

**GEAUGA PARK DISTRICT
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
March 10, 2015**

The regular meeting of the Geauga Park District Board was held March 10, 2015 at The Meyer Center Chardon Twp., Ohio. The meeting was called to order at 3:31 p.m. Commissioners Mary Ruth Shumway Bill Gertz and Jeffrey Orndorff were present.

Mary Ruth Shumway called the meeting to order. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Park District Employees	GUESTS
John Oros, Interim Director	See EXHIBIT "A" attached
Anna McDonald, Executive Administrative Assistant	
Matt McCue, Planning & NRM Manager	
Michele Pennell, Director of Business & Visitor Services	
Robin Pilarczyk, HR Manager	
Brett Bellas, Grounds & Facilities Manager	
David Ondrey, Legal Counsel (Thrasher Dinsmore & Dolan)	

VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH

Volunteer Jane Hall Nemeth was recognized by the Board for her contributions to the Park District. Commissioner Orndorff read and presented Ms. Nemeth with the following Certificate of Appreciation with thanks from the Board of Commissioners and employees of the Geauga Park District:



Ms. Nemeth thanked the Board and gave a brief overview of "Gaugua Walkers" of which she is a member.

ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES

The Board was presented with minutes from the February 10, 2015 Board Meeting. There were no questions from the Board.

Mr. Gertz made a motion to accept the February 10, 2015 Board Meeting minutes as presented.

Mrs. Shumway seconded the motion and after roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved 2-0.

Mrs. Shumway	Yes
Mr. Gertz	Yes
Mr. Orndorff	Abstain

PRESENTATION OF FINANCIAL STATEMENT

The Board was provided with a copy of the February 2015 Financial Statement. All questions from the Board were satisfactorily answered.

Geauga Park District
FINANCIAL STATEMENT MONTH ENDED
February 28, 2015

GENERAL FUND

BEGINNING FUND BALANCE FEBRUARY 1, 2015	5,993,063.17
EXPENDITURES & OTHER USES	
Personnel	230,003.65
Medicare	3,314.00
Dental /Hospitalization	45,270.54
OPERS January	46,354.80
Unemployment Transfers (January E. Smith)	1,672.00
Vouchers	128,329.95
EXPENDITURES & OTHER USES	454,944.94
REVENUES & OTHER SOURCES	
<u>Grants</u>	720.00
- D.O.J. Grant - vest for Ranger	
<u>Investment Income</u>	265.19
<u>Gifts & Donations</u>	8.51
- Bird Box - \$ 8.51	
<u>Fees</u>	
- Camping	470.00
- Shelters	620.00
- Utility fees	2,520.00
- Programs	228.00
<u>Sales</u>	
- Tapper's Treasures - MC	28.80
- Tree Tops - TWW	1,338.05

Other Receipts

- Agricultural Leases	2,200.00
- GPD Foundation rental space/equipment	212.18
- Observatory house - Sindelar	300.00
- Swine Creek house - Harry	400.00
- Burton Wetlands house- Kolar	400.00
- Hyde house - Krigbaum	400.00
- Chickagami house - Maksim	400.00
- Payment for property damage at Chickagami B.Barwidi	100.00
- Recycling proceeds -Honest Scales - Scrap metal from Chickagami demo	180.24
- Western Reserve Farm Co-op dividend distribution - \$57.13	59.13
- Public records request - \$ 2.00	
- Local Government Funds	8,866.73
	19,716.83

REVENUES & OTHER SOURCES **19,716.83**

ENDING FUND BALANCE AS OF FEBRUARY 28, 2015 **5,557,835.06**

LAND IMPROVEMENT FUND

BEGINNING FUND BALANCE FEBRUARY 1, 2015 **3,208,334.79**

EXPENDITURES & OTHER USES

Vouchers 28,512.14

EXPENDITURES & OTHER USES **28,512.14**

REVENUES & OTHER SOURCES

Investment Income 139.56

Royalties/In-Lieu Fees 828.39

- Hehmeyer - \$175.69, Farley - \$435.34
- Sunnybrook - \$68.69, Ford-Windsor - \$148.67

REVENUES & OTHER SOURCES **967.95**

ENDING FUND BALANCE AS OF FEBRUARY 28, 2015 **\$ 3,180,790.60**

RETIREMENT RESERVE ACCOUNT

- - -

BEGINNING FUND BALANCE FEBRUARY 1, 2015 **\$ 82,442.69**

REVENUES & OTHER SOURCES **3.55**

Investment Income 3.55

ENDING FUND BALANCE AS OF FEBRUARY 28, 2015 **\$ 82,446.24**

PURCHASE REQUISITION PRE-APPROVALS

The Board was presented with a list of outstanding Purchase Requisitions for pre-approval in the amount of \$321,013.84. Ms. Pennell brought several items to the Board’s attention and distributed plan specifications for the proposed playground at Headwaters Park.

Mr. Orndorff made a motion to approve the purchase requisition pre-approvals, in the amount of \$321,013.84.

Mrs. Shumway seconded the motion and after roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved 2 – 0:

Mrs. Shumway	Yes
Mr. Gertz	No
Mr. Orndorff	Yes

PRESENTATION OF VOUCHERS

The Board was presented with the vouchers paid during the month of February 2015 in the amount of \$483,457.08. These vouchers represent the normal day-to-day operating expenses, approved budgeted expenses and payroll. There were no questions from the Board.

Mr. Orndorff made a motion to accept the February 2015 paid vouchers into the record.

Mrs. Shumway seconded the motion and after roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved 3-0:

Mrs. Shumway	Yes
Mr. Gertz	Yes
Mr. Orndorff	Yes

HEADWATERS PARKS

The Board was advised that the Park District received one (1) bid for the Headwaters Park Improvements project, which bid was incomplete. At the recommendation of the project architect the Park District is seeking approval from the Board to revise and re-bid the project. The revised bid would be for improvements to the shelter only. The camping improvements and construction of the double restroom would be completed by the Park District in-house construction crew. Mr. Orndorff requested that Mr. Ondrey review all bids received.

Mr. Gertz made a motion to re-bid the Headwaters Park Improvement project as revised (removal of camping improvements and construction of double restroom).

Mr. Orndorff seconded the motion and after roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved 3-0:

Mrs. Shumway	Yes
Mr. Gertz	Yes
Mr. Orndorff	Yes

FROHRING MEADOWS-PHASE II IMPROVEMENTS AND BUDGET AMENDMENT #2 – RESOLUTION No. 15-15

Mr. McCue made a recommendation to the Board to accept the bid and award the project to Hummel Construction for \$279,500.00 for construction of the Pavilion and Parking Lot, with non-performance of the Boardwalk and Demonstration Garden. It was also recommended that the Boardwalk and Demonstration garden be constructed by the Park District. If the non-performed items are to be constructed by the Park District an additional amount of \$20,000.00 will need to be allocated to this

project by approving proposed Budget Amendment #2 – Resolution No. 15-15. Mr. Orndorff and Mr. Gertz made suggestions regarding the use of volunteers to help in the construction of the Demonstration Garden. Mr. Bellas (GPD Grounds and Facility Manager) confirmed that he has worked with Master Gardeners in the past on like projects.

Mrs. Shumway made a motion to approve Budget Amendment #2 to for supplemental appropriations to the Land Improvement Fund in the amount of \$20,000.00, Resolution #15-15.

Mr. Gertz seconded the motion and after roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved 3-0:

Mrs. Shumway	Yes
Mr. Gertz	Yes
Mr. Orndorff	Yes

Mrs. Shumway made a motion to approve awarding the contract for improvement to Frohring Meadows – Phase II to Hummel Construction in an amount of \$279,500.00, based on the following:

- The submitted bid has been reviewed and determined to be complete
- Recommendation of a contract award for \$279,500.00 for the Pavilion Construction and Parking Expansion as recommended by Peninsula Architects is within the \$300,000.00 budget for the project.
- A thorough reference check has been conducted by Peninsula Architects and the Park District’s prior experience with Hummel Construction on the Observatory Park – Phase II Project.
- The Ohio Auditor Findings for Recovery Database yielded no results.

Mr. Gertz seconded the motion and after roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved 3-0:

Mrs. Shumway	Yes
Mr. Gertz	Yes
Mr. Orndorff	Yes

GPD FOUNDATION – UTILIZATION OF PARK DISTRICT LOGO AND NAME, Resolution No. 14-15

Mrs. Shumway read the following letter to the Geauga Park District Foundation, into the record:

March 10, 2015

*Mr. David Chew, President
Gauga Park District Foundation*

Dear Mr. Chew:

This letter is to confirm that the Geauga Park District Foundation has permission to utilize both the Geauga Park District name and logo for the purpose of promoting park events and raising funds for Geauga Park District. These permissions will expire on December 31, 2015 and be revisited annually.

We are happy to have the Foundation as a valuable partner in supporting our mission. We look forward to working with you on the Nassau Observatory Station, Nature Scopes, Chip Henry Institute, and a variety of park and nature inspired initiatives, both now and in the future.

Thank you for your steadfast support.

*Sincerely,
Mary Ruth Shumway
President, Board of Park Commissioners*

Mr. Orndorff asked Mr. Ondrey, Park District legal counsel, if he had any reservations or comments regarding this permission. Mr. Ondrey stated this is appropriate use, and had no reservations granting these permissions.

Mr. Orndorff made a motion to accept Resolution No. 14-15, and to send the letter as presented.

Mr. Gertz seconded the motion and after roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved 3-0:

Mrs. Shumway	Yes
Mr. Gertz	Yes
Mr. Orndorff	Yes

ODOT BIENNIUM FUNDING – RESOLUTION NO. 13-15

The Board was presented with Resolution No. 13-15, which requests funds from ODOT’s Park Road Improvement Fund for years 2016-2017. Mr. Oros explained that these funds are administered with assistance from the Ohio Parks and Recreation Association and can be used to cover the cost of materials and labor for road and parking lot improvements or maintenance. The amount of the fund received will be determined once the Biennium funding is approved by the State. Mrs. Shumway inquired as to where the funds would be used. Mr. McCue advised the Park District maintains a list of projects that could be funded by these monies, and the project would be chosen based on the amount of funds awarded.

Mr. Orndorff made a motion to accept Resolution No. 13-15, requesting ODOT Biennium Funding.

Mr. Gertz seconded the motion and after roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved 3-0:

Mrs. Shumway	Yes
Mr. Gertz	Yes
Mr. Orndorff	Yes

VIDEO PRODUCTION SERVICES

The Board was provided with the results of the Request for Proposal (RFP) for video production services and distribution of the product. Ms. Pennell advised that due to the variance of quality and cost of the submitted proposals, she is requesting Board assistance in planning for use of the video and with the vendor selection process. Mr. Orndorff volunteered to be the Board representative for this process.

Ms. Pennell added that she has corresponded with the State Auditor and advised their interpretation was this is a service, not a product, and it is not necessary to choose the lowest bid submitted.

This item will be tabled pending further information.

SURPLUS PROPERTY

The Board was asked to approve the following as Surplus Property. All questions by the Board were satisfactorily answered.

	Inventory No.	Description	Starting Bid
1	2155 E	Dell CRT computer monitor	Scrap
2	2119 E	Palm Pilot	Scrap

Mr. Orndorff made a motion to approve the items declared surplus as presented.

Mr. Gertz seconded the motion and after roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved 3 – 0:

Mrs. Shumway	Yes
Mr. Gertz	Yes
Mr. Orndorff	Yes

COMMISSIONER'S TIME

Mr. Lombardy addressed the Board regarding increased cost of Microsoft Office subscriptions and changes to the way the subscriptions are purchased and managed. The Board requested that this information be submitted as an Agenda item at the April Board meeting.

Mr. Oros advised the Board that PERS contributions were not deducted for a former employee during 2014. The total amount the Park District will be responsible for correcting is \$3,741.92 (\$2,170.31 Employer Contribution, \$1,571.60 Employee Contribution). Mr. Orndorff requested the employee be notified and advised that this will be corrected.

Mrs. Shumway advised that she has researched the alleged hunting violation at Burton Wetlands by reviewing the Burton Wetlands Nature Preserve Management Plan and the Articles of Dedication – Burton Wetlands Management, citing parts that referenced the criteria and approvals needed regarding the controlling/management of animal species that have become a nuisance and that, in her opinion, Geauga Park District has adhered to the referenced plans. In addition, Mrs. Shumway advised she spoke with Tom Arbor of ODNR and that he relayed that ODNR is confident with the way Burton Wetlands is being managed.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC - below are comment summaries:

Ed Buckles, Troy Township, addressed the Board from the podium. Mr. Buckles requested that the minutes reflect there was a meeting held with two members of the Board of Commissioners at the Meyer Center prior to the Board Meeting that was not publicly announced and that Park District business was discussed. Mrs. Shumway advised that this was not accurate. She explained that the meeting was a retention hearing (GPD Records Retention Commission) and Mr. Gertz asked if he could sit in and listen to the meeting. The door was left open so that anyone else could also sit in and listen. Mrs. Shumway added that as a Geauga County resident Mr. Gertz had a right to attend, and that he was not allowed any input. Mr. Buckles requested the minutes reflect Mrs. Shumway's explanation.

Mr. Buckles stated that the Park District previously had an Audit Committee that looked into the Park's finance and he understands it was disbanded approximately 14 months ago. Ms. Pennell advised that the audit committee was not disbanded, but there has not been a recent meeting.

There were further discussions regarding trapping at Park District locations that were not identified or recommended for trapping by the Park District Natural Resource Management Department.

Barbara Partington, Munson Twp., addressed the Board from the podium. Ms. Partington welcomed Mr. Orndorff to the Park District. Ms. Partington gave an overview of the purpose of Protect Geauga Parks. There were discussions regarding permitted activities at Frohring Meadows and the impact to the property. Ms. Partington addressed the definition of recreation stating it may be misleading as it means different things to different people. In regards to Mrs. Shumway's investigation of the Burton Wetlands trapping issue, Ms. Partington stated that investigations are usually done by someone other than a

Board member (*copies of documents Mrs. Shumway referenced were supplied to Ms. Partington per Mr. Orndorff*). Ms. Partington expressed her concerns regarding the close ties that Mr. Orndorff and Ms. Shumway have to Judge Grendell and hoped that the connection can be separate and the Commissioners act as independent advocates for the Park District; Ms. Partington asked the Board to give strong thought to returning to protection, conservation and preservation.

Thomas Foster, Munson Twp – representing Bass Lake Club as President of the Trustees, addressed the Board from the podium. Mr. Foster stated that Bass Lake Park has always been considered a community park. The Bass Lake Club community helps look after it, and in exchange there is an agreement with the Park District to supply boat racks and other considerations. Mr. Foster stated that the current agreement with the Park District expires on April 13, 2015 and inquired if a new agreement could be reviewed and signed. Mr. Foster addressed the issue of the backstop, which obstructs the lake view and requested it be removed. Mr. Foster added there are no objections to the other amenities and thanked the Park District for the new boat racks. Mr. Oros stated that the Park District was waiting until the EPA requests regarding Bass Lake had been resolved, before entering into new agreement. The EPA is requesting that an additional three (3) acres be placed in an environmental covenant to replace the three (3) acres that was impacted by the addition of recreational amenities. Mr. Foster stated that he would be willing to address the EPA if it would help.

Mr. Orndorff made a motion to extend the existing Bass Lake Club Agreement for a period of 90 days from the April 13, 2015 expiration date, to allow for review of the Agreement and to address the issues raised by EPA and Mr. Foster. (*90 days from April 13th is July 12, 2015*)

Mr. Gertz seconded the motion and after roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved 3 – 0:

Mrs. Shumway	Yes
Mr. Gertz	Yes
Mr. Orndorff	Yes

Mr. Orndorff confirmed with Mr. Foster that the only change that Bass Lake Club is requesting is the removal of the backstop. Mr. Orndorff supplied Mr. Ondrey with a copy of the Agreement for review.

Kathleen Webb, Munson Twp.-Bass Lake neighborhood, addressed the Board from the podium. Ms. Webb thanked Mr. Foster, but requested the Board consider removing not only the backstop but removing or relocating the soccer backstop which also obstructs the lake view. Ms. Webb suggested removal of the sand volleyball court that geese are using as a litter box – then children are playing in it. Ms. Webb stated she was told by someone else in the community that the outside light may be attracting groups of young people who participate in drinking alcohol which is not safe with a lake nearby.

Marcia Rubin, Bainbridge Twp., addressed the Board from the podium. Ms. Rubin advised she drove over 40 minutes to get to the meeting and requested the Board consider having some of the meetings at The West Woods as she felt it was a more central location. Ms. Rubin expressed her concern that the Board meeting minutes are not made public until they are approved, and the fact that items are already voted on and approved. Mr. Ondrey, Park District legal, counsel advised that this is typical practice of every political subdivision that he is aware of – that the minutes of the last meeting are approved at the next meeting, and this is not an unusual practice. Ms. Rubin stated that 3:30 p.m. is an unreasonable time for Board meetings, eliminating individuals with jobs from attending and giving input. In regards to the survey, Ms. Rubin stated that out-of-county individuals/non-tax payers should not have input on

regarding what goes on in Geauga Park District. Mr. McCue advised that analysis of the survey will separate in-county from out-of-county responders. Ms. Rubin is concerned about the balance of the Board and the leverage Judge Grendell has due his relationship with two of the three Board members.

Frank Jacobson, South Russell Twp., addressed the Board from the podium. Mr. Jacobson stated he agreed with Ms. Rubin's comments. He asked if he heard correctly that \$99,000.00 was being spent on a playground, and asked who would take children all the way out to Headwaters to play on a turtle.

John Augustine, Parkman Twp., addressed the Board from the podium. Mr. Augustine welcomed Mr. Orndorff to the Board. Mr. Augustine provided information to the Board which he requested be entered into the minutes (see "Exhibit B"). Mr. Augustine initiated discussions regarding trapping at Burton Wetlands, i.e. ODNR's failure to ask why trapping was necessary there; he inquired why trapping was necessary at The Rookery and stated he would be looking into the agreement with the prior owners of Pinebrook regarding trapping, and access to the property.

Joy Keco, Ohio Horsemen's Council, addressed the Board from the podium. Ms. Keco inquired as to the cost of the turtle (Headwaters Park playground), and was informed the turtle was a component of the playground. The entire playground will cost \$99,750.

Phil Gingrich, Middlefield, addressed the Board from the podium. Mr. Gingrich advised that he retired from Geauga Park District about twelve (12) years ago and he is responsible for writing up almost all of the Management Plans. He believes the Management Plan Mrs. Shumway recited from was misinterpreted. There were discussions regarding types of animals that were trapped, locations where trapping was permitted and who performed the trapping during Mr. Gingrich's tenure at Geauga Park District. Mr. Gingrich stated that the point he was trying to make was that the trapping had to be necessary (for nuisance animals only) and other alternatives were explored before trapping took place. He added that staff and the Army Corp. of Engineers were involved in the decision making regarding the necessity of trapping. He further stated that muskrat and beaver can be destructive, but sometimes the damage can be controlled with creative structures, eliminating the need to trap, as beaver are a very important part of the eco-system. Mr. Gingrich stated that trapping should only be done if you absolutely have to, and there has to be proof that there is structural damage to infrastructure or the ecosystem, and he is opposed to trapping at Burton Wetlands. He added that he is the individual who did the research on deer management which resulted in structures being set up many of the Parks to determine if there was a deer browse problem. There were discussions on access (public and for hunters/trappers) to Burton Wetlands due to its designation as a Preserve, with Mr. Oros stating issuing a permit for Burton Wetlands was an oversight, and that the trapper did not utilize it. Mr. Oros added that trapping and hunting is a method for controlling populations, and that many of the county residents enjoy trapping and hunting. Mr. Gingrich advised the Board that in the late 90's a Director was fired for deer hunting in Burton Wetlands. He stated he felt that there must be more studies to determine that hunting and trapping is necessary in the Parks, adding that he visits all the Parks and he has not seen the necessity at Burton Wetlands. Mr. Gingrich stated he felt since his name has been brought up in two Board meetings in a row, he needed to set the record straight, and he felt that there is a lot more thought that needs to go into the process.

Joe Sweet, Munson Twp. (Bass Lake Resident), addressed the Board from the podium. Mr. Sweet stated that his and other families love the recreational additions at Bass Lake. He added that he appreciated all the passion in the room and the work the Board is doing.

Stan Piekos, Newbury Twp., addressed the Board from the podium. Mr. Piekos inquired as to why Sap's Arisin' in only being held for two weekends this year, and why with the emphasis on recreation there was only one Naturalist led cross-country skiing program (intro to cross-country skiing) was held this year. Ms. Pennell advised the decision was made to reduce the number of days for Sap's Arisin', but more activities were added including the return of horse-drawn wagons, and that she would research and advise Mr. Piekos regarding the lack of cross-country skiing programs. Mr. Piekos inquired how many additional private agreements there are with the private groups, preserves and the Park District. Mr. Oros advised that the Park District was doing a review of the Park District agreements in place. To save paper, Mr. Piekos suggested that the Park District have a supply of Agendas available for meeting attendees if they want one, instead of placing the on all the available chairs.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Orndorff made a motion to enter Executive Session to discuss legal issues, personnel and land acquisition.

Mr. Gertz seconded the motion and after roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved 3 – 0:

Mrs. Shumway	Yes
Mr. Gertz	Yes
Mr. Orndorff	Yes

The Board entered Executive Session at 5:27 p.m.

Mrs. Shumway made a motion to come out of Executive Session

Mr. Gertz seconded the motion and after roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved 3-0.

Mrs. Shumway	Yes
Mr. Gertz	Yes
Mr. Orndorff	Yes

The Board came out of Executive Session at 6:15 p.m. The following item was brought forward:

Mr. Orndorff made a motion to promote Matt McCue to the position of the Director of Planning and Operations and offer him compensation commensurate with the new responsibilities of \$ 76,800.00 per annum, commencing with the start of the next pay period (March 15, 2015).

Mr. Gertz seconded the motion and after roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved 3-0.

Mrs. Shumway	Yes
Mr. Gertz	Yes
Mr. Orndorff	Yes

Mr. Orndorff made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Gertz seconded the motion and after roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved 3 – 0:

Mrs. Shumway	Yes
Mr. Gertz	Yes
Mr. Orndorff	Yes

The meeting was adjourned at 6:16p.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,

John Oros, Interim Director

Mary Ruth Shumway, President

GEAUGA PARK DISTRICT
 Board of Park Commissioners
 The Meyer Center
 March 10, 2015 - Regular

Exhibit "A"

Name	Organization/Company
Donna Ina Tutera	Orange County residents
Alison W. Cree	Orange County resident
Yvonne Henry	CF
Don Lombardy	GPD
Robin Fisher	GPD
Nick Smith	Madison, WI
Gayle Wohlken	Burton
J.A. Wohlken	Burton
Edwin Jacobson	S. Ryssen
Melissa	Charlottesville
Jane Hall-Nemeth	Volunteer
Shelley Chernin	Russell
BAEB - Dave Praeminger	Musaw
Jo Tedor	Russell
Joe Kuo	G.O.H.C.
Phyllis August	Parkman Resident
Mona Stanton	G.H.C.
John Hicks	Newbury
Patricia L	Burton
Doreen Butler	Burton
Joe Sweet	Bass Lake Community / Residents
Thom Foster	Bass Lake Community

Exhibit "B"

It's not often that an interim director "pulls one over" on the Geauga Park Board but one might well wonder if John Oros has done just that. The Natural Resources Management (NRM) department provided the Park district with recommendations last fall on Park areas and species that they would recommend for trapping during the following trapping season. Trapping is sometime recommended if no other feasible management is possible. NRM listed six parks and two species, to be included in the parks trapping lottery for this season. These six parks are Oakton Preserve (muskrat), Hyde-Kaplan Preserve (beaver), Bass Lake Preserve (beaver), Beartown Lakes Reservation (muskrat), Frothing Meadows (muskrat), and Orchard Hills Park (muskrat). The only other park identified as having nuisance animals was The Rookery whose raccoon problem was being taken care of by the Ohio Dept. of Agriculture in an effort to bolster the population of a state threatened turtle. It would be logical to assume these areas would be the only park areas trapping would be permitted.

How then, obviously unbeknownst to the park board did 5, you read right, F-I-V-E additional park areas get added to the lottery and assigned to trappers? These parks which had absolutely no nuisance animals identified on them included Beaver Creek Preserve, Walter C. Best Preserve, The West Woods, Big Creek Park, and Burton Wetlands. Furthermore, none of the permits issued to trappers, save one, had any animal species identified for trapping presumably giving the trappers free rein to trap whatever their heart's desire including River Otters. The only permit that identified a species was Big creek Park and the species was raccoon. Hmmmmmmm . . . Raccoons? . . . Did not John Oros assure the Park Board, audience and questioning citizens at two commissioners meetings that nothing but Coonbear traps (Instant kill traps) were being used in this lottery? I doubt there are many, if any, instances of raccoons being trapped beneath the surface of the water in Coonbear traps. Foothold or leghold traps would be the most likely form of traps used for this species. It's not uncommon for a raccoon, when caught, to chew it's leg off to get out of a leg hold trap.

So now we move on to the Burton Wetlands Preserve. This is not a typical Geauga Park but one that in 1999 was dedicated as a State Nature Preserve by the Ohio Division of Natural Resources. State Nature Preserves come with their own set of rules and regulations, and despite the fact that the GPD is the actual owner of the property, that does not mean the park district can neglect to follow the rules in the Articles of Dedication that was signed by the Geauga Park District and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. Per information I've received from the State, the deed states that any hunting or trapping for species management is allowed only after consultation with the Ohio Natural Areas council. My understanding is that the criteria for determining the nuisance status of a given game species, as well as the management of controlled or public hunts (including trapping) shall be determined by the Park District with the advice of the Division of Natural Areas and Preserves, and subject to all applicable laws and regulation of the Division of Wildlife. This was obviously not done as no nuisance species were identified in Burton Wetlands Preserve.

One may well ask: "What gives?" Why the sloppy permitting (ranger department?) and serious lack of documentation of what has been going on regarding trapping? Why the apparent violation of rules and not following Natural Resources Management recommendations? The Park Commissioners are currently evaluating applicants for executive director and will be conducting interviews this month. I would urge them to consider the importance of hiring a director with a clear understanding of why Park Districts were started, a person who values protecting fast disappearing natural areas and a person who does NOT look on parks as places ideal for conducting personal hunting/trapping operations. Hopefully we'll have a director who understands that trapping should be a last resort tool to preserve biodiversity and NOT a favor to be doled out to one's trapping buddies. One would hope for a director who does NOT look on park land primarily as "Vacant Land" on which to put sports and other recreation facilities or talks mainly about how many thousands of people he or she can attract to the next park activity or cram into a park in a given season. Park areas ARE for people but in this relatively small percent of the county that is Geauga Parks (3.5%) PRESERVE, CONSERVE, PROTECT, should come first. Let that be a deep seated philosophy of our new park director.

John G. Augustine, Parkman Township resident
17670 Farmington rd., W. Farmington, Oh 44491-9602
440-548-2414