

**GEAUGA PARK DISTRICT BOARD
OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
March 21, 2022**

The regular meeting of the Geauga Park District Board was held March 21, 2022 at the Meyer Center, Big Creek Park. The meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. Commissioners Howard Bates, Pat Preston and Mario Innocenzi were present.

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

Park District Employees	GUESTS
John Oros, Executive Director	
Sheryl Hatridge, Administrative Service Manager	
Jennifer Pae, Treasurer and Fiscal Officer	
Christine Ward, HR Manager	
Dennis Sloan, Lt. Ranger	
Paul Pira, Natural Resources Management	

LETTER OF RESIGNATION

Mr. Oros read a letter of resignation dated March 18, 2022 from park board member Mrs. Linda Smallwood due to her commitment to Cardinal Schools.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

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

Mr. Innocenzi Yes
Mr. Bates Yes
Mr. Preston Yes

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Mr. Bates requested a motion to approve the February 22, 2022, regular board meeting minutes. Mr. Preston seconded the motion and after roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved.

Mr. Innocenzi Yes
Mr. Bates Yes
Mr. Preston Yes

PRESENTATION OF FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Ms. Jennifer Pae presented the February 2022 financial statement. Mr. Preston asked what the current balance is and Ms. Pae said the YTD at the end of February is \$8,000,000. Mr. Preston asked how the shortfall will affect us if the \$1.9 million is taken away by the prosecutor and auditor, Ms. Pae said it will significantly impact the park by year end and will contribute to a shortfall in 2023. Mr. Preston stated the park is being very open about educating the public and by taking legal action to try to bring this to a positive conclusion, restoring the money back to the park.

PRESENTATION OF VOUCHERS

Mr. Oros presented vouchers from January. Mr. Bates made a motion to approve all vouchers except ARMS and Preston. Mr. Preston seconded the motion and after roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved.

Mr. Bates Yes
Mr. Preston Yes
Mr. Innocenzi Yes

Mr. Preston made a motion to approve vouchers for ARMS Trucking. Mr. Innocenzi seconded the motion and after roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved.

Mr. Innocenzi Yes
Mr. Preston Yes

Mr. Bates Abstained

Mr. Bates made a motion to approve vouchers for Preston. Mr. Innocenzi seconded the motion and after roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved.

Mr. Bates Yes
Mr. Innocenzi Yes
Mr. Preston Abstained

OLD BUSINESS

FISCAL/FINANCE WORK SESSION

Ms. Pae discussed park district revenues and focused on property taxes which is overwhelmingly the largest revenue the park district receives. JP discussed park district revenues and focused on property taxes. She presented documents showing total revenues and said the auditor of state ensures compliance and that the law is followed along with the accuracy of the financial statement. The tax budget commission made up of the county auditor, treasurer and prosecutor are responsible for the assessment, collection and disbursement of property taxes and levies. She added they also certify the revenue at year end, so when the park district passes their budget, they submit it to the tax budget commission to certify the funds are indeed available. Ms. Pae explained that property taxes are the most important revenue for the park district and has been steady around \$6.1 million per year, along with grants, intergovernmental funds from the state, and gifts and donations which has been around \$2 million per year. The park can only depend on the property tax revenue since the others are usually one-time dollars and the other revenues fluctuate, she added.

Ms. Pae presented total revenue vs. total expenditures with the year-end balance shown. She explained capital improvements include buildings, land, stream restoration and development and said we cannot control the timing of some of these expenditures. She stated the fund balance fluctuates unlike other entities and this has likely been the issue with the tax budget commission. Ms. Pae discussed the history of the property tax revenues, and stated it is important to understand property tax revenues and types of levies. She said charter communities do not have to follow the influence of HB 920. When a new levy goes into place it is the current property tax, whereas a renewal is at the original property tax rate. She explained the 2.6 voted mills for Geauga Park District currently equals about 1.8 mills based on 1986, 2000 and 2013 numbers which is the effective millage currently collected. Ms. Pae discussed Schedule B from the auditor's office, including the total value of all properties the taxes are levied off of, which is what the park district collects from. She said this shows the three levies the park district is collecting, and the values based on the different percentages of taxes paid countywide. Mr. Oros mentioned the park district received two schedule B's from the auditor; one showing the \$1.9 million taken away and another schedule B showing what the taxpayers expressed as their will showing the original amount.

Mr. Preston asked how the tax budget commission decides the park's need on public voted approval of the levy funds and Ms. Pae responded that the tax budget is a best guess for the following year and the Ohio Revised Code can determine the need of an entity based on the information provided, however it is extremely rare and unheard of for a tax budget commission to determine voter approved funds are not needed. Mr. Oros also added that there were two large trust donations in 2019 and 2020 totaling nearly \$2.7 million which were put in with the 'other' funds and not acknowledged by the budget commission. Mr. Oros's point being that if money is withheld from the park district, there should have been a better understanding that this money was not all taxpayer money.

NEW BUSINESS

QUARTERLY STAFF PRESENTATION

Mr. Paul Pira presented information on balancing human use versus healthy ecosystems and wildlife in Geauga County. He discussed meadow habitat and how it helps biodiversity. Mr. Pira said homeowners can help by minimizing turf grass areas which reduces mowing, and by planting native meadow plants and trees in their yard. He shared photos and video of rehabilitated properties that were previously agricultural and restored back to 'native' habitats and meadows. He also shared examples of park projects restored back to native meadow habitat

over a few years using native seeds, prescribed fire, and maintenance. He noted that U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service provided funds to purchase the native seeds. The park district also collects native seeds and reseeds areas. Mr. Pira also mentioned 'Earth Day' in April with tree planting at Veterans Legacy. Mr. Oros mentioned the importance of Frohring Meadows and how U.S. Fish & Wildlife supported and assisted with creating three primary habitats at that park – wetlands meadow, Auckland meadow and wetlands scrape habitat.

PLANNING AND OPERATIONS UPDATE

RESOLUTION NO. 1-22 RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM GRANT

Mr. Oros requested approval of an approximately \$60,000 grant application for ODNR funds to purchase trail grooming equipment which includes a tractor. This requires a 20% match of funds from the park. Mr. Oros explained we will also use in-kind services to groom the trail to match the 20%.

Mr. Preston made a motion to approve the grant application and matching funds, Mr. Bates seconded the motion and after roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved.

Mr. Innocenzi	Yes
Mr. Bates	Yes
Mr. Preston	Yes

CONTRACT AWARD FOR FROHRING MEADOWS POLLINATOR PLAY GARDEN

Mr. Oros requested the board approve a bid. A one lump sum was submitted by L. Caticchio & Son Inc. on March 16, 2022 for \$93,151 for a pollinator garden at Frohring Meadows. Mr. Preston made a motion to approve the bid, Mr. Innocenzi seconded the motion and after roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved.

Mr. Preston	Yes
Mr. Innocenzi	Yes
Mr. Bates	Yes

EXCAVATOR CONTRACT AWARD

Mr. Oros requested approval of a bid not to exceed \$90,000 from the Sourcewell Cooperative Procurement Program to purchase an excavator with attachments which is within the original budget of \$130,000. This replaces the previous approval for \$77,008.94 as a not to exceed \$90,000. Mr. Bates made a motion to approve the contract award, Mr. Preston seconded the motion and after roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved.

Mr. Preston	Yes
Mr. Innocenzi	Yes
Mr. Bates	Yes

TRACTOR & BOOM MOWER CONTRACT AWARD

Mr. Oros requested approval of a bid for a John Deere Tractor 6110 for \$87,520.50 and Alamo Samurai Boom Mower at \$59,121.60 through the state bid contract for total of \$126,642.10. Cost not to exceed \$150,000. This is for the South Operations Zone which will replace the 2004 Massey Ferguson with trade in value of \$20,000.

Mr. Preston made a motion to approve the contract award, Mr. Bates seconded the motion and after roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved.

Mr. Innocenzi	Yes
Mr. Bates	Yes
Mr. Preston	Yes

REQUEST TO ADVERTISE TO BID HVAC SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

Mr. Oros requested approval to go out to bid for improvements to the HVAC system at Veterans Legacy Woods former club house not to exceed \$176,000. The current system is no longer working due to age.

Mr. Bates made a motion to advertise for bids, Mr. Preston seconded the motion and after roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved.

Mr. Innocenzi	Yes
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Mr. Bates	Yes
Mr. Preston	Yes

SURPLUS PROPERTY

Mr. Oros presented items to be declared surplus property. Mr. Preston made a motion to approve the surplus property, Mr. Bates seconded the motion and after roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved.

Mr. Bates	Yes
Mr. Preston	Yes
Mr. Innocenzi	Yes

COMMISSIONERS TIME

Mr. Oros shared an update regarding the concept for Thompson Township Park and his follow up with Erwin Leffel. He said Mr. Leffel requested another month to try to engage Thompson Township Park Board members.

Mr. Oros stated Teresa Runion was recognized in April 2021 by the park district for her 32 years of service and her many accomplishments during that time and shared that she enjoyed a wonderful retirement celebration.

Mr. Oros informed the board that the park district has hired McCaulley & Company Consultant, certified lobbyists, at a cost of \$30,000 for 6 months to pursue grant opportunities for state and federal monies. The park district has currently requested grant funds through a state capital bill through ODNR earmarks for future projects for \$820,000 for expansion and improvements at Holbrook Hollows. He said Bainbridge Township Trustees, Village of Chagrin Falls, Franklin Circle Retirement Community, Chagrin Falls Community Center and Cleveland Metroparks provided letters of support.

Mr. Oros shared Headwaters Park will have 2 paddleboats available from Memorial Day through Labor Day along with kayaks and canoes. He said the Naturalists held 81 programs and served 1,692 people in February. Our park rangers also had contact with ice anglers during the colder months and monitored the many park lakes during that time. Natural Resource Management is working with Kent State University, Geauga Rotary Club, the non-profit organization Donate a Tree to the World and Best Sand volunteers to plant trees on Earth Day at Veterans Legacy Woods. Mr. Oros said Mr. Pira will be presenting at the Midwest Multi-State Science Research Conference highlighting brook trout and spotted turtles. Mr. Oros gave kudos to Sgt. Rose for helping a lost 12-year-old young lady at dusk while on foot patrol at Veterans Legacy Woods and getting her home safely. Mr. Oros shared Ms. Holly Sauder has served 17 years as volunteer coordinator and during her service, 130,457 hours of volunteer service time was logged.

Mr. Preston mentioned receiving a letter regarding dark skies. Mr. Oros explained that Observatory Park is a designated international dark sky park due to minimal light pollution.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Mr. Oros requested a motion to go into executive session for matters related to the promotion of a public employee, the purchase of property and a pending court action. Mr. Preston made a motion to approve, Mr. Innocenzi seconded the motion and after roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved.

Mr. Innocenzi	Yes
Mr. Preston	Yes
Mr. Bates	Yes

Mr. Bates made a motion to promote Lt. Dennis Sloan from Lieutenant Ranger to Chief Ranger, Mr. Preston seconded the motion. After roll-call vote, all approved.

Mr. Innocenzi	Yes
Mr. Preston	Yes
Mr. Bates	Yes

The Board entered Executive Session at 9:43 a.m. The Board came out of Executive Session at 9:55 a.m.

ADJOURNMENT

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

the motion was approved:

Mr. Preston	Yes
Mr. Innocenzi	Yes
Mr. Bates	Yes

The meeting was adjourned at 9:56 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