

**GEAUGA PARK DISTRICT BOARD
OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
October 16, 2023**

The regular meeting of the Geauga Park District Board was held October 16, 2023, at the Meyer Center, Big Creek Park. The meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. Commissioners Howard Bates, Jolene Carnabuci, Les LaGatta and Frank Stein were present. Ray Guarino was absent.

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

Park District Employees	GUESTS
John Oros, Executive Director	Todd Hicks
Matthew McCue, Deputy Director	
Paul Pira, Park Biologist	
Christine Ward, HR Manager	
Chief Dennis Sloan, Ranger	
Sandy Ward, Marketing Manager	
Lucas Beamer, Interim IT Manager	
Jessica Alpers, Administrative Assistant	

APPROVAL OF AGENDA/ADDENDUM ITEMS

Mr. Oros asked for a motion to approve the agenda. Mr. Guarino made a motion to approve the agenda; Ms. Carnabuci seconded the motion. After a roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved.

Mr. Guarino	Absent
Ms. Carnabuci	Yes
Mr. LaGatta	Yes
Mr. Stein	Yes
Mr. Bates	Yes

APPROVE OR AMEND MEETING MINUTES

Mr. Oros asked for a motion to approve last month's meeting minutes. Mr. Guarino made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from September 18, 2023, Mr. LaGatta seconded the motion. After a roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved.

Ms. Carnabuci	Yes
Mr. LaGatta	Yes
Mr. Stein	Yes
Mr. Bates	Yes
Mr. Guarino	Absent

PRESENTATION OF FINANCIAL STATEMENT – SEPTEMBER FINANCE

Ms. Sweeney the finance manager was on vacation, Mr. Oros stated that for the month of September the General Fund had a beginning balance was \$5,122,705 with an ending balance of \$4,906,106. The Land Improvement Fund had a beginning balance of \$2,549,255 with an ending balance of \$2,177,974. Mr. Oros shared that all funds combined had a beginning balance of \$7,671,961 with an ending balance of \$7,084,080 Mr. Oros asked if there were any questions about the financial statement. No questions were asked.

PRESENTATION OF PAYMENT REPORT – SEPTEMBER FINANCE

Mr. Oros asked if there were any questions about the payments made in September. No questions were asked.

OLD BUSINESS

Planning Update

Mr. McCue shared updates regarding Veterans Legacy Woods where there were a few punch list items to in the HVAC system but overall project has been completed with the trail project ongoing with our crew; finishing up the Troy Wetlands/Brede Property trails which are being worked on by the GPD construction crew. Contract work at Holbrook Hollows the South Franklin Street project is moving along with the parking area paving finished with the picnic shelter and restroom still being worked on. Mr. McCue said the crews are trying to finish projects before the weather turns for fall at the trails at this park. Mr. McCue stated the Veterans Legacy Woods stream restoration project is about 30% completed on the contracted design part of it. Mr. McCue and Mr. Pira met with the designers who are working on the permits and development design with the project beginning sometime in 2024. Mr. Oros asked if the board had any questions. No questions were asked.

NEW BUSINESS

2024 Capital Improvement Projects

Mr. McCue shared a presentation regarding 2024 Capital Improvement Projects for the Geauga Park District. In the presentation Mr. McCue stated:

- The West Woods – The main entry bridge replacement is funded through the ODOT Municipal Bridge Fund, as the original steel work and wood has deteriorated over time and will be replaced with a 3-sided box culvert. The Gallo Property trail improvements will create a loop that connects to existing bridle trails adding a mile to the existing bridle trails putting the park district at about 10 miles of equestrian trail. This will be done by the park district construction crew.
- Claridon Woodlands – An engineering consulting company looked at the upper dam primary & emergency overflow. The primary overflow is too narrow and has had blocking issues, such as debris and beaver dams, in the past. The new overflow grate will be done by the park district construction crew. Also, the area just outside the lodge is a washed river stone which will be planted with native plants to create a softer space when entering.
- Swine Creek – Swine Creek is one of the oldest district parks. The trails span everything from primitive to paved along with some trails that developed on their own over time. Operations will clarify trail signage (hiking vs. sugaring), block off unused or informal trails, and regrade and resurface some areas. The shelter at River's Edge will have a new roof and the horse tie-off area will be refreshed.
- Orchard Hills – There are two projects at this park. Asphalt driveway and parking lot resurfacing will be done with funds from ODOT. The Cricket Trail, especially by the dam area by the pond, will be worked on due to muskrat burrowing issues. There will also be repairs on the boardwalk done by the park construction crew.
- Veterans Legacy Woods – Reforestation of 13 acres of former fairways with 2,500 trees which is a grant funded project by GRLI (Great Lakes Restoration Initiative) through the U.S. Forest Service

Buckeye Retriever Club Use Agreement Kittredge Property

Mr. Oros read a memo/summary of the Buckeye Retriever Club Use Agreement for the Kittredge Property which is the newest acquisition of approximately 182 acres in Hambden Township.

“Please find attached the Use Agreement for the Buckeye Retrievers Club to utilize our newest property acquisition, the Kittredge Property. Western Reserve Land Conservancy worked with Buckeye Retrievers Club to negotiate the purchase alongside Geauga Park District. Throughout the negotiations, the purchase was negotiated in good faith knowing the former uses of the property extended by Mr. Kittredge to Buckeye Retriever Club would also be extended by Geauga Park District.”

Mr. Oros asked if there were any questions about the use of the property in regard to Buckeye Retriever Club. Mr. Bates asked what amount of general liability insurance does the Club have to maintain. Mr. Oros stated it was typical to maintain \$1 million for the certificate of liability insurance. Ms. Carnabuci asked if the dog training events will be public. Mr. Oros shared that with other affiliated retriever clubs, the goal is to work with them to develop programs we could advertise in our park program. Mr. Oros said programs would be in the future as the park determines logistic and parking for these programs.

Mr. Oros asked for a motion to approve the use agreement between Buckey Retriever Club and the Geauga Park District. Mr. Bates made a motion to approve, Ms. Carnabuci seconded the motion. After a roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved.

Mr. LaGatta	Yes
Mr. Stein	Yes
Mr. Bates	Yes
Mr. Guarino	Absent
Ms. Carnabuci	Yes

2024 Healthcare

Mr. Oros shared that the 2024 contribution rates for healthcare increased from 2023 by 8.9%. The 2024 Geauga Park District employer contribution is estimated to increase by \$57,751.44 annually. Mr. Oros stated this annual increase is based on current employee enrollment. Mr. Oros said the 2024 individual employee contribution will increase annually by \$228.00 for those who contribute to a family plan, and \$96.00 for those who contribute to a single plan. Mr. Oros requested the Park Board consider the same plans and contribution rates as the County. Mr. Oros asked for a motion to approve the 2024 Healthcare Plan effective January 1, 12024. Mr. Bates made a motion to approve, Ms. Carnabuci seconded the motion. After a roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved.

Mr. Stein	Yes
Mr. LaGatta	Yes
Mr. Bates	Yes
Mr. Guarino	Absent
Ms. Carnabuci	Yes

Surplus Property

Mr. Oros asked for a motion to the surplus of an Indiana Arlington desk for auction and a 2015 Jeep Patriot Vin #8620 for trade in. Mr. Oros asked for a motion to approve surplus property. Ms. Carnabuci made a motion to approve the surplus; Mr. Stein seconded the motion. After a roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved.

Mr. Bates	Yes
Mr. Guarino	Absent
Ms. Carnabuci	Yes
Mr. LaGatta	Yes
Mr. Stein	Yes

COMMISSIONERS TIME

Mr. Oros shared the following staff and department updates from the month of September 2023:

- Approximately 16,290 people visited the GPD fair building during The Great Geauga County Fair!
- 822 fifth graders from 10 Geauga County schools are participating in the Nature Scope’s Binocular Program this year.
- Mr. Oros read a report from Mr. John Kolar regarding the Boats and Ropes Summer 2023 Report

Total Ropes Course attendance: 895
Adult climbers: 381 – (43%)
Children climbers: 514 – (57%)
In county – 67%
Out of county - 33%
Ropes Course Revenue Total: \$4,180.00

Total boaters: 2397
Adults: 1659 – (69%)
Children: 738 – (31%)
In county 2004 – (83.5%)
Out-of-County 393 – (16.5%)
Boathouse Revenue Total: \$3,563.67

- The Naturalist Department: The Homeschool Learning Fair at The West Woods was again a success, featuring numerous vendors and 223 happy patrons coming out to enjoy two different sessions.
- A total of 83 programs were held in the month of September with an attendance of 1,795 (not including the fair).

Mr. Paul Pira presented **“Ecological Restoration: Golf Courses – Lessons Learned... New Opportunities.”** Mr. Pira shared that ‘Ecological Restoration’ means working towards the recovery of an ecosystem, particularly those damaged or destroyed by human activity, through projects, restoration activities and the practice of conservation. Mr. Pira stated that general restoration goals facilitate or ‘jumpstart’ the return (or recovery) of native ecosystems through planned habitat restoration and guided succession. Mr. Pira noted Orchard Hills Park and Veterans Legacy Woods as an example of ongoing GPD ecological restoration projects from golf courses to natural habitats. Mr. Pira stressed that inventory and management plans provide park development, restoration and management recommendations based on 1) biological inventory & assessments and 2) best management practices with management plans as ‘big picture/living’ documents that will change over time and help guide ‘adaptive management’. Mr. Pira shared ariel photos of Orchard Hills Park from 1937 to 2007, the 2007 photo taken right before the Park District acquired the property. Mr. Pira then showed Park District maps detailing natural areas in Orchard Hills Park, water resources and a diagram for additional restoration efforts. In the next few slides, Mr. Pira shared the Veterans Legacy Woods general restoration goals: replace old fairways with 70-80 acres of mature native forest; restoration of headwater streams; removal of ponds to be replaced with streams riparian wetlands; stream bank stabilization/reconnection of streams with floodplains/re-establishment of natural nutrient cycles; restoration of 10 acres of native meadow and create a pollinator habitat (native forbs). Mr. Pira stated that ‘partners’ in this process are extremely important and named the US EPA, Ohio EPA, US Forest Service, Chagrin River Watershed Partnership and the Western Reserve Land Conservancy as well as local community members are key to the success of these types of projects. For the Orchard Hills restoration specifically, Mr. Pira stated that grants were acquired from the Water Resources Restoration Sponsor Program, a part of the Water Pollution Control Loan Program within the Ohio EPA; and Clean Ohio (Natural Resource Advisory Committee & the Ohio EPA) as well as 319 Grant provided funding.

Mr. Oros thanked Mr. Pira and the GPD teams as well as the support of the general public in making these restoration projects happen.

Mr. Oros asked if there were any questions. Mr. Bates stated he had been approached by several people about the possibility of a ‘Rainbow Bridge’ within the parks. Mr. Bates said he believed it was a popular attraction at other parks. Mr. Oros said he would investigate and contact the patron if Mr. Bates had that information.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Oros stated there were no items to be brought forward to executive session.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEXT BOARD MEETING: Mr. Oros announced the next meeting is Monday, November 20, 2023, at 8:30am.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr. Guarino	Absent
Ms. Carnabuci	Yes
Mr. LaGatta	Yes
Mr. Stein	Yes
Mr. Bates	Yes

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 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