

**GEAUGA PARK DISTRICT BOARD
OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL BOARD MEETING MINUTES
August 24, 2022**

The special meeting of the Geauga Park District Board was held August 24, 2022 at the Meyer Center, Big Creek Park. The meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. Commissioners Howard Bates, Pat Preston, Ray Guarino, Mario Innocenzi and Jolene Carnabuci were present.

Mr. Oros called the meeting to order. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Park District Employees	GUESTS
John Oros, Executive Director	Mr. John Slater, Park District Lawyer
Jennifer Pae, Treasurer and Fiscal Officer	
Christine Ward, HR Manager	
Dennis Sloan, Chief Ranger	
Sandy Ward, Marketing Coordinator	
Sheryl Hartridge, Executive Administration Mgr.	

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA/Addendum Items

Mr. Oros requested a motion to approve the agenda and addendum items. Mr. Bates made a motion to approve the agenda. Mr. Preston seconded the motion and after roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved.

Ms. Carnabuci	Yes
Mr. Preston	Yes
Mr. Innocenzi	Yes
Mr. Bates	Yes
Mr. Guarino	Yes

EXECUTIVE SESSION – Pursuant to Section 121.22(G)(3) of Ohio Revised Code

Mr. Guarino made a motion to enter executive session. Mr. Innocenzi seconded the motion and after roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved. The board entered Executive Session at 8:32am to discuss pending legal action.

Mr. Innocenzi	Yes
Mr. Guarino	Yes
Mr. Preston	Yes
Mr. Bates	Yes
Ms. Carnabuci	Yes

Ms. Pae was invited along with counsel Mr. John Slagter. Executive Session ended at 9:37am. No item was brought forward.

Resolution No. 7-2022 – Rescinding Resolution No. 2-2022

Mr. Oros requested a motion to approve a resolution acknowledging the Geauga County Budget Commission's concerns, rescinding Resolution No. 2-2022, and authorizing the Fiscal Officer to request an amended or renewed GPD official certificate of estimated resources from the Budget Commission to account for the monies in the rescinded fund to the general fund of Geauga Park District's 2023 Tax Budget.

Prior to obtaining the motion, Mr. Oros shared several slides from the Geauga County Budget Commission meeting on August 16, 2022. Mr. Oros stated the park district has taken the commission's points into consideration; hence the resolution and they are preparing for the next meeting on August 31, 2022. Mr. Oros shared slides Mr. Walder had prepared for the Park District meeting regarding Geauga Park District's budget. Mr. Oros pointed out the \$6,290 discrepancy noted between the budget commissions numbers and the Geauga Park District tax budget submission. Immediately following the committee meeting, Ms. Pae and Finance Assistant Ms. Dawn Sweeny reviewed ledgers and found the discrepancy from 2020. Mr. Oros stated that this discrepancy was known about in the past and the park district will be ready to discuss this on August 31, 2022. Mr. Preston noted that the discrepancy appeared before Ms. Pae began working with the Park District. Lastly, Mr. Oros discussed the legitimacy of the land acquisition fund that the board set up as a reserve fund under ORC 5705.13. The question is whether the park district is a taxing unit versus

a political subdivision. Regarding the reserve fund set up, the budget commission provided a list of concerns including that the resolution needs to include a maximum amount, the term when the fund commences and the source stated or revenue stream rather than fund, and the resolution did not align with the meeting minutes.

Mr. John Slagter, counsel for the park district, said he was at the committee meeting and has had further discussion with counsel representing the budget commission. He stated there has been a question whether park districts can create these reserve funds, specifically for land acquisition. There was no question there was a need for these funds, but more a question of the authority in the creation of this fund. He added it boils down to the definition of a subdivision in the Ohio Revised Code, which technically doesn't include park districts. He acknowledged other park districts within the state of Ohio have created these reserve funds, and the State of Ohio Auditor has a checklist that shows the parks can create these funds. Mr. Slagter said this issue has been raised and there is concern about it so rather than deal with this now, he recommends moving it to the General Fund until the attorney general or a court provides guidance on this matter. The Park District in the meantime is following the statute accordingly.

Mr. Oros thanked Mr. Slagter for the additional explanation. Mr. Oros said the last point made by the budget commission was the reasonableness, purposefulness, and acquisition of additional park district land. Is it reasonable to set aside taxpayer funds for park district lands while publicly stating intention to close parks. Mr. Preston clarified the discussion regarding possibly closing parks. He explained it was because the park district had too much money in the budget coming into 2022, so the budget commission reduced the budget by \$1.9 million. The fear was by the end of 2022, there would be little carry over funds and if the budget commission decided to take another \$1.9 million in 2023, the park would not be able to even meet payroll requirements. He felt the budget commission comments were taken out of context and he added we don't have the ability to understand what they are telling us ahead of time.

Mr. Slagter added the other issue raised at the budget meeting, which the budget commission can't require, was regarding allowing public comment at board meetings which may be beneficial, so it doesn't come up at budget commission each year. Lastly Mr. Slagter stated the budget commission did agree to table and allow the park district to return on 8/31/22. He said hopefully we can move forward and do the great things the park does.

Mr. Oros stated the resolution is accompanied by an appendix which is our capital plan 2023 – 2028. In terms of reasonable land acquisition, we don't comment on specific land acquisitions in the capital plan, but the park district does hope to purchase the Brubaker property adjacent to The Rookery. He added it is a significant purchase as it is the headwaters for one of the last 3 Brook Trout streams in Ohio. Mr. Oros also mentioned the capital improvement project to repair the bridge at The West Woods and wanted to recognize the park districts intentions are good and they look forward to the budget commission meeting on 8/31/22 and identifying a path forward. Mr. Oros asked if Mr. Slagter or the board had any additional comments.

Ms. Pae indicated she would like to make a statement. She read a prepared statement regarding her experience at the August 16, 2022 budget commission meeting.

A follow-up comment from Mr. Preston clarified the establishment of the land acquisition fund was to make the park budget process clearer by separating land development from all other park activities.

Mr. Guarino made a motion to approve the resolution acknowledging the Geauga County Budget Commission's concerns, rescinding Resolution No. 2-2022, and authorizing the Fiscal Officer to request an amended or renewed GPD official certificate of estimated resources from the Budget Commission to account for the monies in the rescinded fund to the general fund of Geauga Park District's 2023 Tax Budget. Mr. Preston seconded the motion and after roll-call voice

vote, the motion was approved.

Mr. Guarino	Yes
Mr. Innocenzi	Yes
Ms. Carnabuci	Yes
Mr. Bates	Yes
Mr. Preston	Yes

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Preston made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Mr. Bates seconded the motion and after roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved:

Mr. Bates	Yes
Mr. Preston	Yes
Ms. Carnabuci	Yes
Mr. Guarino	Yes
Mr. Innocenzi	Yes

The meeting was adjourned at 9:59 a.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, Executive Director

Howard Bates, President