

**GEAUGA PARK DISTRICT BOARD
OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
DECEMBER 18, 2023**

The regular meeting of the Geauga Park District Board was held December 18, 2023, at the Meyer Center, Big Creek Park. The meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. Commissioners Howard Bates, Ray Guarino, Jolene Carnabuci, Les LaGatta and Frank Stein were present.

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	
Chief Dennis Sloan, Ranger	
Sandy Ward, Communications Specialist	
Lucas Beamer, Interim IT Manager	
Jessica Alpers, Administrative Assistant	
Paul Pira, Park Biologist	
Holly Sauder, Special Events Coordinator	
Chris Mentrek, Naturalist	
Christine Ward, Human Resources	
Dawn Sweeney, Fiscal Officer	
Josh Inks, South Operations	

APPROVAL OF AGENDA/ADDENDUM ITEMS

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

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

APPROVE OR AMEND MEETING MINUTES

Mr. Oros asked for a motion to approve last month’s meeting minutes. Mr. Bates made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from November 20, 2023, Mr. Guarino seconded the motion. After a roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved.

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

PRESENTATION OF FINANCIAL STATEMENT – NOVEMBER FINANCE

Ms. Sweeney stated that for the month of November the General Fund had a beginning balance was \$4,672,930 with an ending balance of \$4,292,396. The Land Improvement Fund had a beginning balance of \$1,849,120 with an ending balance of \$2,035,190 Ms. Sweeney shared that all funds combined had a beginning balance of \$6,522,050 with an ending balance of \$6,327,586. Mr. Oros asked if there were any questions about the financial statement. No questions were asked.

PRESENTATION OF PAYMENT REPORT – NOVEMBER FINANCE

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

OLD BUSINESS

Planning Update

Mr. McCue shared that the Holbrook Hollows South Franklin Street Connection is nearly completed, but work is still being done on the restroom and the picnic shelter. The construction crews have wrapped up with the outdoor work at Troy Wetlands, the Brede property, and Veterans Legacy Woods as the weather has started to turn. Mr. McCue stated that a Design Build RFP and request for qualifications will be advertised for the Veterans Legacy Woods reforestation project, funded through US Forest Service, after the first of the year. Mr. McCue said that the 2024 Aggregate Materials will be advertised for bid within the first quarter of the upcoming year. Mr. McCue explained that the Asphalt Improvements for the Rookery for the upcoming year will also go out to bid. Mr. Oros asked if the board had any questions. No questions were asked.

NEW BUSINESS

2024 Prequalified Consultants

Mr. Oros shared that Mr. McCue and the Geauga Park District requested Statements of Qualifications to establish a list of professional design firms to provide professional services including architecture, landscape architecture, civil, mechanical, or electrical engineering; surveying; and geo-technical investigation in 2024 if needed.

Mr. Oros stated that there is a list of firms that have submitted their qualifications attached which includes their disciplines which they provide with in-house staff. Mr. McCue explained that this is an annual occurrence in which GPD advertises a request for qualifications for the upcoming year and firms send in qualifications. Mr. Oros asked if the board had any questions. No questions were asked.

2024 Printing & Mailing Services for Activity Guides

Mr. Oros presented the following information to the board regarding a bid that went out for the printing and mailing of the 2024 Activity Guides. Mr. Oros stated that on November 30, 2023, four (4) bids were received for our 2024 Printing & Mailing Services for Activity Guides (see attached Bid Results). These bids were based on the 'Invitation to Bid' published November 9, 2023. The apparent low bid of \$74,601.40 came from Premier Printing Corp. of Warrensville Heights, Ohio. Ms. Ward recommends working with Premier for the upcoming year is based on the following: the submitted bid is within the budgeted amount of \$75,000; the submitted bid has been reviewed and determined to be complete. Premier fulfilled all the requirements to be eligible to execute the project in accordance with the contract documents; the Ohio Auditor Findings For Recovery Database yielded no results for Premier Printing Corp.; based on Premier's many years of reliable service to Geauga Park District Ms. Ward is confident in Premier's abilities to communicate well and provide a quality product for the taxpayers to enjoy. Mr. Oros asked if the board had any questions. No questions were asked.

Mr. Oros asked for a motion to award the contract. Mr. LaGatta made a motion to approve, Mr. Guarino seconded the motion. After a roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved.

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

Resolution 17-2023 / 2023 Final Appropriations

Mr. Oros presented the 2023 Final Appropriations to the board as follows: The following format conforms with the "legal level of budgetary control" according to Ohio Revised Code 5705.38 (C) that requires "appropriation measures shall be classified so as to set forth separately the amounts appropriated for each office, department, and division, and within each, the amount appropriated for personal services." Therefore, this budget format conforms with the state statute in that the appropriations resolution is presented as follows: by fund; by department; personal services (salaries and benefits); all other expenditures. This level of format will reduce the number of budget amendment resolutions throughout the year since budget adjustments within these categories can occur without board approval. The final 2023 appropriation resolution adjusts department budgets where

funds budgeted earlier in the year exceed anticipated actual expenditures, as well as where additional appropriations are needed.

Mr. Oros asked Ms. Dawn Sweeney if she wanted to point out anything related to the 2023 appropriation adjustments. Ms. Sweeney stated that for the General Fund the appropriations are 9,240,025.48 and the Land Improvement Fund is 2,529,566.04. The Canine Fund contains \$794.34 which was transferred out of the 2016 Capital Reserve Fund which contains 89,189.80. Ms. Sweeney concluded that the total appropriations are \$11,859,579.66, which is under the \$12,409,895.03 that was proposed for this year. Mr. Oros asked if the board had any questions. No questions were asked.

Mr. Oros asked for a motion to approve this resolution. Mr. Guarino 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	Yes
Ms. Carnabuci	Yes

Resolution 18 -2023 / 2024 Final Budget Appropriations

Mr. Oros presented 2024 Final Budget Appropriations to the board as follows: The following format conforms with the “legal level of budgetary control” according to Ohio Revised Code 5705.38(C) that requires “appropriation measures shall be classified so as to set forth separately the amounts appropriated for each office, department, and division, and within each, the amount appropriated for personal services.” Therefore, this budget format conforms with the state statute in that the appropriations resolution is presented as follows: by fund, by department, personal services (salaries and benefits); all other non-personal services expenditures. Ms. Sweeney stated that the expenditures for the General Fund are anticipated to be \$7,517,709.45 and the Land Improvement expenditures to be \$839,360. Ms. Sweeney explained that these figures are the same ones from the draft presented at the November board meeting. Mr. Oros asked if the board had any questions. No questions were asked.

Mr. Oros asked for a motion to approve the resolution. Mr. Bates made a motion to approve, Mr. LaGatta seconded the motion. After a roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved.

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

Resolution 19 – 2023 / 2024 Tax Advance Resolution

Mr. Oros presented the 2024 Tax Advance the board as follows: Please accept this resolution to request advances of real estate taxes collected on the districts behalf and deposited into the General Fund as set forth on the following dates provided by the Geauga County Auditor’s Office: January 19, 2024; February 16, 2024; June 26, 2024; July 12, 2024. This will assist with cash flow in that tax revenues will be dispersed to the district in a timelier manner.

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

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

COMMISSIONERS TIME

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

- Geauga Park District Naturalist Mr. Chris Mentrek shared a presentation containing information regarding the upcoming total solar eclipse, which is set to occur on April 8th, 2024, which has not occurred in Geauga County since 1806. Mr. Mentrek reviewed what is expected to occur during this event and the prospective timeline during the day of the total solar eclipse in Geauga County. Mr. Mentrek stated that this is a once in a lifetime opportunity and participation has historically been high regarding solar eclipse programs, but the park can only hold around 2,000 patrons. Mr. Mentrek said that a GPD event has been planned for the Geauga County Fairgrounds to accommodate the anticipated increase in attendance. Mentrek explained that in January a lot of school outreach programs will occur for fifth grade students and five out of six libraries have programs scheduled. Ms. Sauder emphasized the importance of safety and education during this event and stated that eclipse glasses will be provided to viewers. Ms. Sauder stated that the expected attendance if the weather is good is around 6,000 to 8,000 visitors. Ms. Sauder explained the layout of the fairgrounds as it relates to the planning of the event. Ms. Sauder said that sponsorship requests went out to the community prior to Thanksgiving and follow-up will occur after the new year begins. Mr. Mentrek stated that there will be several methods of safe sun-viewing present at the event and ways to record patron observations. Ms. Sauder said that the steer at the fairgrounds will have sunglasses on for the event, and NASA has provided information for the event.
- When GPD opened facility and campsite reservations at 8:00am on December 1st to county residents, and in the first hour there were 341 facility reservations and 52 camping reservations. By 12:00pm there were 524 facility reservations which totaled \$45,503 and 86 camping reservations which totaled \$3,085. All Saturdays and Sundays have been reserved for Claridon Woodlands Lodge for the 2024 year.
- On December 2nd, we hosted our 10th annual Greens for Giving event at The West Woods Nature Center. More than 125 visitors created 350 evergreen centerpieces for the Veterans Food Pantry and the Department of Aging, and when it came time to deliver these centerpieces the following Monday, Fox 8 News was there. The New Day Cleveland Fox8 segment which expressed great community support was played for the board. The feedback from this program is resoundingly positive.
- In a series of social media posts the day before Thanksgiving, staff had the honor of announcing the opening of Troy Wetlands to the public. The posts were extremely popular and yielded a good number of visits to walk the beautiful boardwalks and explore the overlook deck. A slideshow of photos from Troy Wetlands showcased the hard work done by the GPD in-house construction crew led by foreman Isaiah Shipman. At Troy Wetlands, which is a mixed emergent wetland, there are opportunities for fishing or to simply explore some incredible views of nature. A trail map and more detailed information regarding Troy Wetlands can be found on the Geauga Park District website. Joshua Inks was recognized as part of the construction crew that made this opening possible.
- From the Naturalist Department, 10 volunteers receiving training on Nov. 19 to assist The West Woods front desk staff with snowshoe rentals beginning when conditions are right. Naturalists held 72 programs in the month of November with an attendance of 3,008 patrons.
- After reaching out to staff regarding the recently acquired Kitteridge property totaling 182 acres, there has been a proposed renaming to Hamden Hills. The name comes from the previous owner, Mr. Chess Kitteridge, who referred to the property as Hamden Hills: Population Five.
- The car counts for the 2023 year has concluded. The top five parks are Frohring Meadows with 62,553 cars; Big Creek Park had 32,658; Beartown had 31,753 cars; Swine Creek Reservation had 31,232 cars; Orchard Hills had 29,544 cars. Ms. Carnabuci questioned if time of day data was provided within the data pool. Chief Sloane stated that it was not included in the data. Mr. Oros stated that this data is collected from 200 days out of the calendar year by the Ranger Department, which is a nice tool to know which parks are prominently visited.

- Commissioner Howard Bates has been reappointed for another term which will last through 2026.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Oros motioned for an executive session to discuss compensation of public employees and collective bargaining matters with negotiations within the Ranger Department

Mr. Oros asked for a motion to go into Executive Session. Mr. Bates made a motion to approve the session; Mr. Guarino seconded the motion. After a roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved.

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

Executive Session began at 9:15am.

Executive Session concluded at 9:40am at which point attendees returned to the meeting.

Mr. Bates stated there were two items coming out of Executive Session, the first item being the contract between the Fraternal Order of Police and the Geauga Park District with the Rangers and Sergeant Rangers for the period of January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2026

Mr. Oros asked for a motion to approve the contract. Mr. Guarino 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
Ms. Carnabuci	Yes
Mr. Bates	Yes
Mr. Guarino	Yes

Mr. Bates stated the second item coming out of Executive Session was the 2024 compensation adjustment of 3.5% for all union and non-union employees and to approve additional merit compensation for eligible employees not to exceed 1.5%

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

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

Mr. Oros stated no additional were brought out of Executive Session.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEXT BOARD MEETING: Mr. Oros announced the next meeting is Tuesday, January 16, 2024, at 8:30am.

ADJOURNMENT

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

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

The meeting was adjourned at 9:43 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