

METROPARKS OF BUTLER COUNTY
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, November 21, 2024

The MetroParks of Butler County Board of Park Commissioners met in regular session on Thursday, November 21, 2024, at Timberman Ridge MetroPark, 1976 Timberman Road, Hamilton, Ohio 45013

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:40 a.m. by Ms. Trokhan

I. Roll Call and Agenda

Members present: Cynamon Trokhan, Larry Gersbach, Daryl Nelson

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

II. Public Comment

Rob and Nancy Wile introduced themselves as avid cyclists and supporters of MetroParks. The Wiles expressed their appreciation for the work MetroParks has done.

Mr. Wile highlighted their advocacy for the *Safe Streets and Roads for All Grant Program* and shared it can also be used for trail connections. He stated that the City of Hamilton recently received a \$9.7 million grant through this program. He also mentioned that Clean Ohio grant funds can be used as matching funds.

Mr. Wile then addressed specific concerns regarding the Great Miami River Trail near Headgates Road and the Canal Road parking area. He advocated for the installation of motion-activated crosswalks at both locations and requested repairs to cracks along the trail from Headgates Road to Rentschler Forest MetroPark. Additionally, he suggested adding centerline striping to enhance trail safety. He thanked MetroParks for its ongoing efforts and improvements.

Mrs. Wile shared a personal story about an accident she experienced while cycling on a busy roadway. As a result, she strongly advocates for enhanced connections on the Great Miami River Trail, emphasizing the importance of safe, off-road cycling opportunities.

The Wiles offered their assistance to MetroParks in applying for relevant grant funds and expressed their willingness to support these efforts.

III. Approval of Minutes

Approval of the October 17, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes.

Mr. Gersbach moved to approve; Mr. Nelson seconded.

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

IV. Consent Agenda

a. Donations – October

Mr. Nelson moved to approve; Mr. Gersbach seconded.

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

b. Approval of 2025 Schedule of Regular Board Meetings

Mr. Nelson moved to approve; Mr. Gersbach seconded.

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

VI. Finance

a. Schedule of Payables – October 2024

Mr. Gersbach moved to approve; Mr. Nelson seconded.

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

Resolution No. 30.24

b. October YTD Revenue & Expense Report

A question was raised regarding the total bond amount due. It was noted that the bond was refinanced in 2022. Ms. Schultz will provide an amortization schedule to clarify the repayment details.

VII. Administrative Reports

Human Resources: Ms. Jaime Kimbrough announced that the December All-Staff meeting is scheduled for December 11, 2024, from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at Kemba Credit Union. During the event, the Excellence in Service Awards will be presented. This year there are two recipients of the 10-year award and five recipients of the 5-year award. Ms. Kimbrough extended an invitation to the Board to attend and noted that she will also share the details with Judge Holcomb.

Planning: Mr. Zeb Acuff provided a brief update on recently completed capital projects, including the Elk Creek Connector and the Tylersville Trail at Voice of America MetroPark. He noted that while most work is complete, a few minor tasks remain at VOA.

Mr. Acuff also distributed photos documenting the demolition of the structure at Antenen Nature Preserve. He explained that the project involved several steps, including the removal of 95,000 bees, the disposal of regulated wastes, decommissioning a well, and removing a septic tank. The total cost for the project was approximately \$37,000.

Discussions regarding the Gilmore wetlands property have resumed with the City of Hamilton. The next steps include having the property surveyed and appraised. Mr. Acuff stated that the grant funds already secured for this project must be utilized by spring.

Programming & Education: Ms. Suzanne Roth distributed flyers for the Winter Hike series, scheduled for the first five Saturdays of 2025. She explained that the goal of the series is to connect participants to the MetroParks and each other while activating the parks in the winter months. Registration for the hikes is now available on the MetroParks website, and an article about the series will be featured in the upcoming edition of *The Hamiltonian* magazine.

Administration: Ms. Jackie O'Connell provided a brief update on the pending Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Hamilton Parks Conservancy regarding Miami Woods. She noted that the revised MOU will be restructured to include volunteer projects, programming, invasive species removal, and the use of goats for vegetation management.

Additionally, Ms. O'Connell shared that she, along with Ms. Suzanne Roth and other MetroParks staff, recently met with representatives from Miami University Regionals at Middletown to explore potential partnership opportunities. She expressed there are promising possibilities that could result from a collaboration.

IX. New Business

a. Approval of 2025 Budget

Ms. O'Connell commented that similarly to last year, she and Ms. Shelly Schultz met with staff for budget presentations.

The Board requested additional information on current staff vacancies, a comparison of actual versus amended budget figures, and details on the funds to be on the carry over cash balance and requirements.

Questions were raised regarding the interest rate on the bond and the amount of carry-over needed to meet bond obligations. Ms. Schultz explained that MetroParks will need to establish an investment policy and several other financial policies to facilitate the change to its own fiscal agent.

Ms. Schultz further explained that part of the carry-over funds includes the ARPA funds received in 2024, which must be spent by September 2026.

Pending clarification on the questions regarding payroll, bond obligations, and carry-over funds, the Board approved an interim budget.

Nr, Nelson moved to approve; Mr. Gersbach seconded.

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

Resolution No. 31.24

b. Approval of Resolutions Delegating Authority 2025

1) Authorize Payment of Fees and Penalties

Mr. Gersbach moved to approve; Mr. Nelson seconded.

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

Resolution No. 32.24

2) Delegating Authority Regarding Budget Obligations

Mr. Gersbach moved to approve; Mr. Nelson seconded.

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

Resolution No. 33.24

Commissioner report

There was a brief discussion on a go-live date for MetroParks becoming its own fiscal agent.

A question was raised about the recent attendance at a Reily Township Meeting. Mr. Smith explained that MetroParks had sought input from the Township on the grant proposal for the Indian Creek bridge, so he attended to provide them an update. He stated that the group was supportive and expressed continued interest in the project.

XII. – Adjournment

Mr. Gersbach moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:25 a.m., Mr. Nelson seconded.

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

Mr. Gersbach was sworn in for a second term as a Park Commissioner.

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:

Presiding Officer of the Board

Jacqueline O'Connell,
Executive Director/Secretary

Date