

Minutes of the 934th meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners of the Columbus and Franklin County Metropolitan Park District, held at 3:00 pm on August 8, 2023, at Beech Maple Lodge, Blacklick Woods Metro Park, 6975 East Livingston Avenue, Reynoldsburg, OH 43068.

Present

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

Staff: Mr. Berkebile, Mr. Bugh, Ms. Flecker, Ms. Heist, Ms. Ingram, Mr. Kaderly, Ms. McClintok, Mr. McGivern, Mr. Moloney, Mr. Storts, Mr. Studenmund

Legal Counsel: None.

Guests: None.

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 July 18, 2023 Board Meeting

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

Public Comment: None.

Disbursement Resolution #6093

Mr. Hadden moved for the approval of the Disbursement Resolution for the July 2023 invoices. Mr. Alex seconded the motion and the Board approved the resolution. A copy of Resolution No. 6093 is attached to these minutes as part hereof. Mr. McCue abstained from the vote.

Staff Reports

Administration

Mr. Moloney provided updates about ongoing talks with the Zimmer Development Group and the City of Columbus regarding Zimmer's project adjacent to Scioto Audubon. Talks are still ongoing to address a variety of concerns with Zimmer and Metro Parks is negotiating how to resolve stormwater issues, the grant of a roadway easement, Zimmer's desire to remove several trees and other issues related to the project. Metro Parks wants the City of Columbus to be involved in these discussions.

Metro Parks is also working with the City to resolve the question of which regulatory body should issue permits for Metro Parks' development within city limits. Metro Parks' attorneys (Squire Patton Boggs) have issued a strong opinion regarding this question; Squire Patton Boggs believes that Metro Parks, as an agency designated by the Ohio Revised Code, is under the permitting authority of the State of Ohio, not the City of Columbus. Metro Parks appreciates its relationship with the City, but currently is struggling to move several projects forward due to delays in the City permitting process. Such projects, including the Blendon Woods trail connection to Cherry Bottom Road across City property (approximately six feet of trail) and the

installation of restrooms at Quarry Trails Metro Park, have been delayed by several years due to these permitting disputes and are affecting visitor experiences.

Operations

Mr. Peck introduced the Board to Ms. Jessica McClintock, Park Manager at Blacklick Woods. Ms. McClintock introduced her staff and shared several projects with the Board. The Canopy Walk adjacent to the Blacklick Woods Nature Center is currently in construction and generating high amounts of visitor interest. The access tower for the elevator, which will make the Canopy Walk inclusive to visitors of all ages and abilities, has been completed and over 140 telephone poles have been installed. Framing of the canopy structure is expected to begin this month.

Mr. Peck added that Blacklick Woods is both the oldest and one of the busiest Metro Parks in the system. Blacklick Woods has experienced record attendance numbers this summer and is popular with families.

Other projects are also underway in the middle of a busy construction season. The fire tower at Scioto Grove has been completed and will open to the public later this month, following a formal dedication ceremony. Security cameras are being installed at several parks to help Metro Parks prevent and solve vehicle break-ins.

Two of Metro Parks' largest annual events are coming up; WAG!Fest, which is hosted at Prairie Oaks and draws several thousand human and canine visitors, is scheduled for August 26, 2023, and SciotoFest, the annual celebration at Scioto Audubon, is scheduled for September 15-17.

Other development projects also continue. Metro Parks is in a holding pattern at Great Southern as several agencies, including American Electric Power, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, the City of Columbus and private businesses, discuss how best to collaborate on an easement that would allow Metro Parks to build the Scioto Trail between Great Southern and US-104. A clean-up event was hosted at Great Southern (and Three Creeks) to start removing trash and large debris items from the area.

Mr. Alex asked what the status was of the proposed easement between AEP and Metro Parks, which would allow AEP to place power lines on Metro Parks' land in exchange for a trail corridor. Mr. Peck stated that ongoing conversations with both AEP and ODNR (which owns the land leased to AEP) are good. AEP is working to determine where exactly they would need to place their lines in order to protect them from future flood events.

Finance

Mr. McGivern updated the Board on Finance's month, which included over 1,000 VISA transactions across the park district as park staff purchases small equipment items, materials for programs, fuel and other things to keep the parks running. Metro Parks has locked in propane rates for 2024 and the Finance team is preparing to switch the reservations system over to a new interface later this month. The conduit for the fiber optic project at Scioto Grove Metro Park has been installed; the park is waiting on Spectrum for fiber, and then this project will be complete.

Human Resources

The Columbus Schools Internship (CSI) program finished its 2023 season at the end of July. CSI participants were able to finish their summer by meeting with Columbus City Schools

administration to talk about the program and their experiences. Ms. Telfer thanked all of the park staff who participated in the program this year.

Human Resources is also working on setting up an earn-to-learn work study program with Columbus State Community College. This program would allow CSCC students to work for Metro Parks while earning their associate's degree.

Ms. Telfer added that, due to the success of a Park Ranger career fair hosted earlier this year, Human Resources is considering hosting a Park Technician job fair to fill some tech vacancies. Mr. Moloney added that, aside from several open park technician positions, Metro Parks' full-time positions are fully staffed.

Resolutions

#6103 AUTHORIZING THE GRANT OF EASEMENTS TO OHIO POWER COMPANY FOR PROPERTY LOCATED AT ROCKY FORK METRO PARK
The Board authorized Metro Parks grant easements to Ohio Power Company (OPC) along Walnut Road at Rocky Fork Metro Park in return for fair market compensation.

#6104 AUTHORIZING ENTERING INTO A CHANGE ORDER WITH SETTERLIN BUILDING COMPANY FOR THE BLACKLICK WOODS CANOPY WALK CONSTRUCTION
The Board authorized Metro Parks to enter into a change order with Setterlin Building Company for additional materials and labor related to the Canopy Walk project at Blacklick Woods.

Mr. Peck provided more information about this change order. The project has been a learning curve for both Metro Parks and Setterlin, as neither has built a Canopy Walk. Setterlin contracted with another group, Adventure Designs, that has experience with similar projects and it was this group that recommended a more extensive framing structure, requiring additional materials and labor. Metro Parks is working with Setterlin to make sure that the change order is accurate. A late fall 2023 opening is planned.

Other Business

None.

Adjournment:

Mr. Alex 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 3:22 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Tim Moloney, Executive Director

Approved by the Board of Park
Commissioners:



Chair