

**GEAUGA PARK DISTRICT BOARD  
OF PARK COMMISSIONERS  
BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
December 16, 2024**

The regular meeting of the Geauga Park District Board was held December 16, 2024, at the Meyer Center, Big Creek Park. The meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. Commissioners Howard Bates, Ray Guarino, Frank Stein and Jolene Carnabuci were present. Mr. Les LaGatta was absent.

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	
Dennis Sloan, Chief Ranger	
Christine Cycyk, HR Manager	
Paul Pira, Park Biologist	
Linda Gilbert, Naturalist	
Lucas Beamer, IT Manager	
Sandy Ward, Marketing Manager	
Dawn Sweeney, Finance Manager	
Jessica Alpers, Administrative Assistant	

**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.

Mr. Guarino	Yes
Ms. Carnabuci	Yes
Mr. LaGatta	Absent
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. Bates made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from November 18, 2024, 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

**PRESENTATION OF FINANCIAL STATEMENT – NOVEMBER FINANCE**

Ms. Dawn Sweeney stated that for the month of November the General Fund had a beginning balance of \$5,219,766 with an ending balance of \$4,665,583. The Land Improvement Fund had a beginning balance of \$1,769,022 with an ending balance of \$1,776,117. Ms. Sweeney shared that all funds combined had an ending balance of \$6,441,700. 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 stated there were no new updates to Capitol project since the last board meeting. Mr. McCue shared

that work at Veterans Legacy Woods is at completion at this point with a few small items finished in the spring. Mr. Oros asked if there were any questions regarding the 2024 Capital Projects; no questions were asked.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Resolution 8-2024 / 2025 Final Budget Appropriations**

Mr. Oros asked the Commissioners to please find the resolution for adoption of the 2025 Final Appropriations Resolution. 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 state statute in that the appropriations resolution is presented as follows: By Fund; By Department; Personal Services (Salaries & Benefits); All other non-personal services expenditures.

Ms. Dawn Sweeney reviewed the 2025 Final Budget numbers, estimating the General Fund revenue to be \$7,158,503 and expenditures to be \$6,872,702.07 with an ending fund balance of \$3,452,323.25; estimating Land Improvement revenue to be \$536,821 and expenditures to be \$1,205,000 with an ending fund balance of \$1,463,955.20; total revenue to be \$12,063,330.52

Mr. Oros asked for a motion to approve the 2025 Final Budget Appropriations. Mr. Guarino made a motion to approve; Ms. Carnabuci seconded the motion. After a roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved.

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

**Resolution 10-2024 / Tax Advance Resolution**

Mr. Oros asked the Commissioners to please accept this resolution to request advances of real estate taxes collected on the district’s behalf and deposited into the General Fund (1000) as set forth on the following dates provided by the Geauga County Auditor’s Office: January 27, 2025; February 24, 2025; June 30, 2025; July 14, 2025. Mr. Oros shared that 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 for the Tax Advance. Mr. Bates made a motion to approve; Mr. Guarino seconded the motion. After a roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved.

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

**Resolution 11-2024 / Hambden Hills Carbon Credit Project**

Mr. Oros asked the Commissioners to please accept the following resolution for the Hambden Hills Carbon Credit Project as stated below.

**RESOLUTION VERIFYING THE 2024 ACTIONS OF THE GEAUGA PARK DISTRICT BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS FOR PARTICIPATION IN A CARBON CREDIT PROGRAM**

WHEREAS, the Hambden Hills property, formerly referenced as Kittredge property was purchased in September 2023 by Geauga Park District with the assistance of Western Reserve Land Conservancy;

WHEREAS, Western Reserve Land Conservancy is currently working with City Forest Credits (CFC), a national nonprofit carbon registry, registering and issuing credits for forests such as those protected by Geauga Park District;

WHEREAS, City Forest Credits carbon crediting standard has been endorsed by the International Carbon

Reduction and Offset Accreditation (ICROA), the oldest accreditation program for the carbon market;

WHEREAS, Western Reserve Land Conservancy has registered seven carbon credit projects to date; WHEREAS, Fifty Seven (57) acres of high quality upland forest at Hambden Hills aligns with the requirements of a preservation carbon credit project as defined by City Forest Credits protocols;

WHEREAS, to register the project, the Park District will, with the support of Western Reserve Land Conservancy, complete an application, enter into an agreement with City Forest Credit, and complete project registration prior to September 29, 2025, as required within two years of property acquisition;

WHEREAS, compliance with the requirements of the preservation protocol will restrict the removal of trees in the project area for at least a 40-year period;

WHEREAS, for similar projects, the Land Conservancy has averaged Ninety Two (92) credits/acre for preservation projects, and credits have sold at prices ranging from \$34.00 to \$55.00 per credit, giving the Fifty Seven (57) acres at Hambden Hills an approximate value of \$178,296.00 to \$288,420.00.

Mr. Oros asked if there were any questions about this resolution/project; no questions were asked.

Mr. Oros asked for a motion to approve the resolution for the Hambden Hills Carbon Credit Project. Mr. Guarino made a motion to approve; Mr. Stein seconded the motion. After a roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved.

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

### **Surplus Property**

Mr. Oros shared the following items are defective and asked the Commissioners to approve sending these items to scrap: Paper Shredder, HP E231I Monitor, HP L245W Monitor, HP LP2275W Monitor, HP E241I Monitor, HP Monitor, Mice & Keyboards, Video cables and 2 qty Server battery backup

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

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

### **COMMISSIONERS TIME**

Mr. Oros introduced Naturalist Linda Gilbert who presented 'Research In Our Parks' over 2024

Ms. Gilbert shared that over the past year out of 112 species we could see in our area, the park district we noted 67 for this area of dragonflies and damers. Ms. Gilbert said there were some very interesting sightings such as the Four-Spotted Skimmers which is an invasive species thought to be in our area due to the wildfires in Canada in 2023 (3 parks had sightings with only 5 sightings in Geauga County total) but in 2024, nothing. Ms. Gilbert did say that the Four-Spotted Skimmer does have an aquatic nymph phase has a 2-year life cycle so we need to watch in 2025. Ms. Gilbert shared the 'threatened species' spotted in 9 of the parks, the Harlequin Damers, Twin-Spotted Spiketail were see at Hambden Hills and because of the clean water in Bates Creek, Lillypad Clubtail. Ms. Gilbert also said that there were Turquoise Bluetail damsels, which is uncommon, at Hambden Hills and Cyrano Damers as well.

Ms. Gilbert also shared that the West Virginia White Survey (a Citizen Scientist program), which surveyed 4 parks had results with 13 at Claridon, 16 at Affleder House, 7 at Big Creek and 0 at Headwaters. Ms. Gilbert said this is a woodlands species butterfly that is not doing well due to habitat fragmentation, forest fragmentation as it does not fly across open spaces.

For the Butterfly Survey, Ms. Gilbert shared that there were 28 species cataloged at Burton Wetlands and 16 at Frohring Meadows but did state that these numbers have been trending way down for butterflies. Ms. Gilbert shared that she looks at the top 3 common species: Pearl Crescent which is stable, but the Clouded Sulphur numbers and Cabbage White butterflies are down, to gauge health of the species in our area. Ms. Gilbert said that the data collected at the parks matches a 20-year study that noted the stability of these 'critters.' Ms. Gilbert said Monarch butterflies in the area are down with only 2 – 6 spotted at the parks total. Ms. Gilbert shared that the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has posted that Monarch butterflies should be listed as 'threatened' in the Endangered Species Act. Ms. Gilbert said that there would still be small scale breeding of Monarchs, but commercial operations should stop. Ms. Gilbert also shared that the Tiger Swallowtail is stable at Frohring though numbers were down this year. She also said that a Spotted Lanternfly was spotted at Frohring (which is an invasive species) and asked that if anyone spots them in the parks, please contact her and let her know where and when, stating that most are found near the 4 major cities in Ohio: Cleveland, Cincinnati, Toledo and Columbus due to cities having the Tree of Heaven plantings which Lanternflies eat (Trees of Heaven are planted along the Rapid Tracks in Cleveland).

Ms. Gilbert also shared that she found a Sculptured Resin Bee at Frohring which was a new find in this area and not native to Geauga County.

In April, Ms. Gilbert stated that there were 2 Citizen Scientist opportunities conducted during the April 8, 2024 solar eclipse. The first was NASA Globe Observer kept track of temperatures during the eclipse and the second was the Eclipse Soundscape was a small recording device to capture nature sounds 3 days before and 3 days after the solar eclipse on April 8, 2024. Ms. Gilbert said the sound card was sent to soundscapes.org for analysis and she was able to obtain a kit with several devices. Ms. Gilbert set her device in Russell Uplands and 1 minute before totality the bird song went quiet, and the peppers came out for 3 minutes.

Ms. Gilbert then shared that with the new Hambden Hills property a biological assessment is done and in this case they did a breeding bird survey as one of the tools they use. There were 52 species under review which are assigned 'codes' based on behaviors observed with sightings of 13 possible, 33 probable and 6 confirmed. Ms. Gilbert shared some of the birds spotted at Hambden Hills: Ovenbird, Yellowbellied Sapsucker, Osprey, Yellow-Throated Vireo.

Project Feeder Watch is another project Ms. Gilbert shared information about as it is volunteer run. Ms. Gilbert said there are 3 volunteers who watch the feeders at Big Creek, Swine Creek and The West Woods. At The West Woods and Swine Creek the most common bird is the Cardinal with Chickadee at Big Creek.

At the new park, Troy Wetlands, Ms. Gilbert shared that there is a small Heron Rookery (about 6 nests) at the park and a Nelson's Sparrow was also spotted (though they are typically found in salt marsh habitats). Ms. Gilbert was also happy to say that Troy Wetlands is almost rivaling La Due with the number of species found at this park.

Ms. Gilbert also shared that a Red-Crossbill was found at Orchard Hills Park and appears to be nesting there – birders from all over have made the visit to park to cross that bird off their list.

For the Bluebird Box Nest Results, Ms. Gilbert shared that there were 222 Bluebirds; 140 Tree Swallows; 62 House Wren; 0 Chickadee. For the Geauga Park District bluebird boxes, volunteers monitor 131 boxes over 9 parks: Frohring Meadows, Orch Hills, Swine Creek, Big Creek, Whitlam Woods, The Rookery, Walter C Best Preserve, Observatory Park and Burton Wetlands.

Ms. Gilbert shared information for the Union Chapel BAT Survey, which she spearheads. In June and July, a thermal imaging scope provided by the Natural Resource Management Department helped with the count. Ms. Gilbert explained that staff and volunteers will stand outside and count as the bats leave the condo. Ms. Gilbert shared that at one time (in 2011) that close to 3,000 bats resided in the condo but due to White Nose Syndrome, the population decreased dramatically in 2012. However, since 2016/2017 when the counts were 0, the bat population has been slowly growing again with this year's count at about 290. Ms. Gilbert speculated that a 'fat bat' has a better chance of surviving White Nose Syndrome than a 'skinny bat' as the larger bats stay in

hibernation longer and have a more plentiful source of food when awakening.

Mr. Oros shared the following information for the month of November:

- Geauga Park District's annual Greens for Giving returned to The West Woods Nature Center on December 7. Through this year's project, 90 registered members of the public, members of the current Leadership Geauga class, and some Park District staff used provided materials to assemble a record-high 414 evergreen centerpieces! Two days later, 335 of them were delivered to the Department on Aging for distribution through their home-delivered meal program to seniors, and 80 of them were delivered to the Geauga County Veterans Food Pantry for distribution to our local veterans. Greens for Giving was the brainchild of Special Events Coordinator Holly Sauder 11 years ago as a nice, Nature-based way to send holiday cheer to our aging and veteran populations. Thanks to all participants and Bob Rogish of Rogish Farm's Tannenbaum Christmas Trees, who again generously donated all the evergreens for the event. Leftover greens were also put to good use later in the week during programs for Timbertots ages 3-5 and individuals with special needs.
- The Naturalist Department in November had 85 programs and served 3,228 park patrons.
- The West Woods Nature Center greeted 2,811 visitors in the month of November.
- The 2025 Park Board Meeting schedule was distributed to the Commissioners with additional copies at the back of the room at the sign-in sheet. These dates are also listed on the Park District website.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Mr. Oros asked for a motion to move into Executive Session to discuss a pending court action, consideration of 2025 compensation of public employees and a land purchase. Mr. Guarino made a motion to approve; Ms. Carnabuci seconded the motion. After a roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved.

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

Executive Session began 9:02am

Executive Session concluded at 9:57am at which point attendees returned to the meeting.

Mr. Oros asked if any items were brought forward from Executive Session. Mr. Guarino asked for a motion to approve a 1/5% cost of living adjustment for 2025, and to begin conducting annual employee performance evaluations on the date of the employee's anniversary (date of hire), at which time merit adjustments will be considered based on employee performance. Mr. Bates seconded the motion. After a roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved.

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

Mr. Oros asked if there were any additional item to be brought out of Executive Session; no additional items were brought forward.

**ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEXT BOARD MEETING:** Mr. Oros announced the next meeting is Tuesday, January 21, 2025 at 8:30 a.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.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 9:59 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,

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John Oros, Executive Director

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Ray Guarino, President