

GEAUGA PARK DISTRICT  
MINUTES  
July 24, 2006

A special meeting of the Geauga Park District Board was held on July 24, 2006 at the Park District office, Chardon, Ohio. The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. President Robert McCullough was in the chair. Board members Betty Cope and Mark Rzeszotarski were present.

Employees present were:

Tom Curtin, Executive Director  
Barb Emch, Executive Secretary  
John Hayhurst, Lieutenant Ranger  
Paige Hosier, Marketing Director  
John Oros, Natural Resource Manager  
Paul Pira, Park Biologist  
Dru Siley, Park Planner  
Aaron Young, Planning Director

Visitors present:

Glen Miller, Maple Leaf  
Diane Ryder, The News Herald

**ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

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

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

**INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS**

Paige Hosier introduced Diane Ryder of The News Herald.

**COMMUNICATIONS TO THE BOARD**

Mr. Curtin shared two communications from recent park patrons. Olive Armfelt wrote to thank the Park District for the use of the Aspen Grove shelter at Big Creek Park and stated that it was very clean. Doug Andrus wrote to comment on the lovely grounds and lodge at The Rookery.

**FROHRING MEADOWS**

Mr. Curtin opened the discussion of the development of Frohring Meadows by asking John Oros to show his presentation on the establishment of the prairie and the process of managing the prairie through monitoring, mowing, and burning.

Mr. Oros stated that he wanted to answer questions that were raised at the recent meeting at Bainbridge Town Hall regarding the development of Frohring Meadows. He addressed the length of time to establish a prairie, the process of prescribed burns, and gave an idea of what the prairie would look like once established through pictures of prairie habitats around the state. John reiterated the recommendations of our partners in this prairie project, the Ohio Division of Wildlife and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, as to the timeline of the application of herbicide, planting, monitoring, mowing, and burning to establish and manage a prairie habitat. He stated that it would take from four to seven years to establish the grasses and flowers that will provide the full color and texture of the prairie.

Mr. Oros went on to explain his certification and experience in managing controlled burns. He completed a training course with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Forestry in 2001 and since then has participated in sixteen prescribed fires of over 150 acres as the Prescribed Fire Manager.

Miss Cope described the recent field trip she and Mr. Oros took to visit prairies and meadows in the northeast Ohio region that have used controlled burns as a management tool. They met with representatives from Cleveland Metroparks and visited sites in Bedford and Brecksville Reservations. Rick Tyler from Cleveland Metroparks stated that they sent out letters to the surrounding neighbors prior to the controlled burns. Miss Cope wanted to get firsthand information from neighbors and talked with several people who had property abutting areas that were burned by Cleveland Metroparks. The response from two neighbors was that they did not recall receiving a letter and that if there was a burn, they were not bothered or even aware of it taking place. The local councilman also lived on the same street. Miss Cope contacted him by phone. He was aware of the project and had received no complaints or expressions of concern.

Miss Cope added that we must carefully prepare our neighbors when we plan to conduct controlled burns. Mr. Oros stated that he has every confidence in the burn crews he has worked with at the Park District. He explained that permits are obtained from the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA), the local Health Department, and local fire departments as well as the ODNR Division of Forestry. Neighbors are notified and call lists are set up to notify residents of the exact date of the burn. Parameters have been developed and Mr. Oros will only conduct a controlled burn when conditions are classified as preferred with respect to weather, temperature, wind, and fuel conditions. He added that plant regeneration can be observed from warm season plants within one to two weeks after the burn. Burns were conducted at Burton Wetlands and Eldon Russell Park this year and no complaints were received.

Mr. Curtin explained that our insurance agent stated that controlled burns from a loss control standpoint require that fire equipment be on the scene, which is the case when the Park District does a controlled burn. The agent added that if the fire jumped onto adjacent property and the local fire department was unable to prevent damage, the Park District's liability coverage would cover the damages. Miss Cope mentioned that Chardon Fire Department is interested in working with us to provide training for their staff in controlled burns.

Mr. Curtin summarized the objections to the development of Frohring Meadows made by the Bainbridge residents at the public meeting on July 13, 2006 at Bainbridge Town Hall. The main points were the park being open until 11:00 p.m., the permission of alcohol in the shelter, electricity and lights in the shelter and restrooms, noise levels, and the site preparation and spraying.

Mr. Curtin explained that he had talked with the Ranger Department regarding the hours of operation. The Rangers did not see a problem with closing the park one half hour after sunset. The early closing time would not interfere with the way they patrol. We could still have evening park-sponsored programs. Dr. Rzeszotarski commented that limiting hours based on solar activity would prohibit access during the late fall and winter months for evening strolls or star gazing. Mr. Curtin stated that we would need to make these changes in park closing times across the board in all parks to maintain consistency, yet he does not feel that it is necessary as we have not had problems. He stated that all parks now close at 11:00 p.m. with the exception of Burton Wetlands, which is designated as a preserve, does not have a shelter, and closes at 9:00 p.m.

Regarding the concern about permitting alcohol in the shelters, Mr. Curtin stated that the Rangers report that we do not have a problem with alcohol in our parks so he sees no reason to consider any change at this time.

Concerns about increased activity, noise, and lights were discussed. Beartown Lakes Reservation is similar to Frohring Meadows in terms of the proximity to neighbors. Mr. Curtin gave usage figures for the shelters at Beartown Lakes Reservation. In 2005, there were a total of fifty-six (56) reservations for the two shelters there. Reservations at the two shelters began in

April with two bookings, and the highest number were June through August, averaging 12 reservations per month. There was only one reservation in November. It would be expected that Frohring Meadows could have from six to twelve reservations per month during the summer months. Dr. Rzeszotarski added that the prairie will provide a visual barrier and sound absorption once it is established.

Mr. Curtin stated that there would be no parking lot lights at Frohring Meadows. The lights from the parking lot to the shelter and restrooms would be on low bollards similar to those at The West Woods. The lights in the shelter would illuminate only the interior of the shelter and the lights outside the restrooms would be pointing down.

Regarding the site preparation and spraying of herbicides, Mr. Curtin stated that he has determined that Mr. Paul Frohring knew that spraying was taking place when the field was farmed. He permitted the man who farmed the field in the 1990's to fill his spraying tanks from the pond on the property. He added that we have been careful to choose the most environmentally safe product that is not soil active and have limited the amount of spraying in comparison to what had been done when the property was farmed. Mr. Curtin stated that if we go out to contract for the project this year then the prairie will be planted this fall. This park will have a habitat that will provide residents with a unique opportunity for educational and enjoyable experiences.

Miss Cope commented that the most significant point that she took from the public meeting was that we did not adequately prepare the Frohring Meadows neighbors for the changes that would be brought about by development of the property. She added that we assumed they were prepared through mailings but in fact the neighbors may have been lulled by a period of little activity on the property. She was troubled by statements that some had lost faith in the Park District and felt that we must increase our efforts to communicate.

Dr. Rzeszotarski pointed out that Frohring Meadows will not open until 2007 so it would not be necessary to make any decision regarding open hours at this time. He stated that the decision needs to be tied to the reservation system which opens up reservations for 2007 beginning November 1, 2006 but would not include Frohring Meadows. More information could be gathered and a decision made next year for the 2008 reservation cycle.

Miss Cope and Dr. Rzeszotarski agreed that the Park District needs to publish educational pieces and conduct programs on the natural resources management processes and tools that the public will be seeing as the Park District grows and develops. Miss Cope added that we need to be overzealous in protecting the value of controlled burns and convey that to our residents through educational pieces and programs.

Mr. Curtin concluded that we will move forward with educational and informational pieces to our residents and give more thought to the implications of making changes to our rules and regulations and the park-wide impact of such changes.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Dr. Rzeszotarski moved to go into Executive Session at 5:25 p.m. p.m. for the purpose of discussing land acquisition matters 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 returned from Executive Session at 5:35 p.m. The following was discussed for resolution:

**Land Acquisition**

**Huntsburg Investments LLC**

**Claridon and Hambden Townships**

Dr. Rzeszotarski moved to authorize the Executive Director to purchase 49.303 acres of real property in Claridon and Hambden Townships from Huntsburg Investments LLC in the amount of Four Hundred Thirty-One Thousand Three Hundred Seventy-Seven Dollars (\$431,377.00).

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

**Geauga Park District Foundation**

Discussion took place regarding the offer by a Geauga Park District Foundation Trustee to use Foundation funds for the services of a public relations firm for the Park District. Dr. Rzeszotarski suggested that we continue to use our own Marketing Department to present educational information through our existing publications, website, and targeted market pieces. Mr. Curtin had not yet had an opportunity to speak to the Foundation Trustee, but would obtain more information. Mrs. Hosier added that she would not be adverse to the idea.

**Piano Donation**

Mr. McCullough thanked Dr. and Mrs. Rzeszotarski for the donation of their piano to the Meyer Center Cherry Room.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 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,

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Thomas G. Curtin, Executive Director

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Robert McCullough, President