

**GEAUGA PARK DISTRICT BOARD
OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
June 17, 2024**

The regular meeting of the Geauga Park District Board was held June 17, 2024, 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 and Frank Stein were present. Les LaGatta 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	Kaci Krupko – Enterprise Fleet Management, Inc.
Dennis Sloan, Chief Ranger	
Lucas Beamer, IT Manager	
Jessica Alpers, Administrative Assistant	
Dawn Sweeney, Fiscal Officer	
Sandy Ward, Marketing Manager	
Meredith McKeon, Park Planner	
John Kolar, Chief Naturalist	

APPROVAL OF AGENDA/ADDENDUM ITEMS

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

Ms. Carnabuci	Yes
Mr. LaGatta	Absent
Mr. Stein	Yes
Mr. Bates	Yes
Mr. Guarino	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 May 20, 2024, Ms. Carnabuci seconded the motion. After a roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved.

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

PRESENTATION OF FINANCIAL STATEMENT – MAY FINANCE

Ms. Sweeney stated that for the month of May the General Fund had a beginning balance was \$5,305,848 with an ending balance of \$4,657,459. The Land Improvement Fund had a beginning balance of \$1,857,748 with an ending balance of \$1,912,802. Ms. Sweeney shared that all funds combined had an ending balance of \$6,570,261 Mr. Oros asked if there were any questions about the financial statement. No questions were asked.

PRESENTATION OF PAYMENT REPORT – MAY FINANCE

Mr. Oros asked if there were any questions about the payments made in May. Mr. Bates inquired about the liability insurance payment listed in the report. Mr. Oros explained that it was an annual bulk fee. No further questions were asked.

OLD BUSINESS

Planning Update

Mr. McCue stated that the internal construction on the upper dam along with planting by the lodge and work on benches at Claridon Woodlands has concluded. Mr. McCue shared that there are upcoming plans to resurface the entry drive and parking lot at the Rookery starting on June 18th. Mr. McCue also said that resurfacing will take place at Orchard Hills later this month and that Ms. Sandy Ward will post notices of park closures on social media. Mr. McCue stated that construction crews are currently working at Swine Creek on trail improvements.

Resolution 3-2024: Enterprise Fleet Management Agreement

Mr. Oros presented a resolution for an Agreement with Enterprise Fleet Management for reconsideration. Mr. Oros shared that since the previous meeting two items, language of indemnity and disposition of vehicles were in question. The District is permitted to work with Enterprise with the disposition of vehicles. Indemnity language would need to be eliminated from the agreement. Ms. Kaci Krupko, of Enterprise Fleet Management Co., presented a five-year outlook on the actual cost of a potential agreement based on the Park District's Capital Budget with cash and leasing options available through Enterprise. Mr. Oros inquired about the process of buying out leased vehicles at the end of the contract term. Ms. Krupko explained that buying a vehicle out is based on the reduced quote received when lease term begins, but it can be bought out prior to the end of a lease term. Mr. Oros stated previously shared vehicle expenditures; this agreement may be beneficial for cost savings. Mr. Oros asked about the process regarding the termination of a contractual agreement with Enterprise. Ms. Krupko shared that if the Park District wanted to terminate the partnership the leased vehicles would be purchased at their reduced book value and they would remain with the Park District. Mr. Oros expressed that one of the challenges that Geauga Park District faces is finding enough vehicles through local dealerships. Mr. Oros also shared the average annual mileage for the fleet is around 7600 miles. Mr. Guarino inquired about discussing this matter during the Executive Session. Mr. Oros stated that he must consult with the legal consul to move the matter to Executive Session. This resolution has been tabled until July.

NEW BUSINESS

Resolution 4-20-24: 2025 Tax Budget

Mr. Oros shared that Ohio Revised Code 5705.28 the Park District requires taxing authorities to pass their tax budget by July 15th of each year, which must be submitted to the County Auditor on or before July 19th, 2024. This legal requirement is separate from the annual appropriation resolution (i.e., the budget) which sets expenditure limits via the legal level of budgetary control and is typically passed by the end of each fiscal year (December 31) for Geauga Park District (GPD).

For further clarification, Mr. Oros stated the tax budget process in Ohio establishes "need" of taxing authorities which they present to the County Budget Commission consisting of the County Auditor, Treasurer and Prosecutor. County Auditors in Ohio are responsible for determining property values which are the basis of tax collections derived from millage levied by taxing authorities and approved by voters. Therefore, the 2.6 mills in property taxes that voters approved to support GPD are collected by the County Auditor based on the property values they assigned and are distributed to GPD the following year. In other words, 2024 taxes of voter supported millage based on that year's property values are collected by the County Auditor and will distribute to the various governments in the county like school districts, cities, park districts, etc. in 2025.

Mr. Oros stated that once the 2025 Tax Budget Resolution is approved by the Geauga Park District Board of Commissioners, it will be forwarded to the Geauga County Budget Commission along with supporting documents in preparation for the budget hearings scheduled for August 19th and 20th, 2024.

Ms. Sweeney shared that for the 2025 tax budget the Total Estimated Revenue is expected to be \$7,158,503. The General Fund expenditures are estimated to be \$7,164,511. The Land Improvement Fund will receive a transfer from the General Fund in the amount of \$200,000 to help fund capital projects. The Land Improvement expenditures are estimated to be \$1,005,000 for projects listed on the capital improvement plan. Mr. Oros asked if there were any questions for Ms. Sweeney. Mr. Guarino inquired if grants were included in the budget in the form of revenue transfer. Mr. Oros stated that most grants are revenue in and expenditures back out with any

carryover going into the General Fund. Mr. Bates asked if there was any projected carryover in this budget. Ms. Sweeney shared that the projected carryover for 2025 is \$3,160,514 for the General Fund and \$1,127,134 for the Land Improvement Fund resulting in a total carryover of \$4,287,648.

Mr. Oros asked for a motion to approve the 2025 Tax Budget. Mr. Bates made a motion to approve, Mr. Guarino seconded the motion. After a roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved.

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

Surplus Property

Mr. Oros presented surplus property item for auction (1) Chest Waders; (2) Hip Waders; (1) EnviroScape Watershed Model – which will be donated to Geauga Soil & Water Conservation District

Mr. Oros asked for a motion to approve items sent to auction. Mr. Guarino made a motion to approve; Mr. Stein seconded the motion. After a roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved.

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

COMMISSIONERS TIME

Mr. John Kolar shared a presentation entitled “Natural Treasures” which detailed the natural wonders of the over 10,000 acres that Geauga Park District preserves which is home to scenic views and a wide range of plants and animals. Mr. Kolar shared that GPD is home to an abundance of mature Beech Maple forests with small groupings of Chestnut trees as well, especially at The West Woods and Welton’s Gorge. These forests are often home to the state wildflower, the Trillium and are critical to several species like the Luna Moth and the Hooded Warbler. Mr. Kolar stated that Swine Creek is home to one of the only places in the county where he has spotted wild rose-shell azaleas. Mr. Kolar emphasized the importance of Swine Creek, Eldon Russel, and Big Creek Park in the preservation of the Cerulean Warbler which is on the brink of becoming endangered. The gorges like Welton’s Gorge and Ansel’s Cave provide habitat for the northern nesting birds like the Black-Footed Green Warbler, the Dark-eyed Junco, and the Blue-Headed Vireo, these are birds are not typically seen at feeders, in this county alone Mr. Kolar has seen around 200 different species of bird in Geauga County this year alone. Mr. Kolar shared that the swamp forests of Bass Lake is full of life with unusual plants like the Cardinal Flower and Eldon Russel provides one of the best spaces in the northeast to see the Prothonotary Warbler which is very habitat specific. The wetlands like Lake Kelso, born of the Ice Age, are part of one of the most pristine wetlands areas and the bog provides opportunities for patrons to see carnivorous sundew plants like the Venus Flytrap and wild Calla. Lake Kelso is also home to the rare northern nesting bird, like the Northern Water Thrush, while also providing habitat to a wide variety of dragonflies and damselflies with close to 110 species being found in Geauga Park District. Mr. Kolar detailed that the wetlands, while also being a great habitat for comeback critters, those that have been absent for a while but are making a return, also house the Baltimore Checker-spot Butterfly, the Four-Toed Salamander, Western Chorus Frogs, and the endangered Spotted Turtle. Mr. Kolar shared that Geauga County is one of the best spots to see Sandhill Cranes with a pair spotted at Welton’s Gorge, Burton Wetlands, and Eldon Russel. Mr. Kolar shared that vernal pools are one of the most critically important, yet threatened wetlands the Geauga Park District protects because they provide habitat for frogs, salamanders and other amphibians to lay eggs without fear of predation. The lakes of GPD like Bass Lake, Best Lake, East Branch Reservoir, and Headwaters are critical stopping points for migratory birds and waterfowl like the Tundra Swan, the Common Loon, the Trumpeter Swan, and Long-tail Duck. Mr. Kolar stated that Headwaters Park and Bass Lake provide habitat for Bald Eagles, which are a tremendous comeback species alongside river otters. Mr.

Kolar stated that a variety of GPD Parks provide habitat for black bears as well which is an endangered species in the state of Ohio. Geauga Park District also maintains meadowlands which provide habitat for declining species of birds such as the Bobolink and the Eastern Meadowlark while also providing a critical stop-over for monarch butterflies. In the winter, the meadowlands also become home for tundra birds like the Rough-legged Hawk, the Long-Eared Owl, and the Short-Eared Owl finding habitat in Modroo Preserve, Chickagami Park, Swine Creek and Frohing Meadows. Mr. Kolar that we also protect Springbrook and Woodiebrook which are the last native populations of brook trout. Mr. Kolar continued that the park waterways allow for a variety of life like minnows and Rainbow Darters, the Molted Sculpin. Furthermore, the Park maintains Affelder Falls at the West Woods is home to the greatest diversity of salamanders in the county. Mr. Kolar emphasized the historic sites of old sugarbushes and sugar mills which still produces syrup while also providing historical education for residents about the history of maple sugaring. Mr. Kolar detailed the importance of Observatory Park, a silver tier international dark sky park, which protects the night sky which is a fragile natural resource. Mr. Kolar concluded that the variety of educational and recreational programs that GPD offers promotes wellness and emphasizes the significance of our natural environment and the importance of protecting and preserving it.

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

- Mr. McCue introduced Geauga Park District's newest Park Planner, Meredith McKeon, a recent graduate of The Ohio State University's Knowlton School of Architecture, who grew up and graduated from Chardon High School. Ms. McKeon expressed her excitement to begin her career and be back in her community.
- NRM is pleased to announce that Geauga Park District has officially been awarded and signed the contract paperwork for a Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) grant for a large reforestation effort at Veterans Legacy Woods. This grant will provide \$159,000 to fund the purchase and planting of approximately 2,400 native trees and shrubs as part of the on-going natural resource restoration plan for the park.
- At Veterans Legacy Woods, the exciting WRRSP coldwater stream and wetland restoration project is well underway and will really start to take shape over the next few months (mid-July-Aug-Sept) when the majority of stream construction will take place. Again, the main goal is to create special habitat: a new coldwater stream that will be an introduction site for our State Endangered Brook Trout.
- Last week over at Observatory Park, IT Manager Lucas Beamer and Naturalist Chris Mentrek installed and configured a new earthquake sensor in the park's seismograph vault. Chris shared that the magnetic sensor that converts earth-movements into electrical signals is called a *geophone*. Live data online from this device can now be viewed anytime on our Observatory Park webpage. The first chart shown here shows the bumps of Lucas and Chris closing up the vault; the second shows 24 hours of nearly-flatline calm (with the exception of some vibrations toward the bottom due to nearby summer-campers running around after their model rockets).
- This May we finished up another year of *Nature Scopes* with our "Binocular Blitz" and Graduation programs held at The Rookery. In total, fifth graders from 10 schools attended these field trips with an attendance of 883 students and teachers. *Nature Scopes* is funded with primary support from the Foundation for Geauga Parks, culminating in these field trips where students learn they get to keep the binoculars they've been using all year.
- In May the Naturalist Department held a total of 131 programs in with total attendance of 4,546.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Oros asked if there were any items for Executive Session. No items were brought forward.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEXT BOARD MEETING: Mr. Oros announced the next meeting is Monday, July 15, 2024, at 8:30a.m.

ADJOURNMENT

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

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

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15a.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

Ray Guarino, President