

**GEAUGA PARK DISTRICT BOARD
OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
February 18, 2025**

The regular meeting of the Geauga Park District Board was held February 18, 2025, at the Meyer Center, Big Creek Park. The meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. Commissioners Howard Bates, Jolene Carnabuci, Frank Stein and Les LeGatta were present. Mr. 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 | |
| Dennis Sloan, Chief Ranger | |
| Michael Thies, Park Ranger | |
| Paul Pira, Park Biologist | |
| Rebecca Cantrell, Land Steward | |
| 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; Ms. Carnabuci 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 |

APPROVE OR AMEND MEETING MINUTES

Mr. Oros asked for a motion to approve last month's meeting minutes (January 2025). Ms. Jessica Alpers stated before the vote a correction on the Board Packet for this meeting. Ms. Alpers stated that under 'Presentation of Payment Report' for the January minutes, Ms. Alpers verbally corrected the payments reviewed summary to say December, not November as noted in the January meeting minutes paperwork given to the Commissioners.

Mr. Oros again asked for a motion to approve last month's meeting minutes. Mr. Stein made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from January 21, 2025 as amended, Mr. LaGatta 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 |

PRESENTATION OF FINANCIAL STATEMENT – JANUARY FINANCE

Ms. Dawn Sweeney stated that for the month of January the General Fund had a beginning balance of \$4,238,852 with an ending balance of \$3,869,547. The Land Improvement Fund had a beginning balance of \$1,352,935 with an ending balance of \$1,323,934. Ms. Sweeney shared that all funds combined had an ending balance of \$5,193,480. Mr. Oros asked if there were any questions about the financial statement. No questions were asked.

PRESENTATION OF PAYMENT REPORT – JANUARY FINANCE

Mr. Oros asked if there were any questions about the payments made in January; no questions were asked.

Mr. McCue asked Park Biologist Paul Pira to introduce the newest member of the Natural Resource Management Team as a Land Steward. Ms. Rebecca Cantrell shared her background and qualifications in Land Management with experience in invasive plant management and deer management.

Mr. Oros then asked Chief Ranger Dennis Sloan to introduce the newest member of the Park Ranger Department. Mr. Michael Thies shared his background in law enforcement with a master's degree in criminal analysis from Tiffin University.

OLD BUSINESS

Planning Update

Mr. McCue said that The West Woods/ODOT bridge project will let on February 27 with details in March as several contractors are bidding project. Mr. McCue also shared that for the Sunnybrook Preserve asphalt improvements for 2025, 4 proposals were submitted with Cunningham Paving as the apparent lowest bid which should be awarded for the asphalt and resurfacing work at the park. Mr. McCue stated that other projects within the park are weather dependent with staff waiting on a break in the weather to start.

Mr. McCue shared that the Planning Department completed GIS map updates on all new trails and properties from 2024. Mr. McCue also stated that the department created a reforestation application in GIS for NRM staff and volunteers entering data to track how species are doing in reforestation areas with survivability and establishment.

Mr. McCue stated that the preliminary plans for The West Woods Nature Center exhibits expansion are being finalized with Architectural Consultants in the next few weeks.

Mr. Oros asked if there were any questions for Mr. McCue regarding projects; no questions were asked.

NEW BUSINESS

Meeting Minutes Correction – February 20, 2024

Mr. Oros shared a memo asking for a correction to the February 20, 2024 Board Meeting Minutes.

On February 20, 2024 a motion for the Agenda Item, 2024 Aggregate Stone Materials – Bid Award Recommendation was not recorded correctly. The minutes show that Mr. Bates made a motion to approve the bid award.

After reviewing both the audio and video recording of the February 20, 2024 meeting it was determined that Mr. Stein made the motion, not Mr. Bates. The motion was seconded by Mr. Guarino. The motion and resulting bid award were approved with a Yes vote by Mr. Stein, Mr. Guarino, Ms. Carnabuci, and Mr. LaGatta. Mr. Bates abstained from the vote.

Jessica Alpers, Secretary to the Board of Park Commissioners, will sign an affidavit affirming this change. We are asking you to affirm this correction with a vote at the February 18, 2025 meeting.

Mr. Oros asked for a motion to approve the correction to the February 20, 2024 board meeting minutes. Mr. LaGatta made a motion to approve; Ms. Carnabuci seconded the motion. After a roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved.

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

Resolution 3-2025: Request of Funds from the ODOT and Designation of Projects for Ohio Parks Districts Roadwork Fund FY 2026-2027 through OPRA

Mr. Oros shared a memo from Deputy Director, Matt McCue for the resolution requirement by the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) for the allocation of the Ohio Park Districts Roadway Fund FY 2026-2027 biennium. The Geauga Park District has participated in this funding program over the past seventeen years. Improvement projects have consisted of stone and asphalt materials and labor used to resurface roads and parking lots throughout the Park District. To participate in the program a Park Board Resolution is required. Approval of Resolution No. 03-2025 at the February 18, 2025, Board meeting which will allow Mr. McCue to submit the required paperwork prior to the deadline of May 1, 2025.

Mr. Oros shared fund balances with the entire planning team and staff have done a good job spending the funds on the biennium with more projects lined up. Mr. McCue stated that currently all funds from the last biennium were used when work was done at Orchard Hills in 2024. Mr. McCue shared that these new funds will be used in the next 2 years for any resurfacing or asphalt projects, the funds typically totaling about \$54,000.

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

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

| | |
|---------------|---------|
| Mr. LaGatta | Yes |
| Ms. Carnabuci | Yes |
| Mr. Stein | Yes |
| Mr. Bates | Abstain |
| Mr. Guarino | Absent |

Surplus Property

Mr. Oros requested the following item sent out to auction or scrap. Items for auction: Gravely 32" snow blower attachment, Jacobsen Textron B-40 Plus Debris Blower, Giant-Vac Debris Blower, Truck Cap full size fits 6'5" bed and a lot of 38 kid size chairs. Items defective for scrap: Indiana wooden desk, Indiana Arlington wooden desk, Lazy Boy L92066 desk chair

Mr. Oros asked for a motion to approve these items for surplus. Mr. Bates made a motion to approve the surplus, 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. Bates | Yes |
| Mr. Guarino | Absent |

COMMISSIONERS TIME

- Mr. Oros shared with the board that he attended the Ohio Parks and Recreation Association Conference where Geauga Park District received a 3rd place award for Troy Wetlands under the 'Capital Improvement Projects Up To \$500,000' category. Mr. Oros congratulated the Planning Department for their design and applying for the Nature Works grant to make the project happen and thanked the Construction team, Natural Resource Management team, and Ms. Sandy Ward for working on the application.
- In January, Land Steward Matt Kneitel was a featured guest at the Chagrin River Watershed Partners' Speaker Series, where he lectured about invasive plant management in our parks, natural areas conservation, rare species protection, and how homeowners can control problem plants on their properties. NRM also just finished writing its annual park-by-park report on invasive plant management.
- Thanks to Kent State University's Geauga Branch in Burton, which for almost 10 years has granted us the use of its greenhouse to start and grow native trees, shrubs and wildflowers for our annual Earth Day Drive-Through plant sale, scheduled this year for Saturday, April 19.

- Operations continued to valiantly keep up with snow and ice management, allowing patrons continuous access to their parks regardless of weather. As of last week, Chardon had seen 74.4 inches of snow.
- In January, the North Zone maintained facilities for 30 lodge reservations and 17 camping reservations, the South Zone maintained facilities for 33 lodge reservations and 49 camping reservations, and the West Zone hosted 116 park attractions: park programs, reservations and camping.
- In addition, the South Zone completed small engine service on mowers, saws, compressors and small generators, and interior painting at Swine Creek Lodge; and the West Zone groomed Orchard Hills Park trails for cross country skiing and also worked on equipment.
- On February 1, Geauga Park District hosted its first-ever *Wild About Winter Nights* at Big Creek Park. Approximately 435 guests enjoyed a bonfire, special views of Jupiter and the moon through telescopes, a "snow snakes" game, a luminary-lit trail, naturalist-led owl hikes, and hot cocoa and s'mores. Thanks to our naturalist staff for providing something new to get people outside and embracing the cold, and especially to Bobby Fowler from North Ops for keeping a bonfire raging the entire time.
- During the month of January: Naturalists hosted 96 programs serving 2,083 patrons, 2,629 guests visited The West Woods Nature Center and while they were there, 97 patrons had the opportunity to borrow our snowshoes.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Oros asked if the Commissions had items for Executive Session; no items were brought forward.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEXT BOARD MEETING: Mr. Oros requested the March board meeting be moved from Monday, March 17, 2025 to Tuesday, March 25, 2025. As no Commissioners objected, Mr. Oros announced the next meeting is Tuesday, March 25, 2025 at 8:30 a.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Oros asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Bates made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Ms. Carnabuci seconded the motion and 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 |

The meeting was adjourned at 8:54 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

Ray Guarino, President