

Minutes of the 939<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners of the Columbus and Franklin County Metropolitan Park District, held on Tuesday, December 19, 2023 at Innis House, Inniswood Metro Gardens, 940 South Hempstead Road, Westerville, OH 43081.

### **Present**

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

Staff: Ms. Fleischer, Ms. Hyatt, Ms. Ingram, Mr. Laughbaum, Mr. Kaderly, Mr. Kasnyik, Mr. Knowles, Mr. McGivern, Mr. Moloney, Mr. Peck, Mr. Studenmund, Ms. Jen Snyder, Ms. Jill Snyder, Ms. Telfer

Legal Counsel: Mr. Franzmann

Guests: Mr. Bob and Ms. Ann Litt, Mr. John Metzger, 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 November 21, 2023 Board Meeting**

Mr. McCue made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 21, 2023 Board Meeting. Mr. Hadden seconded the motion and the minutes were approved.

### **Minutes of the December 4, 2023 Budget Meeting**

Mr. McCue made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 4, 2023 Budget Meeting. Mr. Hadden seconded the motion and the minutes were approved.

### **Public Comment**

Mr. David Roseman thanked park staff and the Board for ongoing projects to build out bike and pedestrian infrastructure in the region. He stated that he hopes for more connections between regional trails, parks and neighborhoods in the coming years. Ms. Ann Litt also thanked the Board and park staff for their work.

### **Disbursement Resolution No. 6128**

Mr. Hadden moved for the approval of the Disbursement Resolution for the November 2023 invoices. Mr. Alex seconded the motion and the Board approved the resolution. Mr. McCue abstained. A copy of Resolution No. 6128 is attached to these minutes as part hereof.

### **Staff Reports**

#### **Administration**

Mr. Moloney recapped 2023 for the Board and updated them on several projects. Staff has submitted a grant application to the Ohio Statehouse for State Capital Improvement funds to help fund development at Great Southern Metro Park and along the Scioto Trail extension. Mr. Moloney has been working with State Representatives regarding this project. Staff also met with members of the Franklin County Township Association to touch base on parks and projects in townships.

The tree-cutting issue on a conservation easement at Clear Creek Metro Park is ongoing. Metro Parks' legal counsel has met to discuss strategies. Metro Parks believes that Camp Wyandot is in direct violation of the conservation easement, which prohibits the cutting of trees for any commercial or non-safety purpose. The Ohio Public Works Commission, which funded part of the acquisition of the easement through the Clean Ohio program, has taken a strong stance against the cutting as well.

Metro Parks is in the process of conducting interviews and hiring a Construction Manager, who will be part of the Planning & Design department. The Construction Manager will help park staff oversee construction projects, coordinate bid packages and handle other construction-related duties.

Finally, Mr. Moloney thanked the Board and thanked park staff for an excellent year. He thanked visitors for continuing to support and enjoy the parks.

### **Operations**

Mr. Peck introduced Mr. Bryan Knowles, Public Gardens Manager, who in turn introduced his staff. Inniswood Metro Gardens, the only dedicated garden in the park district, sees over 700,000 visitors annually. Mr. David Roseman, a member of the public, asked Mr. Knowles if there were any plans to build a trail connection between the Chipmunk Chatter Trail and Hempstead Road. Mr. Peck answered that such a connection was possible and would be reviewed in the future.

Mr. Peck also introduced Mr. Stefan Bruch, one of Metro Parks' Second Shift Supervisors, who helps manage ranger staff across the park district on weekends and during second shift. Mr. Bruch had assisted with an incident at Inniswood relating to several teenagers attempting to start fires within the park. One such attempt resulted in a woodland fire that was put out by Westerville firefighters. Ranger staff continues to respond to a variety of incidents in the parks.

Metro Parks is preparing for winter operations, including setting up plow crews, winterizing shelters, restrooms and equipment, preparing sled hills and skating ponds and preparing for the popular Winter Hike Series. Construction at the Blacklick Woods Canopy Walk continues. Metro Parks is also preparing to close with Invenergy on a buffer property between Metro Parks' property at Battelle Darby Creek Metro Park and the Invenergy Pleasant Valley Solar project.

Mr. Alex asked if Metro Parks would be planting vegetation to act as a buffer between individual solar panels. Mr. Peck and Mr. Kevin Kasnyik, Resource Manager, clarified that Metro Parks does not have the rights to plant a buffer on Invenergy's property, but will be planting buffer vegetation on Metro Parks' property once the property is acquired. Invenergy is supposed to maintain buffer vegetation on their site and Metro Parks has advised on seed mixes.

Finally, Mr. Peck stated that development at Bank Run Metro Park is ongoing and moving along nicely. Several projects there have been completed.

## **Finance**

Mr. McGivern and his staff are preparing to close 2023. A resolution regarding year-end appropriation adjustments will go before the Board later in the meeting. The Finance team is also preparing a forecasting model to project Metro Parks' finances through the end of the current levy period. The levy will be up for renewal or replacement in 2028.

## **Human Resources**

Ms. Telfer and her team have been heavily involved in the hiring process for the Construction Manager position. Metro Parks will be hosting a park ranger job fair at the end of January to help fill open part- and full-time ranger positions. Performance evaluations, which are completed annually, are underway across the park district.

Mr. Alex asked if Human Resources had made any headway regarding Issue 2, which legalized the use of recreational marijuana within the State of Ohio. Ms. Telfer and Mr. Peck stated that, while Metro Parks has no desire to be at the "cutting edge" of how Issue 2 will be regulated and enforced for park visitors, Metro Parks is closely watching the Statehouse and other local agencies. Metro Parks is working on its internal policy regarding pre-employment and post-accident drug testing to reflect changes as related to the law.

## **Resolutions**

- #6129      REQUESTING TAX ADVANCES FOR 2024  
The Board authorized Metro Parks to request tax advances from the Franklin County Auditor and County Treasurer for the 2024 calendar year.
- #6130      AUTHORIZING APPROPRIATION ADJUSTMENTS WITHIN THE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS FUND (FUND 29) AND THE GOLF COURSE FUND (FUND 30)  
The Board authorized Metro Parks to transfer unused funds from Fund 29, Metro Parks' Capital Improvements budget, to the Golf Course Fund, Fund 30, for non-personnel expenses that may exceed 2023 projections.
- #6131      AUTHORIZING THE PURCHASE OF TRACTORS  
The Board authorized park staff to purchase two tractors to support park operations.
- #6132      AUTHORIZING THE PURCHASE OF VEHICLES  
The Board authorized park staff to purchase four pick-up trucks, three SUVs and one utility truck to support park operations within the district.

## **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 3:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Approved by the Board of Park  
Commissioners:

  
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Tim Moloney  
Executive Director

  
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Aryeh Alex, Chair