

GEAUGA PARK DISTRICT
MINUTES
August 23, 2006

A special meeting of the Geauga Park District Board was held on August 23, 2006 at The West Woods Nature Center in Novelty, Ohio. The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. President Robert McCullough was in the chair. Board member Mark Rzeszotarski was present.

Employees present were:

Tom Curtin, Executive Director
Keith McClintock, Deputy Director
Barb Emch, Executive Secretary
John Hayhurst, Lieutenant Ranger
Paige Hosier, Marketing Director
Bob Lange, Land Steward
John Oros, Natural Resource Manager

Visitors present:

Jan Blair, Newbury Twp. Trustee
Sammie Brickel
Andy Bushman, Munson Twp. Trustee
Charmaine Clark
Beth Cupp
ElmHershberger, Troy Twp. Trustee
Denver Hill
Sofie Horvath
Dan Kramer, ODNR Div. of Wildlife
Tom Korycki
Joe Koziol, The Times Courier
Al Kunz
Marjorie Lind
Michael Kunz
Marc Magill, The Sun Times
Jim Marsic, Montville Twp. Trustee
Glenn Miller, The Maple Leaf
Paul Miller
Bebe Ober
Linda O'Brien
Todd Ray, Munson Twp. Trustee
Diane Ryder, The News Herald
Denver Sallee
Jacqueline Samuel
Ken Shieff
Timotha Sullivan
Jim Swartz
Jim Szeason

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Dr. Rzeszotarski moved to accept the agenda for the meeting.

Mr. McCullough seconded the motion and the roll being called upon its adoption, the vote resulted as follows:

Miss Cope	Absent
Mr. McCullough	Yes
Dr. Rzeszotarski	Yes

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Curtin thanked all of the visitors for coming and told them they would each have an opportunity to speak.

COMMUNICATIONS TO THE BOARD

Mr. Curtin shared a communication from the Aquilegia Garden Club and Perennial Gardeners of Chesterland who wanted to thank the Park District for holding their standard flower show at The West Woods Nature Center in July. They stated that they received many compliments from the visitors who attended their show.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Sofie Horvath of Munson Township expressed concern that the Park District is acquiring more land and questioned the ability of the District to maintain and patrol with adequate staffing. Mrs. Horvath voiced her opposition to the fall controlled hunt and asked the Board to reconsider their decision.

In an effort to answer questions that the visitors may have had, Mr. Curtin asked John Oros to present his proposal for the controlled fall hunt.

Miss Cope arrived at 5:40 p.m.

FALL CONTROLLED HUNT PROPOSAL

John Oros made a presentation about hunting as a wildlife management tool. He stated that land managers and wildlife managers look to ecology, which is the study of the relationships between organisms and their environment. Mr. Oros explained how the white tail deer population relates to the habitats in our parks. He illustrated how the healthy biological carrying capacity of 5-10 deer per square mile has been exceeded on several park lands. He also showed pictures of the result of deer browse on the vegetation in several of the parks. The picture of the Ellerin property showed no seedlings or saplings in the understory. This lack of vegetation could lead to erosion of the soils.

Mr. Oros stated that other methods for culling the deer population have not been successful. Sterilization is no longer approved and it is not possible to relocate the deer. Using sharpshooters is a costly method and Geauga Park District prefers to involve Geauga County residents in the controlled hunt. Mr. Oros explained that the western part of Geauga County (west of State Route 44) is considered an urban deer zone which permits a hunter to take six antlerless deer and one with antlers.

John Oros proceeded to present the following Proposal for 2006-2007 Wildlife Management:

Bow Hunting:

- ❖ Allow bow-hunting for whitetail deer at park properties currently not open to the public. Allow the selected hunter to access the property for a period of one week. Allow one hunter for approximately every 50-acres of park owned.
- ❖ Allow bow hunting at the following parks:
 - Becvar Preserve, 68-acres, 2 hunters (neighbors only) per week.
 - Ellerin Property, 121-acres, 3 hunters per week.
 - Observatory Park, 676-acres, 13 (3 of 13, neighbors only) hunters per week.
 - Sunnybrook Preserve, 73-acres, 2 hunters (neighbors only) per week.
 - Bass Lake Preserve, 488-acres, 9 hunters (neighbors only) per week.
- ❖ The whitetail deer bow season begins September 30, 2006 and ends February 4, 2007. Bow hunting will be closed during all statewide whitetail deer firearm seasons. The firearms season dates are as follows:
 - Youth Gun Season: November 18th and 19th.
 - Statewide Gun Season: November 27th to December 3rd, and December 16th and 17th.
 - Statewide Muzzleloader Season: December 27th to December 30th.

- ❖ Hunters will be allowed to use tree stands that are not permanently fixed to trees. Hunters will be encouraged to utilize bait piles while hunting deer.
- ❖ Hunters will be required to complete a bow-hunter accuracy test at a local archery range. Geauga Park District will request County archery ranges submit qualifications and proposals in writing for conducting the test. We will pick one archery range to conduct this test in cooperation with our Ranger Department thus ensuring range competency. The range will charge for this service at their discretion. We feel this is necessary to ensure hunters can utilize their equipment, thus ensuring success in harvesting whitetail deer.

Fall Turkey Hunting:

- ❖ Allow turkey hunting at Observatory Park during the fall turkey shotgun season starting October 14, 2006 and ending October 29, 2006. The park will be closed to bow-hunting for whitetail deer at this time.

Other Considerations:

- ❖ Hunters will submit their name, age, address, and telephone number on a postcard for random drawing.
 - Individuals under the age of 18 will not be eligible to apply for these hunts. However, adult hunters may be accompanied by one hunter under the age of 18 if both hunters meet all criteria as outlined in this plan including possession of all valid licenses/tags, completion of a Hunter Safety Education Course, and completion of the mandatory bow-hunter accuracy test.
- ❖ Approximately one hunter will be allowed per 50-acres.
- ❖ The hunt(s) will revolve around all rules and regulations as set by Ohio Division of Wildlife and outlined in Ohio Hunting/Trapping Regulations.
- ❖ Geauga Park District uses infrared deer counts, staff experience, and field observations to help justify hunting as a wildlife management tool. The Board of Park Commissioners may consider hunting other species on park land under regulations set by biologists and wildlife management professionals representing Ohio Division of Wildlife and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- ❖ The Natural Resource Management Department will work with the Administrative Department to inform adjacent property owners of the scheduled hunts. We will use these letters to offer neighbors the opportunity to apply for hunts where vehicle parking and access is not available to other County residents.
- ❖ Geauga Park District Rangers and Ohio Division of Wildlife will check hunters accessing park property for any wildlife violations.
- ❖ The randomly drawn hunters will sign a release and indemnification agreement approved by Geauga Park District legal counsel (correspondence Dave Ondrey 9/17/2004). Hunters will then be issued a park permit allowing them to access the properties to hunt.
- ❖ Local conservation organizations (Ducks Unlimited, National Wild Turkey Federation, Whitetails Unlimited) have requested we donate one hunting slot for their annual conservation banquet and fundraiser. Donating one hunting opportunity to a Geauga County organization may help promote Geauga Park District and our role in conservation.

- ❖ Geauga Park District Staff and their immediate families (as defined in the Geauga Park District personnel and policy manual) will not be able to participate in this hunt, as well as future hunting and / or trapping opportunities.

Mr. Curtin opened the floor to comments from the visitors.

Visitors Sammie Berkel, Bebe Ober, Sofie Horvath, Linda O'Brien, and Marjorie Lind voiced opposition to the proposal for a fall controlled hunt.

Tom Koricky, Michael Kuntz, Elmer Hershberger, Todd Ray, and Paul Miller spoke in support of the Park's effort at wildlife management. Two Russell Township residents stated they would like to see hunting in The West Woods as the deer browse severely affects their corn crops.

Denver Salle, Timmy Sullivan, Bill McCullum and Ben Sustin expressed concerns regarding the hunt, but if it was deemed necessary, would prefer to use sharpshooters.

Jim Marsic, neighbor of the Observatory Park property stated that the deer in that area are a problem for school bus drivers who must be sure to slow down while driving on that section of Clay Street. The deer have also negatively impacted his corn crop.

Charmaine Clark, a veterinarian from Russell Township, asked the Board to consider beginning the deer hunting with one park and document what happens.

Dan Kramer, Wildlife Management Supervisor with the Division of Wildlife, complimented the Board on their efforts and recommended that they adopt the proposal.

Miss Cope stated that she is concerned that any citizen would lose faith in the Park District over the culling of wildlife. She added that for several years the Commissioners and staff have studied the issue and have come to the conclusion that we have no choice but to go forward with this decision.

Mr. Curtin thanked the visitors for their comments.

A complete transcript of the public comments is available at the Park District office.

Mr. McCullough made a motion to approve the Proposal for 2006/2007 Wildlife Management as stated above.

Dr. Rzeszotarski seconded the motion and the roll being called upon its adoption, the vote resulted as follows:

Miss Cope	Yes
Mr. McCullough	Yes
Dr. Rzeszotarski	Yes

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. McCullough moved to go into Executive Session at 7:20 p.m. for the purpose of discussing land acquisition matters, personnel issues and pending litigation.

Miss Cope seconded the motion and the roll being called upon its adoption, the vote resulted as follows:

Miss Cope	Yes
Mr. McCullough	Yes
Dr. Rzeszotarski	Yes

The Board took a break from 7:20 p.m. to 7:40 p.m.

The Board returned from Executive Session at 8:05 p.m. The following was discussed for resolution:

Land Acquisition

Munson Township

Dr. Rzeszotarski moved to authorize the Executive Director to enter into negotiations for real property in Munson Township.

Mr. McCullough seconded the motion and the roll being called upon its adoption, the vote resulted as follows:

Miss Cope	Yes
Mr. McCullough	Yes
Dr. Rzeszotarski	Yes

Economic Development Workshop

The Board discussed the proposal for an Economic Development Workshop to be hosted by Geauga Park District. Ted Eubanks, of Fermata, Inc. would be the presenter on the subject of eco-tourism. Chagrin River Partners and the Geauga County Commissioners would partner with the Park District on the costs for this workshop with a commitment of Five Hundred Dollar (\$500.00) each. Total cost is Four Thousand Dollars (\$4,000.00) and Mr. Curtin has requested support in the amount of Two Thousand Dollars (\$2,000.00) from The George Gund Foundation. Elected officials, business leaders, and developers would be invited to attend the event.

Miss Cope expressed concerns over the Park District taking the majority of the expense for the event and would have liked more time to gather information about the presenter and his organization. Mr. Curtin commented that this is an opportunity to guide economic development that will use the assets that we have in our region and preserve the land.

Audit Committee

Dr. Rzeszotarski reported that the Audit Committee held a meeting earlier this afternoon and had a good discussion of high risk areas over which we have little control which could have the potential of impacting park operations and budgets. Examples given were personnel, energy costs, health care, levies, technology and disasters. He added that Michele Pennell, Accountant will be looking into this matter.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

SUNSHINE LAW COMPLIANCE

The rules of the Park Board were complied with by sending notice pursuant to the rules adopted by the Board.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas G. Curtin, Executive Director

Robert McCullough, President