

**GEAUGA PARK DISTRICT BOARD  
OF PARK COMMISSIONERS  
BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
MARCH 18, 2024**

The regular meeting of the Geauga Park District Board was held March 18, 2024, at the Meyer Center, Big Creek Park. The meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. Commissioners Howard Bates, Ray Guarino, Les LaGatta, Jolene Carnabuci and Frank Stein were present.

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

<b>Park District Employees</b>	<b>GUESTS</b>
John Oros, Executive Director	Todd Hicks
Matthew McCue, Deputy Director	
Sgt. Mike Rose, Ranger	
Lucas Beamer, Interim IT Manager	
Jessica Alpers, Administrative Assistant	
Christine Ward, Human Resources	
Karie Wheaton, Park Naturalist	
Dawn Sweeney, Fiscal Officer	

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

**APPROVE OR AMEND MEETING MINUTES**

Mr. Oros asked for a motion to approve last month’s meeting minutes. Mr. Stein made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from February 20, 2024, Mr. Guarino seconded the motion. After a roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved.

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

**PRESENTATION OF FINANCIAL STATEMENT – FEBRUARY FINANCE**

Ms. Sweeney stated that for the month of February the General Fund had a beginning balance was \$3,504,108 with an ending balance of \$3,947,906. The Land Improvement Fund had a beginning balance of \$1,836,387 with an ending balance of \$1,844,958 Ms. Sweeney shared that all funds combined had an ending balance of \$5,792,864. Mr. Oros asked if there were any questions about the financial statement. No questions were asked.

**PRESENTATION OF PAYMENT REPORT – FEBRUARY FINANCE**

Mr. Oros asked if there were any questions about the payments made in February. Mr. Guarino asked about line item ‘Real Estate Tax.’ Mr. Oros and Ms. Sweeney explained that some properties for example, the new park Hambden Hills (Kittredge Property), had been billed for tax however forms have been filed to change the property status to tax exempt with the park being reimbursed for the charge once solidified with the county. Mr. Oros also explained that the park district does pay some tax due to a few farm leased properties. Ms. Carnabuci asked about the line item under IT called ‘Service Express.’ Mr. Lucas Beamer clarified that the charge was for the yearly hardware warranty service.

**OLD BUSINESS**

Mr. Oros asked if there was any old business to discuss at this time. No old business was brought forward.

**Planning Update**

Mr. McCue shared the 2024 Capital Improvement Project Summary. Mr. McCue stated the Veterans Legacy Woods Coldwater Stream project funded partially by WRC, had a meeting with the EPA to discuss the 100% design and is waiting to hear back from them. Mr. McCue said information was sent to the Army Corp of Engineering, and once we have final approval and permits, the project would start in late July, early August. Mr. McCue shared The Rookery asphalt improvement project would be discussed later in this meeting. Mr. Bates asked when The West Woods bridge replacement project would be out to bid. Mr. McCue stated that with all paperwork submitted to ODOT, bids would begin tentatively April 4<sup>th</sup> through ODOT. Mr. Oros asked if there were any additional questions. No questions were asked.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**The Rookery – 2024 Asphalt Improvement Contract Award**

Mr. Oros shared that on February 16, 2024, seven (7) bids were received for The Rookery – 2024 Asphalt Improvements project. These bids were based on the bid documents dated January 2024. After reviewing the low bid of \$90,420.00 that was submitted by Cunningham Paving Company on the information provided within the bid documents, they have fulfilled the requirements to be eligible to execute the project in accordance with the contract documents. Mr. Oros recommended the Board of Park Commissioners accept this bid for \$90,420.00 and award the contract for the Rookery – 2024 Asphalt Improvements to Cunningham Paving Company.

Mr. Oros asked for a motion to approve. Mr. LaGatta made a motion to approve, Mr. Guarino 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 No. 1-2024 / The West Woods Bridge Replacement / ODOT**

Mr. Oros shared the resolution for The West Woods Bridge Replacement Project in conjunction with the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT):

*The following Final Resolution is enacted by the Board of Park Commissioners of the Geauga Park District, hereinafter referred to as the Legislative Authority/Local Public Agency or "LPA", in the matter of the stated described project.*

*WHEREAS, on the 20th day of November 2023, the LPA enacted legislation proposing cooperation with the Director of Transportation for the described project: The project consists of improvements to West Woods Road south of Kinsman Road (S.R. 87) by replacing the structure (Bridge No. GEA-WWOOD- 0032 SFN: 2830012) over Pebble Brook Tributary with a 3-sided culvert, including guardrail, lying within the Geauga Park District; and WHEREAS, the LPA shall cooperate with the Director of Transportation in the above described project as follows: The LPA agrees to assume and bear one hundred percent (100%) of the entire cost of the improvement, less the amount of Federal-Aid funds set aside by the Director of Transportation for the financing of this improvement from funds allocated by the Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation.*

*The share of the cost of the LPA is now estimated in the amount of Thirty-Eight Thousand Seven Hundred Eighty-Seven and - - - -50/100 Dollars, (\$38,787.50), but said estimated amount is to be adjusted in order that the LPA's ultimate share of said improvement shall correspond with said percentages of actual costs when said actual costs are determined; and*

*WHEREAS, The Director of Transportation has approved said legislation proposing cooperation and under Ohio Revised Code Section 5511.06 has caused to be made plans and specifications and an estimate of cost and expense for improving the above-described highway and has transmitted copies of the same to this legislative authority;*

WHEREAS, The LPA desires the Director of Transportation to proceed with the aforesaid highway improvement.  
NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved:

Mr. Oros asked for a motion to approve the resolution for the park district to enter into a contract with ODOT and the fiscal officer will certify that the park district has \$38,787.50 in the budget. Mr. Guarino made a motion to approve, Ms. Carnabuci seconded the motion. After a roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved.

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

### **COMMISSIONERS TIME**

#### **Maple Sugaring Programs at the Geauga Park District**

Naturalist Karie Wheaton shared the wonderful programs the park district presented during ‘Maple Madness’ in February and March 2024. Ms. Wheaton said that Geauga County is the top producer of maple syrup in Ohio with Swine Creek Reservation alone harvesting sap from about 30 acres of trees (sugarbush) with about 150 tapped trees. Ms. Wheaton said that park programs focus on teaching the public the history, collection and production of syrup with most of the programs focused on/at the Mark Sperry Memorial Sugar House at Swine Creek. Ms. Wheaton shared that since 1984, the park district has been hosting programs for the public (except for 2020) with this year’s attendance for the 3 Sundays ‘Saps a Risin’ programs having 1,075 attendees. Ms. Wheaton also thanked the dedicated volunteers who had given their Sundays to make these maple programs a success with this year’s 39 volunteers working 138 hours over 3 days, outside, inside the lodge and at the sugar house. Ms. Wheaton also mentioned additional maple programs hosted, such as a van trip to local sugar houses, child specific programs and 3 schools which requested naturalist led programs teaching 130 students about maple sugaring. Ms. Wheaton also mentioned ‘Maple 101’ which partnered with the Ohio State Extension educator, Les Ober who taught a class on how to make maple syrup by tapping trees on your own property with an attendance of 17 people. Mr. Oros let the board know that Ms. Wheaton was selected as ‘Employee of the Year 2023’ and thanked her, the Naturalist Department, and the volunteers for all their hard work.

Mr. Oros shared the following staff and department updates from the month of February 2024:

- A video produced last week by our marketing department featured our outdoor recreation specialist, Naturalist Trevor Wearstler, and the free, app-based game called Agents of Discovery, which we debuted in Geauga County last year. Players must physically explore the park to play, with a new mission available every month and a half.
- Agents of Discovery was played at The West Woods April-December an estimated 1,821 times by 203 accounts (the equivalent of more than 435 miles traveled in the park and roughly 3 weeks of engagement with Nature). Currently the game is located at Swine Creek Reservation through March, and as a reward, players can be entered into a drawing for free maple syrup that was produced at that park.
- Just a friendly reminder that all park staff are gearing up for The Great Geauga Total Solar Eclipse event held at Geauga County Fairgrounds on April 8. Admission is free, and eclipse viewing glasses will be distributed first-come-first-served, one per person at the gates, which open at 10:30 a.m. A complete schedule of events, food trucks and more was posted on our website to plan your day.
- Most of the astronomy portion of our Nature Scopes Binocular Program occurred in February, experienced by 807 Geauga fifth graders.
- At The West Woods Nature Center, our Bird in the Hand Feeding Station has had at least 500 park patrons feeding birds by hand this winter!
- The Naturalist Department hosted 132 programs with a total attendance of 3,423 patrons.
- The West Woods Nature Center welcomed 2,694 guests.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Mr. Oros asked for a motion to move into Executive Session to consider the purchase or sale of property. Mr. Guarino made a motion to approve; Mr. Stein seconded the motion. After a roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved.

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

Executive Session began 9:00am

Executive Session concluded at 9:19a.m. at which point attendees returned to the meeting.

Mr. Oros asked if there were any items coming out of the Executive Session. Mr. Guarino stated there were no items coming out of Executive Session.

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

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Oros asked for a motion to adjourn. 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	Yes
Mr. Bates	Yes
Ms. Carnabuci	Yes
Mr. LaGatta	Yes
Mr. Stein	Yes

The meeting was adjourned at 9:19a.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,

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John Oros, Executive Director

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Ray Guarino, President