

Minutes of the 931st meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners of the Columbus and Franklin County Metropolitan Park District, held at 2:57pm on May 16, 2023 at Sharon Woods Metro Park, 6911 Cleveland Avenue, Westerville, OH 43081.

Present

Commissioners: Mr. Hadden, Mr. McCue

Staff: Mr. Baugess, Mr. Billow, Ms. Boniface, Ms. Chatfield-Rohrbaugh, Ms. Christian, Ms. Hall, Mr. Hamilton, Ms. Ingram, Mr. Kaderly, Mr. Kasnyik, Ms. Lackey, Mr. Laughbaum, Mr. McGivern, Mr. Moloney, Mr. Morrison, Mr. Peck, Mr. Ramey, Ms. Shaw, Ms. Snyder, Ms. Strosnider, Mr. Studenmund, Ms. Telfer, Mr. Woodard

Legal Counsel: Mr. Franzmann

Guests: Mr. David Roseman, guests of park rangers and Sharon Woods Volunteer staff, including:

Ms. Marie Dower, Ms. Mary Louise Hudson, Ms. Ann Litt, Mr. Bob Litt, Mr. Terry Nichols, Ms. Beth Pompey

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 April 18, 2023 Board Meeting

Mr. McCue made a motion to approve the minutes of the April 18, 2023 Board Meeting. Mr. Hadden seconded the motion and the minutes were approved.

Public Comment: Ms. Ann Litt, a longtime volunteer with Sharon Woods Metro Park, introduced herself and asked if Metro Parks was planning to bring back the popular summer concert series at Inniswood Metro Park, which had been suspended during COVID-19.

Mr. Josh Laughbaum, Manager of Park Operations, stated that the summer concert program had returned to Inniswood last year and will be returning for 2023. A monthly series is currently planned.

Mr. David Roseman, a longtime trail volunteer and avid area cyclist, introduced himself and stated that he is excited for the Annehurst Connector to the Sharon Woods Multi-Use Trail, and that he hopes more community connection trails will be on the parks' agenda in the future. Mr. Roseman asked if the Multi-Use Trail at Sharon Woods will become a one-way bike trail (no, it will not) and if the Board would consider updating signage on the Greenway Trails at bridges, intersections and other landmarks in order to improve public safety.

The Board thanked Mr. Roseman for his comments. Mr. Peck said that the Operations department would continue to work on trail priorities.

Disbursement Resolution #6082

Mr. McCue moved for the approval of the Disbursement Resolution for the April 2023 invoices. Mr. Hadden seconded the motion and the Board approved the resolution. A copy of Resolution No. 6082 is attached to these minutes as part hereof.

Staff Reports

Administration

Mr. Moloney updated the Board on several initiatives. Metro Parks is focusing on expanding its Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) hiring practices and programs and has met with Columbus Public Schools (CPS) to discuss opportunities to collaborate and develop avenues for CPS students to become employed with Metro Parks. Staff is also exploring a program modeled on the Columbus Promise Program that CPS has with Columbus State Community College.

Staff also met with representatives from the Zimmer development and the City of Columbus to discuss that project. Metro Parks is working on options for the developer that preserve park operations at Scioto Audubon Metro Park. Metro Parks is also working to ensure that any option presented to and accepted by Zimmer is not changed at a later date.

Mr. Moloney also provided information on two proposed changes to Ohio tax law, which are being considered as part of the current round of State budget negotiations. Both proposed changes would affect agencies such as park districts, which are funded through levies. The first proposed change would eliminate replacement levies, requiring levy-funded agencies to either put renewal or new levies on ballots. Metro Parks and other similar agencies have concerns that this change will confuse voters and make it more difficult to pass levies.

The second proposed change is to the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) system, which is an economic development mechanism available to local governments; the proposed change would allow municipalities to extend TIFs implemented prior to 2009 for another ten to fifteen years. Doing so would shrink the pool of tax dollars available to levy-funded agencies such as Metro Parks. Both of these changes have passed the Ohio State House of Representatives, but not the Senate.

Mr. Moloney has been in discussions regarding these concerns with state legislators, and thanked Senator Stephanie Kunze for the amendments to the budget she put forward, which would remove both proposed changes. Mr. Moloney stated that Metro Parks does its best to represent the interest of Franklin County taxpayers at the Statehouse.

Mr. McCue asked if any agencies would be exempt from changes to the TIF program. Mr. Moloney said that only public school would be exempt, but other agencies that would be affected, including libraries, have not raised concerns to the legislature.

Operations

Mr. Peck introduced the Board to Mr. Vinnie Billow, Park Manager for Sharon Woods, who introduced his staff, who in turn introduced some of the Sharon Woods volunteers who were in attendance. Several volunteers, including Ms. Ann Litt and Ms. Mary Louise Hudson, have been volunteers for more than twenty-five years. Ms. Alli Shaw, a Park Naturalist, thanked the volunteers for their service.

Mr. Peck also provided some updates on Sharon Woods' ongoing projects. The Multi-Use Trail (MUT) is in the process of being repaved. Several parking lots have been paved and the

Annehurst Connector Trail, which will connect the Annهورst neighborhood of Westerville to the MUT, is also being paved.

In the parks, a busy construction season is underway. The Roving Crew has moved operations to Hoover Y to work on preliminary park development. Several new playgrounds have been installed across the parks, including playgrounds at Highbanks and Battelle Darby creek. Repairs and upgrades to the Blacklick Woods Nature Center have begun, as has construction on the Blacklick Woods Canopy Walk. Several other paving projects are underway, including paving the Tall Pines parking lot at Walnut Woods, trail repair at Highbanks and other projects.

As for ongoing projects, the Scioto Grove fire tower is ready to put up once permits for the concrete footers are received from Grove City. At Quarry Trails, the office building and maintenance building have been installed. Site preparations are being made for a cold storage building. The Via Ferrata is now open to the public, though access is currently limited to Metro Parks-guided programs only.

Finally, Mr. Peck was pleased to report that the Blacklick Woods Golf Course experienced a record-breaking month. April 2023 revenues were up 45% over the five-year average. Mr. Peck also introduced Mr. Willis Woodward, a Park Ranger who was part of the inaugural Columbus Schools Initiative (CSI) internship program, and is now preparing to swear in as a fully-commissioned Park Ranger with Metro Parks.

Finance

Mr. McGivern's staff has also been busy with projects. Several dozen purchases orders were entered in April as parks and Operations staff began the busy spring and summer seasons.

Mr. McGivern's team also continues to work on upgrading Metro Parks' IT security, with new technology in place to keep financial systems secure, up to date and efficient. Mr. McGivern reiterated that the Golf Course has been busy, with Finance seeing several repeat customers.

Human Resources

Ms. Telfer updated the Board on Metro Parks' annual seasonal hiring initiatives. Fifty-three of fifty-four seasonal employees met on Monday, May 15 to begin seasonal training. Seasonal staff will continue training at their assigned parks.

Camp and high school intern orientations are scheduled for early June. Metro Parks has also been extremely successful in filling several park ranger vacancies; a ranger-specific job fair held in April has yielded twelve offers of full-time employment, with rangers recruited there expected to start in late May or early June.

Resolutions

#6083 APPOINTMENT OF PARK RANGERS

The Board authorized Metro Parks appoint Ms. Cara Chatfield-Rohrbaugh and Mr. Willis Woodward as Park Rangers, following their completion of the Ohio Peace Officers academy and commission through said academy. Ms. Chatfield-Rohrbaugh and Mr. Woodward were sworn in as Park Rangers.

#6084 AUTHORIZING THE REPLACEMENT OF SURETY BONDS FOR SPECIFIC PERSONNEL WITH FAITHFUL PERFORMANCE OF DUTY INSURANCE COVERAGE

The Board authorized Metro Parks' Finance department to replace insurance coverage previously covered by a surety bond with a specific policy covering employee dishonesty and faithful performance of duty. This change is undertaken following Resolution No. 6077, which updated Metro Parks' insurance coverage.

#6085 DECLARING AN EMERGENCY AND AUTHORIZING REPAIRS TO THE HEADQUARTERS ELEVATOR

The Board declared an emergency related to a failure of the elevator at the Metro Parks Headquarters building, and authorized Metro Parks to enter into a time and materials contract with Gable Elevator in order to repair the elevator and expediently restore function.

Other Business

None.

Adjournment:


Mr. Hadden asked if there was a motion to end the meeting. Mr. McCue made a motion, seconded by Mr. Hadden, and the Board voted to adjourn the meeting at 3:26 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Approved by the Board of Park
Commissioners:



Tim Moloney, Executive Director



Chair