

**GEAUGA PARK DISTRICT BOARD  
OF PARK COMMISSIONERS  
BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
January 21, 2025**

The regular meeting of the Geauga Park District Board was held January 21, 2025, at the Meyer Center, Big Creek Park. The meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. Commissioners Howard Bates, Ray Guarino and Jolene Carnabuci were present. Mr. Les LaGatta and Mr. Frank Stein were 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	
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.

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

**ELECTION OF BOARD OF OFFICERS**

Mr. Bates nominated Mr. Guarino for President; Ms. Carnabuci seconded the nomination. After a roll-call voice vote, the nomination was approved for Mr. Guarino to act as President.

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

Mr. Guarino nominated Mr. Bates for Vice President; Ms. Carnabuci seconded the nomination. After a roll-call voice vote, the nomination was approved for Mr. Bates to act as Vice President.

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

**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 December 16, 2024, Mr. Guarino seconded the motion. After a roll-call voice vote, the motion was approved.

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

**PRESENTATION OF FINANCIAL STATEMENT – DECEMBER FINANCE**

Ms. Dawn Sweeney stated that for the month of December the General Fund had a beginning balance of \$4,665,583 with an ending balance of \$4,238,852. The Land Improvement Fund had a beginning balance of \$1,776,117 with an ending balance of \$1,352,935. Ms. Sweeney shared that all funds combined had an ending balance of \$5,591,788. Mr. Oros asked if there were any questions about the financial statement. No questions were asked.

**PRESENTATION OF PAYMENT REPORT – DECEMBER FINANCE**

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

**OLD BUSINESS**

Mr. Oros stated there was no ‘old business’ to discuss, however, Mr. McCue would share planning projects for 2025.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Planning Update**

Mr. McCue stated that in the board packet, 2025 Capitol Improvement project are listed for this year. Mr. McCue shared that work at Veterans Legacy Woods reforestation is still ongoing with plantings in the spring. Mr. McCue said that the teams were preparing RFPs for the other projects; The West Woods ODOT bridge project should be going out to bid shortly with the project awarded hopefully by March 2025.

Mr. McCue included in the planning update packet a 2025 statement of qualifications list: professional design and engineering services. Mr. McCue stated these companies responded to an RFQ sent out in 2024 with these companies being ones the Park District will use for service in 2025. Mr. Guarino noted there were no companies listed from Geauga County. Mr. McCue said that GPD Group had an office in Chardon but closed it, now they are located in Akron.

Mr. Oros asked if there were any questions regarding planning; no questions were asked.

**Resolution 1-2025 / 2024 Final Budget Appropriations**

Mr. Oros asked the Commissioners to please find the resolution for adoption of the 2024 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.

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 2024 Final 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 the Commissioners if they had any questions regarding the 2024 Final Budget Appropriations; no questions were asked.

Mr. Oros asked for a motion to approve the 2024 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. LaGatta	Absent
Ms. Carnabuci	Yes
Mr. Guarino	Yes
Mr. Bates	Yes
Mr. Stein	Absent

**Resolution 2-2025 / Geauga Park District Beartown Lakes Reservation Site & Playground Improvements – ODNR Grant**

Mr. Oros stated that ODNR needs a resolution and approval by the board to fund this project. Mr. Oros read Resolution 2-2025:

*WHEREAS, pursuant to House Bill No. 2, the 135th General Assembly of the State of Ohio has appropriated funds in the amount of Three Hundred Forty- Four Thousand Seventy-Five Dollars (\$344,075.00) to make a grant to the Grantee for the costs associated with the construction of a park and recreation or conservation facility in appropriation item C725E2, more fully described as 'Gauga Park District - Beartown Lakes Reservation Site & Playground Improvements', (hereinafter referred to as the "Project"). Furthermore, \$6,882.00 of the total Project appropriations will be used by ODNR for the administration of the Project. The Project reference number is GEAU-007C; and*

*NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Park Commissioners of the Gauga Park District, Gauga County, Ohio that:*

*SECTION 1. The Gauga Park District approves of filing an application for financial assistance.*

*SECTION 2. The Gauga Park Board of Commissioners authorizes Matthew McCue, Deputy Director to act as the authorized Grantee and representative to execute the Community Recreation/Conservation Project Pass-Through Agreement (hereinafter referred to as the "Agreement") by and between the State of Ohio, Department of Natural Resources, (hereinafter referred to as "State" or "ODNR"), acting by and through its Director, pursuant to Section 154.17, 154.22, and 1501.01 of the Ohio Revised Code ("R.C") and House Bill No. 2, 135th General assembly of the State of Ohio and the Gauga Park District, an Ohio political subdivision (hereinafter referred to as "Grantee") acting by and through its authorized representative.*

*SECTION 3. The Gauga Park District does agree to obligate the funds required to satisfactorily complete the proposed project and become eligible for advances and reimbursements according to the terms of the Community Recreation/Conservation Project Pass-through Agreement.*

*SECTION 4. After meeting in regular session on this 21 day of January 2025, Board of Park Commissioners of the Gauga Park District hereby certifies this Resolution as approval of the actions of the Board of Park Commissioners of Gauga Park District for transactions and obligations proven mutually beneficial by and between Gauga Park District and ODNR.*

*SECTION 5. It is hereby found and determined that all formal actions of the Board of Park Commissioners of the Gauga Park District concerning and relating to the passage of this Resolution were adopted in an open meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners of the Gauga Park District, and that all deliberations of the Board of Park Commissioners of the Gauga Park District that resulted in formal actions, were in meetings open to the public in compliance with all legal requirements, including Section 121.22, Ohio Revised Code.*

*SECTION 6. This Resolution shall take effect immediately upon its passage.*

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

**Surplus Property**

Mr. Oros shared the following item to be put up for auction: 2015 Ford Explorer

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

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

**COMMISSIONERS TIME**

Mr. Oros began by sharing 2024 car counts from the Ranger Department which are taken over a 200-day period each year. The top 6 counts for 2024 were the following: Frohring Meadows had 50,315 cars; The West Woods with 32,315; Big Creek Park 31,635; Beartown Lakes 31,497; Orchard Hills 29,804; Headwaters 27,139. Mr. Oros stated he reviewed numbers back to 2018 when the car counts started and noted that the same 6 parks were the ‘top’ counts. Since 2018 Frohring Meadows has had 453,872 cars; The West Woods 225,664; Big Creek 217,685; Beartown Lakes 215,022 and Orchard Hills 207,136 with Headwaters at 204,856 cars. These are the 6 most popular parks within the Geauga Park District parks. In the past 7 years we have counted 3,075,328 cars but 2024 alone had 420, 925 cars.

On Saturday, December 21, The West Woods welcomed 875 guests celebrating the longest night of the year during our annual Winter Solstice Celebration. First held in 1989, this year's event attracted the largest attendance in its 35-year history. Thanks to the Naturalist Department, West Ops and volunteers for presenting this excellent three-hour showcase of historical solstice traditions and wintertime family fun.

Coming to us through the Northern Ohio Watershed Corps, or NOWCorp, Jacon Foley began working this fall with our Natural Resource Management team and has been busy educating Geauga County residents about invasive plants through his weekly Facebook and Instagram posts. NOWCorps is funded by AmeriCorps and Ohio's state commission on service and volunteerism, ServeOhio. To date, Jacob has covered 10 different problem plants for people to be aware of, with many more to come through September as he continues to assist with all things NRM.

Some other NRM items to report land stewards are currently working on their annual invasive plant report, which details more than 225 records and summarizes 2024's management of our parks. The final document will help us prioritize and inform the future management of our natural areas.

NRM has also been busy outside with annual property monitoring, walking almost 20 properties to note natural resource-related issues, pollution, encroachment and more.

From Operations, as of last Monday, January 12, Chardon had had 48.6 inches of snow this winter. (By comparison, only 41.3 total inches of snow fell here last winter.) Operations staff have performed snow removal on 12 winter days so far, ensuring continued public access to the park.

Speaking of snow, you may have seen on the cover of some local papers this week, a GIANT snow turtle has been inspiring people to get out to The West Woods since it was built the week of January 6 by our talented naturalist staff. This frosty reptile measures 24 feet nose to tail, 12 feet wide and four feet tall at the top of its shell and can be found by visitors "chilling out" near Turkey Ridge Shelter. Thanks to the naturalists for bringing this vision to life, and to our sustained cold forecast for keeping it around! Photos of the turtle have been on the cover of the Geauga Times Courier and Maple Leaf newspapers.

And finally, in the month of December there were 56 naturalist-led programs hosting 2,061 park patrons; The West Woods Nature Center greeted 1,509 visitors; and Grounds and Facilities provided facility and visitor support for 207 public reservations.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Mr. Oros asked for a motion to move into Executive Session to discuss a pending court action, personnel matter to consider the employment of public employees and to discuss a land purchase. 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. Bates	Yes
Mr. LaGatta	Absent
Mr. Stein	Absent

Executive Session began 8:51am

Executive Session concluded at 9:31am at which point attendees returned to the meeting.

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

**ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEXT BOARD MEETING:** Mr. Oros announced the next meeting is Tuesday, February 18, 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	Absent
Mr. Bates	Yes
Mr. Guarino	Yes

The meeting was adjourned at 9:32 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