

**GEAUGA PARK DISTRICT
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL BOARD MEETING – WORK SESSION
May 8, 2013**

A Special Board Meeting – Work Session of the Geauga Park District Board of Commissioners was held on May 8, 2013 at Big Creek Park, The Meyer Center. The meeting was called to order at 8:07 a.m. President James Patterson was in the Chair. Commissioners Michael Petruziello and Nicholas Fischbach were present.

Employees Present:

Thomas Curtin, Executive Director
Anna McDonald, Executive Secretary
Matt McCue, Strategic Planning Director
Paige Orvis, Marketing and Administrative Services Director
Eileen Smith, Administrative Services Coordinator
Holly Sauder, Volunteer Coordinator
John Oros, Operations Director
Brett Bellas, Maintenance Supervisor
Aaron Young, Planning Director
Diane Valen, Naturalist Services Director
Dan Best, Senior Naturalist
Wayne Kriynovich, OP Naturalist
Judy Bradt-Barnhart, Nature Education Coordinator
Teresa Runion, Special Events Coordinator
Paul Pira, Natural Resource Management Director
Scott Wilson, Chief Ranger
Don Lombardy, Information Technology Manager
Michele Pennell, Chief Financial Officer

Guests:

None

President James Patterson called the meeting to order. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Mr. Petruziello moved to adopt the agenda for the meeting
Mr. Fischbach seconded the motion and the roll being called upon its adoption, the vote resulted as follows:

Mr. Fischbach	Yes
Mr. Petruziello	Yes
Mr. Patterson	Yes

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

No guests were present at the meeting.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Patterson provided background on the purpose for the work sessions: To provide the Board with the opportunity to become more familiar with current, short range and long ranges plans, goals and challenges of each Geauga Park District department.

Strategic Planning

Matt McCue, Director of Strategic Planning, introduced himself and identified his duties as directing the development and execution of a long-term comprehensive plan for the Geauga Park District. Mr. McCue distributed hand-outs to the Board outlining the four phases of the Comprehensive Plan Process.

Phases I and II will include the gathering of data, assessment and analysis of what we do well now, what we need to improve on, the identification of opportunities, trends and review of current and possible future programming . These phases will include outreach to community organizations, county municipalities, stake holders, general public and Park District departments. Phase III will concentrate on drafting the Comprehensive Plan insuring that it ties into the Park District's mission, core values (to be determined), goals and the needs of Geauga County now and in the future. The Board has scheduled an initial meeting to discuss the Park's mission and philosophy that will be used as a basis for development of the core values. Phase IV will be completion and presentation of the Comprehensive Plan to the Board for final approval and implementation.

Mr. McCue informed the Board that he and Mr. Curtin have met with Cleveland Metroparks and Holden Arboretum, both of which have completed Comprehensive Strategic Plans. These organizations provided valuable insight and ideas that will assist the Park District. Mr. Patterson inquired as to the timeline for completion and Mr. McCue advised that Phases I and II are targeted for completion by year end of 2013 and Phase III by year end of 2014. The Board, Mr. Curtin and Matt all expressed the opinion that Board input and feedback are critical to the creation, completion and implementation of the Plan. Mr. Patterson requested quarterly progress updates.

There were general discussions on future programming, park usage and creation based on the needs of residents of Geauga County and school districts. Mr. McCue advised the board that this will be a 'living' document that should be revisited and changed as needed.

Marketing and Administrative Services

Paige Orvis, Director of Marketing and Administrative Services introduced herself and outlined the responsibilities of the Department as marketing and communications, internal and external customer service needs and volunteer coordination. Ms. Orvis introduced Eileen Smith, Administrative Services Coordinator and Holly Sauder, Volunteer Coordinator. Ms. Orvis gave a history of the department's growth, changes and improvements that have occurred over years such as relationship building with the media, quarterly newsletter, social media outreach and brand definition and identification. Ms. Orvis recognized Vicky Liptak (Graphic Designer) for her excellent work in helping to establish brand identity.

Ms. Smith gave an overview of the responsibilities of Administrative Services portion of the department explaining that internal and external customer service are key elements of the department. Administrative Services provides administrative/clerical assistance to all GPD departments as needed, staffs the front visitor desks at The Meyer Center and The West Woods, and manages the Nature Stores.

Ms. Sauder advised that the Park District has approximately 450 volunteers who provide invaluable time to the Park District. 60% of the volunteer hours are for public and school programming. In addition, volunteers assist with Natural Resource Management projects and the Ranger Department as bike patrol members. The Park District has expanded its outreach to increase youth involvement via Park internships, assists with placing Scouts with Operations, Naturalists and NRM for completion of projects and works with local businesses setting up employee service days.

There were discussions regarding the maximization of the EZ Go Cart Tours for county residents, the possible addition of free standing park picnic areas and 'activity' fields, facility fees, percentage of in-county vs. out-of-county facility usage and the distribution method of Park District newsletters.

Operations

John Oros, Operations Director, introduced himself and Brett Bellas, Maintenance Supervisor for the Geauga Park District. Mr. Oros explained that the department structure as having two divisions: Maintenance and Construction with Mr. Bellas overseeing Maintenance (day to day operations and light construction) and Steve George overseeing Construction (more complex construction projects). Mr. Oros stated that he's proud of the fact that everyone in the Operations Department is hands on, provides customer service every day, and it is the Department's responsibility to "put the product on the ground". Mr. Fischbach asked Mr. Bellas to describe his job responsibilities. Mr. Bellas explained that he helps insure the department's APO's (projects) are kept on-task and that assists with problems that arise by communicating with the three foremen on a daily basis and conducting monthly review meetings to insure current projects are on schedule and discuss future ones. Mr. Fischbach inquired into budgeting responsibility. Mr. Oros explained that he oversees the total Operations budget, but that each foreman was responsible for his zone's budget.

Mr. Oros advised the responsibility of the Construction division of Operations was to manage the larger, more heavy-trade skill projects for the Park District such as the Covered Bridge and Shelters. These projects are included in the yearly APO and scheduled accordingly so that completion is on target.

Mr. Oros also explained the each Operations employee has a Park area assigned to him – giving accountability and responsibility for the area to that employee. The employee creates a punch list of what is needs to be done on a day-to-day basis for maintenance and includes a 'what they would like to be done' portion. The employee inspects their area monthly, but actual work is prioritized park-wide by the zone foremen and can be completed by any operations employee. The procedure works well and the employees take pride in seeing that their areas are well taken-care of and managed.

There were discussions regarding the purchase vs. lease of equipment needed to complete Park projects and whether our Park employees were certified to operate construction equipment. Certification/safety training will be looked into for employees who may be required to operate such equipment. Mr. Fischbach inquired if there were replacement and maintenance plans/logs for all Park vehicles and equipment. Mr. Oros advised that there is a rotation plan for replacement of equipment, and maintenance logs are maintained.

Mr. Oros advised that the covered bridge is scheduled to be set up on May 29th, and completion should be by end of August as scheduled. There were general discussions on upcoming projects such as restroom replacements, the 2013-14 Deer Management program, and ongoing Park maintenance.

Planning Department

Aaron Young, Planning Director, introduced himself and advised that his responsibilities included design, development and implementation of capital improvement projects for the Park outside of the general Park maintenance projects, which includes overseeing projects that are in progress (MHT-North and South were given as examples). In addition, the department plans/oversees large Park maintenance projects such as HVAC upgrades and Park paving. Based on the projects the Board approves, it is determined if the Department can complete the project planning in-house or if a third-party is needed to help with design work. Mr. Young advised that in the past five years \$20 million dollars of physical improvements have been completed by the Park District – with a 15% surplus of funds, and that in the past seven years not one project has come in over budget. It is the Planning Department’s responsibility to use the Park money wisely, and that this is done by having a system, sticking to it and planning for projects at least a year-ahead.

Mr. Curtin provided the Board with a copy of the 10-year project plan which gives a starting point when discussing project budgets. Mr. Patterson suggested an additional column that would provide information on the actual bid cost. Mr. Patterson noted that the 10-year plan includes monies for two trial playgrounds, and that plans should be put together on what we want/need so that the budget can be reviewed and put into place for 2014. Mr. Fischbach asked what the initial plan was for the Ellerin Park. Mr. Young stated that the plan was to provide bike trail access, parking, a Shelter, restroom, one-half mile of ADA trail, and a walking trail. The budget is approximately \$500,000 which would increase as additional amenities are added.

The Board recessed for Lunch at 12:00 noon.

The Board reconvened at 12:40 p.m.

Naturalist Services

Diane Valen, Naturalist Services Director, introduced the following staff members: Teresa Runion, Wayne Kriynovich, Judy Bradt-Barnhart and Dan Best. Ms. Valen advised that her report would focus on what is new in the Naturalist Services Department and distributed informational sheets to the Board.

Ms. Valen advised that with the opening of Observatory Park two Naturalists were added to the staff, Wayne Kriynovich and Chris Mentrek who handle most of the programming and staffing at the Park. Programs include stargazing nights, bi-weekly Friday evening programs, special programs and Sunday planetarium shows. Middle school programming has been implemented that is in-line with science standards. The popular Nature Scopes program now services approximately 736 students. Work is progressing on the ‘Something’s Afoot, Why Nature Just Can’t Stay Put’ exhibit scheduled to open at TWW in November, the Interurban display/kiosk at the Rookery is complete, two arts shows are scheduled at The West Woods for 2013 and art shows have been reinstated at the Meyer Center. The Naturalist Services Department has increased exposure to the community by participating in Senior Expos, local community events and parades and the Interurban Open House.

Mr. Patterson asked what type of programming was offered at Senior Expos. Ms Valen explained that it is geared toward encouraging seniors to ‘rediscover’ the parks by supplying programming information, volunteer opportunities, activities/programs they could participate in with grandchildren and information on the EZ Cart tours.

Ms Valen informed that other program expansions included Geocache Days, which are becoming very popular, increased canoe/kayak programs and the Youth Programs which were renamed to bring a freshness and new awareness. The new 'Nature Not to Be Missed' seasonal programming has been well attended and a more in-depth Birding Lecture Series has been added. Staff has been hired for the new Chip Henry Institute Camps that begin in June. The Union Chapel Interpretive Plan is well underway.

There were general discussions related to Union Chapel, overall Park District programming and reservation procedures and the increased requests for school programming. Ms. Valen advised that Observatory Park opened a whole new avenue for school programming. The current OP programming is geared toward 7th and 8th graders and is intended to be a step up from the Nature Scopes programming. The Summer Camp programming and goals were discussed.

Mr. Fischbach asked that the other attendees from the Naturalist Services Department report on their job responsibilities.

Teresa Runion, Special Events Coordinator, introduced herself and advised that she coordinates the Park District's large programs and events such as Sap's Arisin', Winter Solstice, Nature of Metal and Recycle Arts Shows. Ms. Runion also schedules art workshops, the Summer Amphitheater series, hosts an annual Holiday ornaments workshop in conjunction with the Geauga Arts Council and is working on an Astronomy type art show. In addition she assists Marketing in representing the Park District at community events, and chairs the Fair Committee and Employee Holiday Party Committee. Ms. Runion would like to see the Park District Arts Festival reinstated.

Wayne Kriynovich, OP Naturalist, advised that he along with Chris Mentrek staff Observatory Park every Friday, Saturday and Sunday with special programs the 2nd and 4th Fridays of the month – this month is "The Search for ET". Mr. Kriynovich notes that the Park's popularity is growing as visitors are coming from Columbus and Dayton for Sunday planetarium shows and other special events.

Judy Bradt-Barnhart, Nature Education Coordinator, reported that she oversees school programming aligning it with school/educational standards. In addition, she coordinates the Naturalist visiting programming for nursing homes and senior centers, heads up the Geocache programming, and works on the Geauga Maple Forestry Committee and Cub Scout Programming.

Dan Best, Senior Naturalist, advised the Board that he tries to promote new opportunities and partnerships for programming and is involved in public, school, special and general programming. He looks for new and innovative ways to present and alternative venues to help keep our programming in line with our mission, noting that the 'Nature Not to Be Missed' series has been growing in attendance. Mr. Best heads up the production of the 'Something's Afoot' exhibit and is working closely with Operations and Auburn Career Center. He also changes out the Seasonal Exhibits at The West Woods. He feels that the "Ask A Nat" portion of the Park District website has increased the Park District's ability to get information out to the public.

Mr. Patterson commented on the excellent video he saw at The West Woods which featured Naturalist John Kolar visiting different habitats and would like to see the video circulated at our other Parks and to community organizations. Mr. Patterson also inquired as to whether the Park District could partner with Kent State Geauga on credit courses. Mr. Kriynovich felt that there is a great potential for partnership, especially when the Nassau Observatory project is complete. Mr. Curtin informed that there have been

discussions with Kent State Geauga regarding a biosocial assessment of their property, use of their outside bio station and the possibility of linking the bike trail to Kent State Geauga.

Human Resources

Ms. Pilarczyk distributed an informational disc to the Board for review, and explained the visual pre-read provided an overview of the responsibilities of the Human Resources Department. Ms. Pilarczyk reviewed the list of groups she maintains regular contact with, noting that the SHRM Peers/Contacts are very valuable and that she will be attending the 2013 SHRM conference. Ms. Pilarczyk noted, as an HR Generalist, her job responsibilities cover multiple areas: Compensation, Recruitment, Employee Development, Employee/Labor Relations, Health Benefits and Risk Management.

This year Ms. Pilarczyk is spearheading the Park District's focus on Employee Development and Succession Planning. Each employee has been asked to create short, mid-range and long term goals. Supervisors are required to meet with their team members to discuss the goals, and determine if there are training and/or educational opportunities to help the employee with their development. In addition, the Park District is working to identify employees that can be mentored in preparation to take on additional responsibilities or positions as opportunities arise. Discussions with supervisors are ongoing regarding key positions and core competencies. Ways to recruit qualified employees have moved to online vs. newspapers and a recruitment procedure is now in place which insures that the supervisor is more involved.

Communications to employees are important and are done three ways: In person (staff meetings), e-mails and employee newsletter. A Disaster Recovery Plan is in the final stages and will be presented to the Board for approval upon completion. GPD Employees raised over \$1,500 in 2012 for such charities as United Way and the Heart Association.

Mr. Patterson inquired as to Ms. Pilarczyk's relationship with the County Benefits Specialist – Kathy Hostetler. Ms. Pilarczyk advised that the County oversees the different benefits (Health Care, Worker's Comp) and that she is the liaison between the Park District employees and the County, collecting and forwarding the necessary information to Ms. Hostetler. Mr. Fischbach asked how the "Affordable Health Care Act" will affect Park District Employees. Ms. Pilarczyk noted that as information is provided to her she will communicate to the Board. Mr. Fischbach requested that it go on record that he is concerned what will happen to the employees with upcoming health care changes. The employees have good benefits and he does not want to see the employees loose them. Mr. Fischbach asked if it would be possible for Ms. Pilarczyk to complete the salary survey. Mr. Curtin advised that the Park District would look into the necessary training and resources to determine if the process could be completed in-house. Mr. Petruziello asked if employees were involved in the review process and Ms. Pilarczyk advised that they were.

Natural Resource Management

Paul Pira, Natural Resource Management Director, distributed a summary of his department's duties to the Board, adding that the NRM Department is charged with conservation of the land, water, animals and management of the 9,000+ acres of Park property. The department consists of 3 full-time and 2 part employees and utilizes interns during the summer months. Mr. Pira advised the Board that in addition to the day-to-day management of the NRM Department he conducts plant and animal surveys for the Park District on new Park properties and possible property acquisitions. The information from the surveys is used to create a Management Plan for each property that includes baseline biological and ecological inventory data that assists the planning department in designing the development of a park.

Mr. Pira explained that Invasive Specie Management is an important responsibility of the department that enables the Park District to pass on healthy park properties to future generations. Mr. Patterson added that “NRM department is the one that manages the park for the purposes of being a park”.

Mr. Patterson asked when project planning for the coming year was performed. Mr. Pira advised that their APO is formulated in the late summer/early fall from a list of restoration plans/projects that will benefit the Park District. These projects are reviewed and chosen based on direction from Mr. Curtin and the Board. Mr. Petruziello inquired as to how long it takes to generate baseline data. Mr. Curtin replied that some baseline data is documented from small research grants. Mr. Patterson added that putting a management plan together for a Park is baseline data, and Mr. Pira noted that we have reports on 20 Parks, and that it should be updated every 10 years.

There were discussions on assessing needs to stock the ponds at Beartown, Swine Creek and Bass Lake, along with different ways to keep the Park ponds algae free, the control of Asian Beetles, Emerald Ash Bore and Garlic Mustard. Mr. Fishbach asked for an update on current NRM projects and the coyote situation at Frohring Meadows. Mr. Pira advised they are working on a grant for wetlands creation, surveys at Pine Brook (ruffed grouse) and that the coyotes have moved on and are not located in the same area as last year. There have been no phone calls or incidents regarding coyotes.

Ranger Department

Scott Wilson, Chief Ranger, distributed an overview of the Ranger Department to the Board which included: “The goal of the Geauga Park District (GPD) Ranger Department is to carry out our overall mission which is to provide for the safety and protection of the visitors and employees of Geauga Park District through proactive, innovative, unbiased and professional practices while conserving and protecting its natural resources and facilities.” The overview included: proposed plan for relocation of the Ranger office to TWW in order to provide better response time to all GPD parks; 2013 budget request for three replacement vehicles; addition of two additional full-time rangers and one part-time ranger; trail marking program to assist patrons and park staff in providing specific trail locations in the event of an emergency; Marine Patrol at Headwaters and Bass Lake; and, updated policy for patrol of Park trails via bicycle and foot.

Mr. Patterson requested information on the Marine Patrol. Chief Wilson advised that the Rangers had joint training with Ohio Watercraft who will also be patrolling our lakes this summer. In addition, the Rangers will participate with local fire departments and dive rescue groups for training at Best Preserve and this winter will participate in ice rescue training. Mr. Patterson asked if Ranger coverage was 24/7. Chief Wilson advised that currently GPD Rangers are on duty 6:00 a.m. – 1:00 a.m. with two cars on a shift for safety reasons. This enables coverage for North and South Parks. Mr. Fischbach stated that at some point he would like to see 24 hour coverage and inquired if the Rangers had sufficient equipment. Chief Wilson advised that his current budget has allowed for equipping all vehicles with the necessary equipment including defibrillators and life vests. Mr. Fischbach asked if our Rangers were radar certified. Chief Wilson advised that the Park District did not own radar guns, but the Rangers will work to become radar certified, and would like to have use of radar guns for speed enforcement.

Chief Wilson spoke about the importance of Rangers patrolling the trails and the increased use of bicycle patrols. There were discussions on the possibility of adding ATV's for patrols or emergency use which would decrease the response time for time-sensitive emergencies (heart attack, lost children).

Information Technology Department

Don Lombardy, Information Technology Manager, provided the Board with a hand-out highlighting the past, current and future improvements to the GPD Network and support systems. He reviewed the handout via a PowerPoint presentation.

Mr. Lombardy explained that in 2008 the Park District utilized a network consisting of a microwave system which was very unreliable and slow due to weather issues and bottlenecks. Currently, the Park District utilizes Windstream Communications for its networking needs which provides a more reliable and stable system. Working through Windstream's network also provides ease for increasing sites and bandwidth.

Mr. Lombardy reported that free public wireless access is now available at The West Woods and The Meyer Center and will soon be available at Observatory Park, as will a night-sky brightness monitor. He also offered information pertaining to IT hardware growth comparing 2008 vs. 2013 and advised several 'green' initiatives have been added increasing efficiencies and cost savings.

Mr. Lombardy updated the Board on 2013 major IT projects including replacement of workstations and Financial server, installation of a NAS (network storage appliance) that will house GIS orthos and GPD master photo and video folder, implementation of Active Directory policies which automatically redirects staff documents to our servers insuring backup and forces efficient network storage and the installation of a new system for bare metal backups, also fulfilling GPD's disaster recovery policy.

Mr. Petruziello requested clarification on the current and new backup tape system and the use for the new Financial server. Mr. Lombardy advised that the new backup system will provide frequent (hourly) snapshots of our server enabling a much more efficient and timely system recovery and that the Financial server will house Fundware and Sequel, and will allow both systems to interact with each other. Mr. Patterson asked if there were any major expenditures projected for 2014 and Mr. Lombardy reported that the Microsoft Office Suite will be updated to the newest version. In addition the network bandwidth will be increased at The West Woods to accommodate the Ranger Department, at The Meyer Center for photo storage and possibly at Observatory Park dependent upon programming and telescope needs.

QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from the public

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES OF THE BOARD

There were no reports from Committees of the Board.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:50 p.m.

SUNSHINE LAW COMPLIANCE

It is declared that notification of this meeting and any business conducted therein by the Geauga Park District Board of Commissioners was in compliance with Ohio's Sunshine Laws.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas G. Curtin, Executive Director

James F. Patterson, President