

Minutes of the 942nd meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners of the Columbus and Franklin County Metropolitan Park District, held at 3:00pm on Tuesday, March 19, 2024 at The Grove, Scioto Grove Metro Park, 5172 Jackson Pike, Grove City, OH 43123.

Present

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

Staff: Ms. Boniface, Mr. Bosworth, Mr. Bruch, Mr. Eplin, Mr. Fortman, Ms. Ingram, Mr. Lako, Mr. Laughbaum, Mr. Kaderly, Mr. Kelly, Mr. McGivern, Mr. Moloney, Mr. Peck, Mr. Studenmund, Ms. Telfer

Legal Counsel: Mr. Franzmann

Guests: Franklin County Probate Judge, Honorable Jeffrey D. Mackey

Mr. McCue 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 February 20, 2024 Board Meeting

Mr. Alex made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 20, 2024 Board Meeting. Mr. Hadden seconded the motion and the minutes were approved.

Public Comment

None.

Disbursement Resolution No. 6148

Mr. Alex moved for the approval of the Disbursement Resolution for the February 2024 invoices. Mr. Hadden seconded the motion and the Board approved the resolution. Mr. McCue abstained. A copy of Resolution No. 6148 is attached to these minutes as part hereof.

Staff Reports

Administration

Mr. Moloney updated the Board on several projects. Staff has met with members of the State legislature, including Senator Michele Reynolds, to discuss Metro Parks' application for State Capital Improvement Funds to support development at Great Southern Metro Park and along the Scioto Trail. Senator Reynolds represents the district in which Great Southern Metro Park is located.

Staff also entered into an agreement with the City of Hilliard regarding maintenance and operation of the Heritage Rail Trail. Metro Parks has previously operated and maintained the trail between Heritage Dog Park and Cemetery Pike; under the new agreement, Metro Parks will assume responsibility for the operation of the trail between the Heritage Dog Park and downtown Hilliard, as well as any future extensions of that trail to Quarry Trails Metro Park and into downtown Columbus.

Mr. Moloney stated that representatives of ABC/Channel 6 reached out to Metro Parks regarding tree/plant removal along the Heritage Trail near Homestead Metro Park, following neighbor concerns. Metro Parks removed Japanese/bush honeysuckle, which is highly invasive, from the area as part of the district's ongoing invasive species management plan. Native trees were not cut down as part of that project.

Finally, Mr. Moloney provided updates on the ongoing easement violation at Camp Wyandot, adjacent to Clear Creek Metro Park. Staff has been in regular communication with members of the Camp board and leadership staff regarding the next steps that will be taken to address the issue.

Operations

Mr. Peck introduced Mr. Kurt Fortman, Park Manager for Scioto Grove, who introduced his staff and updated the Board on the park and some of its projects. Scioto Grove is one of Metro Parks' newest parks, opening in 2016. In the coming year staff plans to make improvements to the popular backpacking trail within the park, engage in a large tree-planting project and continue to offer programs to the public, including archery, kayaking, overnight camping and access to the new fire tower, which was installed last year.

Mr. Peck updated the Board on the Blacklick Woods Golf Course breezeway project, which is now ongoing. He requested the approval of additional funds as field adjustments to the project scope have been made.

Mr. Peck and Mr. Moloney have met with Ms. Pam Tinsley and Ms. Jessica Bennett, who attended last month's Board meeting and requested that Metro Parks consider more adaptive and accessible spaces for both children and adults. Staff has set up an additional meeting with them for later this month.

The Operations department is also in the middle of developing an operational plan for the total solar eclipse, which takes place April 8, 2024. Five Metro Parks are in the path of totality. Staff has begun to distribute free solar eclipse glasses at Nature Centers, programs and eclipse-focused events. If there is weather suitable for viewing the eclipse, as many as 1.5 million visitors are expected in the state.

Mr. Peck also introduced Mr. Dan Kaderly and asked him to speak about the training process for full-time rangers, as Mr. Kaderly was accompanied by Mr. Drew Lako, the newest full-time ranger for Three Creeks Metro Park.

Metro Parks' Field Training Officer (FTO) program is several weeks long and allows full-time rangers to be trained in policies, procedures, driving, emergency response and other areas by experienced ranger staff. After completing this program, rangers are then eligible to be sent to the Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy (OPOTA) to be commissioned.

Mr. Moloney asked Mr. Kaderly and Mr. Bruch, Second Shift Supervisor, to discuss efforts at Great Southern Metro Park regarding law enforcement and management. Mr. Bruch described efforts to cut down on vandalism, ATV use, illegal dumping and other activities that were common on the property before Metro Parks purchased the land. Metro Parks, which usually issues fewer than twenty-five citations across the entire district in the course of the year, has issued nine citations at Great Southern alone this year.

Mr. Kaderly added that staff is hard at work transforming Great Southern into a park. Staff has been busy putting in amenities and preparing for trail and parking lot paving, which will take place later this year. Staff has also worked to build and maintain positive relationships with the area's unhoused population. Metro Parks regularly works with outreach groups to provide resources to assist this population with finding housing.

Finance

Mr. McGivern's team completed financial statements for the Auditor's Office ahead of schedule; typically, this process is not completed until May. The Finance team also conducted its annual review of Metro Parks' banking services.

Human Resources

Ms. Telfer and her team are in the midst of seasonal hiring. Staff has attended several job fairs and is hiring for seasonal technicians, rangers, camp counselors and naturalist staff. Seasonal orientation is scheduled for May 13.

The Columbus Schools Internship (CSI) program is also preparing for its 2024 season, which begins in June and runs for eight weeks in the summer. This program is geared towards providing high school students in Columbus City Schools with training for and opportunities in the field of parks, recreation and natural resource management.

Mr. Alex shared praise for the CSI program with staff; he had recently met a fresh graduate from The Ohio State University's School of Natural Resources program who credited the CSI program with getting her interested in the field.

Quarry Trails

Mr. Dan Kaderly, Park Operations Manager, shared a report on the progress made in building Quarry Trails Metro Park with the Board. Quarry Trails has been open for two years. Last year, park staff opened several amenities, including the dog park, the Via Ferrata and a park office. Over 730 visitors participated in Via Ferrata climbs. Staff has planted over 200 trees, installed giant hammocks and added several swinging benches to scenic areas around the park. Visitation has increased thirty-eight percent (38%) since the park opened.

2024 projects at Quarry Trails include a new parking lot, several trail improvements, bridge repair to the railroad truss bridge over the Scioto River and pumps in the channel between the two quarry lakes to create more kayaking features.

Resolutions

- #6149** AUTHORIZING TRANSFER OF PROPERTY FOR HIGHWAY PURPOSES TO THE CITY OF COLUMBUS FOR PROPERTY ALONG BRICE ROAD AND ASSOCIATED WITH BLACKLICK CREEK GREENWAY
The Board authorized Metro Parks to transfer 2.122 acres of property adjacent to the Blacklick Creek Greenway Trail to the City of Columbus for highway, drainage and utility improvements.
- #6150** DECLARATION OF AND AUTHORIZATION TO DISPOSE OF SURPLUS EQUIPMENT
The Board authorized Metro Parks to declare several items, including equipment, materials, unclaimed property and other various items, as surplus and further authorized staff to dispose of this surplus through auction, recycling, trade-in, donation and disposal.
- #6151** AUTHORIZING ENTERING INTO A CONTRACT WITH M.O. BRYANT PAVING LLC, DBA BRECK'S PAVING FOR PAVING IMPROVEMENTS AT MULTIPLE PARKS
The Board authorized Metro Parks to enter into a contract with Breck's Paving (through M.O. Bryant Paving LLC) for paving work at five Metro Parks, including Highbanks, Glacier Ridge, Blacklick Woods, Inniswood and Great Southern.

Other Business


The Honorable Judge Jeffery Mackey, Probate Judge of Franklin County, introduced himself and swore George R. McCue in for a three-year term as a Park Commissioner. Judge Mackey thanked the Board for their work. Mr. McCue swore an oath of appointment. A copy of this oath will be kept with other Board records at Metro Parks' Headquarters office.

Adjournment

Mr. McCue asked if there was a motion to end the meeting. Mr. Alex made a motion, seconded by Mr. Hadden, and the Board voted to adjourn the meeting at 3:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Approved by the Board of Park
Commissioners:



Tim Moloney
Executive Director



George McCue, Chair