS TOWER  
The Board authorized Metro Parks' Finance Department to complete any remaining purchase orders from 2022 to specific vendors totaling \$50,000 or more.
- #6062** AUTHORIZING A CHANGE ORDER FOR THE BLACKLICK WOODS CANOPY WALK AND ACCESS TOWER  
The Board authorized Metro Parks' Finance Department to open annual purchase orders with specific vendors totaling \$50,000 or more, allowing park staff to begin to purchase equipment, contract services and start on other business.
- #6063** AUTHORIZING THE PURCHASE OF NEW GAS-POWERED GOLF CARTS FOR THE BLACKLICK WOODS GOLF COURSES  
The Board authorized Metro Parks to acquire new golf carts for the Blacklick Woods Golf Course to keep up with demand. Mr. Alex asked if Metro Parks had considered using electric vehicles. Mr. Peck answered that staff had used electric vehicles in the past but due to the volume of use at the Golf Course, electric golf carts were not sustainable.
- #6064** AUTHORIZING THE PURCHASE AND INSTALLATION OF SECURITY CAMERAS AT MULTIPLE LOCATIONS  
The Board authorized Metro Parks to purchase security cameras and an integrated system through the Omnia purchasing co-operative to address safety concerns in multiple parks.

- #6065 AUTHORIZING SUBMISSION OF AN APPLICATION TO THE CLEAN OHIO GREEN SPACE CONSERVATION FUND FOR PROPERTY IN FRANKLIN COUNTY  
The Board authorized Metro Parks to submit a grant to Round 17 of the Clean Ohio Greenspace Program for property in Brown Township.
- #6066 AUTHORIZING THE PURCHASE OF REAL ESTATE OWNED BY SHELLY AND SANDS INC FOR PARK LAND ALONG BIG WALNUT CREEK IN HAMILTON TOWNSHIP, FRANKLIN COUNTY  
The Board authorized Metro Parks to enter into a contract with Shelly and Sands, Inc. for approximately 106 acres of land adjacent to the Hoover Y property in Hamilton Township.
- #6067 AUTHORIZING THE GRANT OF A TEMPORARY EASEMENT TO THE CITY OF COLUMBUS  
The Board authorized Metro Parks to grant a temporary easement to the City of Columbus in order to install grading improvements at the intersection of Dublin Granville and Ulry Road. Mr. Alex abstained from voting on this resolution due to his work with the City.

**Other Business**

None.

**Adjournment:**

Mr. Alex asked if there was a motion to end the meeting. Mr. Hadden made a motion, seconded by Mr. Alex, and the Board voted to adjourn the meeting at 3:54 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Approved by the Board of Park  
Commissioners:

  
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Tim Moloney, Executive Director

  
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Chair