

METROPARKS OF BUTLER COUNTY
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, October 17, 2024

The MetroParks of Butler County Board of Park Commissioners met in regular session on Thursday, October 17, 2024, at the Butler County Historical Society, 327 N 2nd Street, Hamilton, Ohio 45011

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 8:32 a.m. by Mr. Larry Gersbach

I. Roll Call and Agenda

Members present: Cynamon Trokhan (arrived at 8:35 am), Larry Gersbach, Daryl Nelson

Staff present: Zeb Acuff, Rhiana Barrero, Joe Dumyahn, Katie Ely-Wood, Jaime Kimbrough, Jackie O'Connell, Amy Pellman, Suzanne Roth, Shelly Schultz, Chad Smith

III. Approval of Minutes

Approval of the September 19, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes.

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

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

IV. Consent Agenda

a. Donations – September

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

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

VI. Finance

a. Schedule of Payables – September 2024

There was a question on the location of the bridge repair in South Zone. It was confirmed to be the suspension bridge at Renschler Forest MetroPark. A question followed regarding the insurance premium payment; it was noted that it is billed biannually.

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

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

Resolution No. 29.24

b. September YTD Revenue & Expense Report

c. Quarterly Stander Report

Ms. O'Connell asked for feedback on the newer layout of the report. The Board concurred that they like seeing the year-by-year itemized report. Short discussion followed that the plan is to use the remaining funds as a grant match for a bridge at Indian Creek MetroPark.

V. Special Presentation Tyler Wogenstahl, Further Festivals

In attendance from Further Festivals: Tyler Wogenstahl, Joel Herzog, Roger Hahn, Carly Adams Sammy Lennon and Brad Kraemer. Mr. Wogenstahl wanted to present to the Board of Park Commissioners his desire to move the event onto MetroParks property. He distributed a packet with statistics and projected numbers for 2025. Hoping year three will exceed attendance numbers in excess of 100,000. Mr. Wogenstahl said that the VOA Country Music Fest is Southwest Ohio's largest music festival with 30+ artists, 3 stages, food trucks and vendors. Currently, the festival is held on the lawn of the VOA Museum with the Voice of America MetroPark Athletic Complex used for parking and the box office.

Local fire officials said the area could hold up to 90,000 people. Mr. Wogenstahl feels that 35,000 to 40,000 would be tight, especially with the ability to bring or rent chairs.

Mr. Wogenstahl said he feels that there are multiple locations that would work but they would like to be as close to the paved/parking area as possible. As part of the proposal, he suggested adding a park fee to each ticket in lieu of rental.

Mr. Wogenstahl said they had auxiliary parking lots at Lakota East High School, Liberty Center, and MidAtlantic properties. Other businesses in the area also offered parking at their lots for a fee. He also commented that many attendees used ride sharing options.

Mr. Wogenstahl said the current layout is approximately a 20-22 acre rectangular lot with little room to grow. He followed by saying they would like to keep using the museum property for parking, food trucks, etc.

He proposed a location on the Butler-Warren Road side of the park that would encompass Wiggly Field, Cricket Field, cross country course, and the conservation area. This area would allow for an amphitheater layout with room to expand over the next 10 years.

If the festival can't move in 2025, they will follow the plans for the current set up and will limit ticket sales to 40,000 per day. Next year's festival is scheduled for August 7 – 10, 2025.

Ms. Rhiana Barrero commented that with the current arrangement there was minimal foot traffic on the VOA Athletic Complex soccer fields with no damage this year.

If the festival moves onto park property, one of the concerns is MetroParks' current concessionaire contract. They would be given right of first refusal as a food vendor.

Short discussion on safety and working with the Sheriff's department.

Mr. Wogenstahl commented that he continues to work with the Visitors Bureau regarding the economic impact the festival has to the area and can provide previous study information. He anticipates the VOA Country Music Festival to be in the top 10 of music festivals in the country.

Ms. Trokhan commented that we will need to check on National Park Service restrictions. She also thinks it's a short window to host next year on MetroParks property. In a proposal, they would like to see future plans with growth.

The Board would like Mr. Wogenstahl and Further Festivals to gain MetroParks' staff approval before the Board would approve moving the event. If moved onto park property, the expectation would be to utilize the entire park; specifically, the Lodge and parking areas. The group is looking for a new home with space to grow.

The Board doesn't want the festival to have an impact on MetroParks' relationships with current partners and neighbors. They would need to determine if the festival plan meets MetroParks mission, serves the space, and minimizes potential impacts to the park property and habitat. Mr. Wogenstahl stated that their goal is to make it that no one knows that they were there.

Mr. Wogenstahl thanked the Board for their time and he and his team left the meeting.

A brief discussion followed on the potential impacts to the conservation areas and our current contract arrangement.

VII. Administrative Reports

Human Resources: Ms. Jaime Kimbrough shared that Choppertunities, a volunteer invasive species removal program, cleared 30 acres of invasive trees and plants so far in 2024. Another volunteer project involves a group of Badin students cleaning a long-standing dump site at Governor Bebb MetroPark - they have removed bikes, refrigerators, and other miscellaneous trash. The Programming and Education division has also been using volunteers for various programs and field trips and recently started to have them care for program animals. The Trail Ambassadors began seed collection of targeted native trees for Natural Resources; the seeds are then propagated in the greenhouse for future plantings in reforestation areas. Another volunteer group has been removing rubble out of the sub-basement in the Augspurger House at Chrisholm MetroPark.

Operations: Mr. Joe Dumyahn reported that the bowhunting program had 57 applicants of which 36 were selected by lottery to participate. The park locations for this season are Davidson Woods, Day Farm & Thomas Farm. All are closed park areas with multiple hunting zones. Bowhunting season runs Sept 28, 2024 – February 2, 2025. The youth hunt area is at Governor Bebb MetroPark. This is the first year that hunting has been offered to young hunters. In compliance with Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) hunting rules, each minor hunter must be with a licensed hunter 21 years of age or older. As the program is for wildlife management, if participants in last year's program didn't hunt, they were unable to apply this year.

Mr. Dumyahn then gave a short update on MetroParks' propagation program. In 2022, the Friends of MetroParks donated funds to purchase a greenhouse that would be used to propagate native seeds from the parks. In 2024, staff and volunteers planted over 300 trees that were grown in the greenhouse. The targeted native species are white oak, burr oak, red bud, persimmon, paw paw, hazelnut, and Kentucky coffee. These species were chosen because they benefit wildlife the most.

Planning: Mr. Zeb Acuff gave current construction project updates. The Elk Creek connector road pavement was completed last week; painting and seeding should take place soon. The Tylersville Trail at Voice of America MetroPark should finish paving in the next few weeks. A contract was recently signed with a contractor for the residential building at Four Mile Creek MetroPark - Antenen Nature Preserve. The plan is for the house to be demolished by early November. Mr. Acuff reported that MetroParks has received a \$95,000 OKI grant to install EV chargers at Rentschler Forest MetroPark and at the Fieldhouse at the Voice of America MetroPark Athletic Complex. The chargers will be pay-to-use.

Mr. Acuff stated that a meeting has been scheduled with the Hamilton City Manager later this week to discuss the Bypass 4 property.

Administration: Ms. Jackie O'Connell shared that budget meetings began last week. All divisions have presented their budget requests with justifications. The second round involves staff making cuts to balance the budget. Budgeting is now done so that organizational and department strategies are in line with budget allocations.

There was a brief discussion regarding a tribute to Mr. Greg Amend. Ms. Trokhan will follow up with the family after the holidays.

The Northern Cincinnati Foundation recently celebrated its 25th anniversary. As part of the anniversary, they highlighted MetroParks as a partner agency.

The proposed entrance to Voice of America MetroPark near Pepper Pike will be managed by West Chester Township.

As previously reported, MetroParks is transitioning to be its own fiscal agent. Recently the Butler County Auditor's Office informed MetroParks that they can't process agency payroll if they aren't MetroParks' treasurer. Staff have begun researching payroll providers for processing and filing, etc.

Ms. O'Connell then gave an update on the USS Cincinnati project. The group initially wanted to have a grand opening next July. After a few discussions, they have pushed that back to October. The Board does not want to have a grand opening if there are no restrooms and don't want to schedule one until all construction contracts are signed. They feel it is short sighted to have a grand opening that isn't grand. The Visitor's Bureau feels that shade and seating are also required. Ms. O'Connell will draft a letter to send to the parties with these stipulations. Construction has been delayed due to Duke sending

crews to areas hit by the recent hurricanes.

IX. New Business

a. Approval of new Naming Rights Policy

Mr. Chad Smith commented that MetroParks currently doesn't have a naming rights policy but do need one. With the potential of naming facilities, fields, etc. it will be good to have guidelines to follow. Per the Bylaws, the Board doesn't need to approve the policy, but staff would like the Board's feedback. The Board feels that this draft offers flexibility and are happy with what is presented.

Commissioner report

Mr. Nelson's shared that today was his father's birthday.

XI. Executive Session

Mr. Gersbach moved for a roll call vote to enter Executive Session, seconded by Mr. Nelson for the purpose of discussions involving:

Personnel Matters and Land Acquisition or Sale

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

The Board entered into Executive Session at 10:10 a.m.

The Board returned to Regular Session at 10:43 a.m.

XII. – Adjournment

Mr. Gersbach moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:43 a.m., Mr. Nelson seconded.

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

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