

METROPARKS OF BUTLER COUNTY  
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS  
WORK SESSION AND REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
Thursday, February 20, 2025

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The MetroParks of Butler County Board of Park Commissioners met in regular session on Thursday, February 20, 2025, at Timberman Ridge MetroPark, 1976 Timberman Road, Hamilton, Ohio 45013

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. by Ms. Trokhan.

**I. Roll Call and Agenda**

Members present: Cynamon Trokhan, Larry Gersbach

Staff present: Zeb Acuff, Rhiana Barrero, Tony Carpenter, Jackie O'Connell, Amy Pellman, Scott Reeve, Suzanne Roth, Shelly Schultz, Chad Smith

**II. Public Comment** Ms. Suzanne Roth introduced to the Board Ms. Julia "Moey" Babek as the new Farm Manager. Ms. Babek has 15+ years of farm management experience and will be an asset to MetroParks.

Mr. House, 2650 Layhigh Road, Hamilton, Ohio distributed a packet of documentation and photos related to the fence project at the Day Farm. The agreement to re-fence his property originally set a project completion of December 31, 2024. Due to weather-related delays and change orders, the timeline was extended to mid-January. Mr. House expressed frustration with the quality of work by the fence contractor and their decision to re-locate the boundary fence onto his property.

Mr. House requested that MetroParks cease the use of herbicides along the fence line, as they could impact his cattle. He also requested that any holes left when the fence is moved be filled with gravel to prevent injury to his cattle, and that brush on MetroParks property be burned due to concerns with it becoming habitat for rodents and bugs.

MetroParks staff will address the issues and schedule a follow-up meeting onsite with Mr. House and Mills Fencing to address concerns, including trees on the property line, the tautness of the fencing, flood gates, and fencing located on his property.

**III. Approval of Minutes**

Motion to approve the December 19, 2024 Work Session and Board Meeting Minutes

Mr. Gersbach moved to approve; Ms. Trokhan seconded.

Motion Passed. Vote: Aye: Ms. Trokhan, Mr. Gersbach

**IV. Consent Agenda**

**a. Donations – December & January**

Motion to approve items on the Consent Agenda

Mr. Gersbach moved to approve; Ms. Trokhan seconded.

Motion Passed. Vote: Aye: Ms. Trokhan, Mr. Gersbach

**VI. Finance**

**a. Schedule of Payables – December 2024**

Mr. Gersbach moved to approve; Ms. Trokhan seconded.

Motion Passed. Vote: Aye: Ms. Trokhan, Mr. Gersbach

**Resolution 01.25**

**b. Schedule of Payables – January 2025**

Mr. Gersbach moved to approve; Ms. Trokhan seconded.

Motion Passed. Vote: Aye: Ms. Trokhan, Mr. Gersbach

**Resolution 02.25**

**c. Budget Amendment**

Budget amendment for Voice of America roadway changes.  
Mr. Gersbach moved to approve; Ms. Trokhan seconded.  
Motion Passed. Vote: Aye: Ms. Trokhan, Mr. Gersbach  
**Resolution 03.25**

**d. December YTD Revenue & Expense Report**

**e. January YTD Revenue & Expense Report**

**f. Quarterly Stander Report**

Mr. Gersbach asked if the remaining Stander Fund balance would be used for a pedestrian bridge at Indian Creek. The cost estimate for the bridge is \$800,000, so MetroParks would need to get a grant to help fund the difference. MetroParks is currently waiting on award notification of a second attempt for a LWCF grant.

**VII. Administrative Reports**

**Development:** Mr. Chad Smith shared that MetroParks will begin contracting with a grant writer to assist in grant applications.

MetroParks is moving forward with the formation of a park foundation and the Hamilton Community Foundation will house the funds. The Friends of MetroParks of Butler County has decided to disband. They have ongoing sources of revenue that they would like transferred to MetroParks. They would like to fund a project with their remaining balance.

The MetroParks Community Grant Program will return in 2025 and will follow the same timeline from last year. Final Reports from the 2024 awardees will be shared with the Board.

**Programming & Education:** Ms. Suzanne Roth discussed the 2024 report; she explained that public programs with historically low attendance and events that weren't mission-based were cancelled, but staff participated in more community events. Most of the MetroParks special events had poor weather which affected attendance numbers.

**Visitor & Event Services:** Ms. Rhiana Barrero shared that Travel Butler County was recently awarded a Wheel the World Certification. The organization provides a guide for travelers with disabilities. MetroParks has two sites that were verified and will be spotlighted on the Wheel the World website – Voice of America MetroPark and Governor Bebb MetroPark.

**Administration:** Ms. Jackie O'Connell shared the social media post about Dan Antenen's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday and his visit to the Antenen Nature Preserve to celebrate.

Ms. O'Connell also shared the 2025 capital projects list and associated funding sources.

She asked for feedback regarding the request to use the Lodge for a USS Cincinnati memorial fundraiser. After a brief discussion, the Board approved the usage, as MetroParks are partners in the project.

Mr. Gersbach asked about the Davidson Woods project. Mr. Acuff stated that construction is to begin this year for a parking lot and a path to the overlook. Ms. O'Connell said there is the opportunity for cultural and historic interpretation at the site and that it is not the intent to do anything too disruptive.

Mr. Gersbach then asked about hunters who "win" a spot in the bow hunting lottery but don't hunt. Mr. Tony Carpentar responded that since this is a conservation program, hunting is encouraged and if a hunter fails to hunt during their timeframe they are not eligible for future lotteries.

**IX. New Business**

**a. Election of Officers**

Ms. Trokhan will remain as President, Mr. Gersbach will remain Vice President.  
Mr. Gersbach moved to approve; Ms. Trokhan seconded.  
Motion Passed. Vote: Aye: Ms. Trokhan, Mr. Gersbach

**b. Investment Management Agreement**

Mr. Gersbach moved to approve; Ms. Trokhan seconded.  
Motion Passed. Vote: Aye: Ms. Trokhan, Mr. Gersbach

**c. Hamilton Parks Conservancy Memorandum of Understanding**

The MOU has been restructured to provide more mission-based support from MetroParks and is more manageable for both agencies; it removes past obligations of large-scale invasive plant eradication by MetroParks to instead focus more on education and basic trail maintenance of officially designated trails.

Mr. Smith briefly reviewed the changes to the MOU and shared that goats may be used for invasive control. Trail maintenance will involve overhanging or encroaching branches and limbs, but maintenance will not include unauthorized trails created by nearby residents.

Mr. Gersbach moved to approve; Ms. Trokhan seconded.  
Motion Passed. Vote: Aye: Ms. Trokhan, Mr. Gersbach

**d. OPRA/ODOT Roadwork Fund Program – Resolution**

Mr. Gersbach moved to approve; Ms. Trokhan seconded.  
Motion Passed. Vote: Aye: Ms. Trokhan, Mr. Gersbach

**e. VOA Entrance Drive Agreement with West Chester**

Ms. O’Connell stated that the Tylersville entrance and parking lot construction project was a recipient of a jointly awarded State Capital grant. The Board did not want to sign the agreement until the bid was returned and they knew the costs to which they were agreeing. The agreement was tabled until the next board meeting.

Mr. Gersbach moved to table; Ms. Trokhan seconded.  
Motion Passed. Vote: Aye: Ms. Trokhan, Mr. Gersbach

**XII. – Adjournment**

Mr. Gersbach moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:25 a.m., Ms. Trokhan seconded.  
Motion Passed. Vote: Aye: Ms. Trokhan, Mr. Gersbach

Adoption: The above minutes are a true and accurate record of the meeting as adopted by the Board of Park Commissioners, MetroParks of Butler County.

Approved:

Attest:

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Presiding Officer of the Board

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jacqueline O’Connell,  
Executive Director/Secretary

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date