

**WOOD COUNTY PARK DISTRICT
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONER'S MINUTES REGULAR MEETING
01/11/2022**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Vice-Chair Kim Rose at 4:04 p.m. at the Park District Headquarters, 18729 Mercer Road, Bowling Green, OH. 43402.

2. ROLL CALL

Kim Rose, present
Dennis Parish, present
Tom Myers, present
Sandy Wiechman, absent
Bill Cameron, absent

Staff present: Zeb Albert, Eric Shiffler, Troy Bateson, Corinne Gordon, Rob Bryan, Jamie Sands, Jim Witter, Diana Ziems, Chris Smalley

Additional guests: From the Ottawa County Park District: Linda Amos, Harper Cromley and Jack Madison
Members of the press

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Before a motion to approve the December 14, 2021 meeting minutes was given, Ms. Rose mentioned due to the absence of Ms. Wiechman and Mr. Cameron that there is a quorum. As a result, Ms. Rose continued that due to the quorum any resolutions presented will need to result in a unanimous 3-0 vote. Ms. Rose added if the resolution vote is not unanimous, then it will be tabled until the next regular meeting.

Ms. Rose stated she had reviewed the minutes from the December 14th, 2021 meeting that were distributed to the board in advance of the meeting and asked for motion to approve. Mr. Parish called to motion the approval of minutes; Mr. Myers seconded the motion. No discussion. A roll call vote was conducted with all in favor, motion carried.

4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Ms. Rose stated Ms. Wiechman did not provide any items to discuss at today's meeting. Ms. Rose mentioned she attended the Wild Lights event last weekend and enjoyed the displays, despite the cold weather. Ms. Rose thanked the staff responsible for organizing the Wild Lights event.

5. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Smalley thanked everyone for attending this first meeting with him as director of Wood County Park District. Mr. Smalley reported the first item on the director's report is the Local Park Improvement Grant Recommendations. Mr. Smalley stated this is a

program completed annually to fund an assortment of projects throughout Wood County. Mr. Smalley continued by saying a committee is composed of three park professionals from different organizations, and together they decide funding levels, project approvals, and make recommendations accordingly. Mr. Smalley stated these recommendations are usually wrapped up in December, but due to the busy circumstances the recommendations were pushed to January. Mr. Smalley stated there are two options this year—Option A: \$100,000 grant allocations broken up between multiple municipalities and/or agencies. Option B: Aforementioned \$100,000 grant allocation with an additional \$24,000 to support the inclusive playground in the city of Bowling Green. To start discussion, Mr. Parish made a motion to accept the funding for the \$100,000 grant recommendation (Option A), Mr. Myers seconded the motion, just to start the discussion. Mr. Parish started the discussion by asking if the city of Bowling Green requested the additional \$24,000 for their inclusive playground project. Mr. Parish continued by asking if the three-person panel from outside the department vetted this grant request. Rob Bryan confirmed the three-person committee submitted the inclusive playground project as part of their grant package. Mr. Bryan stated this project had been placed on the back-burner due to the large amount of the grant. Mr. Bryan continued by saying Neil Munger recalled a similar project the board had expressed interested in, however couldn't fully recall the details on this other project. Mr. Smalley stated the previous project in question was a City of Perrysburg playground. Mr. Parish pointed out the Perrysburg project was not part of the three-person grant committee comprised of outside members. Mr. Bryan added the city of Bowling Green had previously submitted this project as part of our grant program, but after a side-discussion it was thought to be a large amount of money to be taken from the \$100,000 grant allotment, as city of Bowling Green had another smaller grant request. Mr. Parish acknowledged that if the board doesn't vote, at least, on the \$100,000 grant request today, many people will be wondering about their budgets. Mr. Smalley stated there would be a delay in the process. Mr. Parish stated he would be prepared to vote for the \$100,000 grant request today, and have a stand-alone vote in the future for the \$24,000 proposal. Mr. Smalley stated to keep in mind the \$24,000 proposal is part of the overall budget for 2022. Mr. Smalley reminded the board that Option A (\$100,000) has money earmarked for Bowling Green, in a smaller amount. Mr. Smalley then stated if Option B (\$124,000) were chosen, the money earmarked for Bowling Green in Option A would be reallocated to additional townships and municipalities. Mr. Smalley then reminded the board their options moving forward were to choose Option A or Option B of the grant proposals, or table the motion. Mr. Parish asked Mr. Myers his thoughts. Mr. Myers stated he is in favor of Option B and begin listing his reasons. Mr. Myers stated this decision would go against what the board has done in the past, from a practice standpoint. Mr. Myers then stated, however, he is in favor of change—and not just for the sake of change. Mr. Myers went on to say he thinks the project has value, and as long as the funds are there, that it's an investment, and as a park district may give to the communities that we serve. Mr. Myers then stated, from a user standpoint, the park in Perrysburg is very well-attended and well thought of. Mr. Myers added from a community investment and integration standpoint, he believes it will be as well-

received and as well-built as the park in Perrysburg, and it follows the mantra of making facilities accessible to all. Mr. Myers continued by saying we may not have had this discussion or presentation 5-6 years ago. Mr. Myers then reiterated he is in favor of the \$124,000 grant proposal, and stated he believes it's a good way to spend funds as long as they are there. Mr. Myers stated he looks at it from two different perspectives—as a taxpayer and as a steward of the taxpayer moneys that are gifted to us by the residents of Wood County. Mr. Myers then stated he believes it's a very acceptable and a very good way to invest the dollars. Mr. Parish stated he doesn't disagree with Mr. Myers. Mr. Parish added he also believes it's a wonderful project. Mr. Parish stated his concern lies with making sure there's transparency regarding granting moneys to other park systems that were allotted to be used within the Wood County Park District. Mr. Parish then stated he wanted to be sure that it is understood that this additional grant isn't an add-on—that this process has been transparent from the start, that it was thoroughly vetted by the three-person outside committee, and there was no undue influence on any of the park commissioners. Mr. Bryan clarified that each community is permitted to submit for three separate grants in each package, and the \$24,000 grant proposal was one of those three offered by Bowling Green. Mr. Myers stated that he understands Mr. Parish's concern, and he wants the process to maintain its integrity as it has in the past. Mr. Myers then stated that any of the grant line items that were submitted could be looked upon with the same scrutiny. Mr. Myers then added if we operate it from the mindset that we are acting on the best behalf of the citizens of Wood County, then he thinks it fits, regardless of the dollar amount. Mr. Parish then asked Mr. Bryan about his experience with the grant process. Mr. Bryan responded he's sat in with Jeff Baney for two years on the grant process. Mr. Parish inquired if any grant has been as large as \$24,000. Mr. Smalley stated he cannot speak to past grants, but regarding the current grant proposal there is one from Perrysburg for just under \$14,000 for a kayak launch. Mr. Bryan then stated he couldn't say if we'd done one this large or not. Mr. Parish then stated he will withdraw his motion at this point in time. Ms. Rose then made a motion to vote on the \$124,000 grant allocation. Mr. Myers seconded the motion. A roll call vote was conducted with all in favor, motion carried.

Mr. Smalley reported visitors attending regarding the North Coast Inland Trail update. Mr. Smalley thanked Linda Amos, Harper Cromley and Jack Madison for attending the meeting. Mr. Smalley stated this group is seeking a letter of support from the board regarding acquisition and future development of the remaining portion of the North Coast Inland Trail that goes from Ottawa County up into Wood County and directed the board to review the information handed out just prior to the meeting. Mr. Smalley requested Board support for a letter supporting this project. Mr. Smalley then stated this project would allow the completion of the North Coast Inland Trail in Ottawa County, then would leave the Wood County portion for us to complete and grow in the future. Mr. Smalley stated this is a second letter of support request, due to a second application—the first being in September of 2020. Mr. Myers inquired if this is a reiteration and extension of the support granted in September of 2020. Mr. Smalley responded by saying this is a reaffirmation of that letter, due to the original grant

application failing. Mr. Smalley stated that due to some good conversation afterward, the North Coast Inland Trail committee was able to find a way to approach again by breaking the proposal up into two phases, rather than one single phase. Ms. Amos stated the acquisition will include the entire right of way from Genoa to Millbury, therefore will include Wood County property. Ms. Amos also stated they spoke to ODOT about the acquisition and they stated it would be alright to add into this grant. Ms. Rose inquired if the project would start this spring. Ms. Amos stated the grant proposal is due January 31st. Ms. Rose made a motion to approve Mr. Smalley to reaffirm the board's letter of support. Mr. Smalley stated the guests are present to answer any questions the board may have regarding the grant in question. Mr. Myers stated he sees no reason to pull back the board's initial support of this grant but he inquired if anything else has materially changed regarding the trail and how it's going to be constructed. Ms. Amos stated the reason ODOT rejected the previous application was due to requesting too much money. Ms. Amos continued by saying the project was then scaled down to purchasing the property, the right-of-way. Ms. Amos stated they have a letter from Norfolk Southern saying they would enter into negotiations and Ottawa County has hired W.E. Realty to do the negotiations. Ms. Amos stated W.E. Realty has hired an appraiser, and the parks have hired a second appraiser, per federal guidelines. Ms. Amos then stated they'd have a good appraisal and already have survey work completed before submitting the second application. Ms. Amos continued by saying the Ottawa County parks now have their levy passed. Mr. Myers asked again if anything has changed regarding the original plan of the land usage. Ms. Amos responded by saying other than general prices increasing, they may inquire on additional strategies regarding Wood County actually applying for the next section of the construction. Ms. Amos then stated if a request to TMACOG is made regarding this and granted, they would like to apply for a grant for opening their Clean Ohio Trails funding to take care of the professional services, etc. Ms. Amos stated they have completed all tasks ODOT has asked, so they are hoping to move forward. Mr. Parish asked if the section of property they are looking to purchase is entirely in Ottawa County. Mr. Madison stated it is not—in fact, one of the biggest changes in the new application is the extension into Millbury by purchasing railroad property. Mr. Madison stated this is to avoid having the North Coast Inland Trail potentially ending in the middle of nowhere. Mr. Madison stated the extension would go through Millbury and into their park. Mr. Madison stated their main concern is securing the property and the rail lines, regardless if the project starts in two years or ten years. Ms. Amos added the idea of the trail is to bring people from Lucas County, into Wood County and Ottawa County, and across the state. Ms. Amos also stated ODOT is paying 95% of grant money, leaving 5%. Ms. Amos added Wood County parks has 15% of the property, and they are hoping to have a number from the appraisers next week. Ms. Amos and Ms. Cromley will pass along the full application information to Mr. Smalley. Mr. Parish inquired if the delay is still going to be, at some point, the bridge across the Maumee River. Ms. Cromley responded by saying their project will not take them as far as the Maumee River, and Mr. Madison stated that potentially Wood County's portion of the trail may be affected by the Maumee River. Mr. Smalley added that crossing the Maumee River

will be an effort, but eventually we need to find a way to connect the two counties. Ms. Amos added in Ottawa County citizens have been using the ferry system from Erie County and Sandusky to utilize the park systems. Mr. Madison added with what is ahead of us regarding multi-use trails, he believes it's possible to complete a bridge across the Maumee River eventually. Mr. Madison also believes that once the portion of the North Coast Inland Trail is complete going into Millbury, it will inject commerce into the town. Mr. Myers made a motion for the board to grant permission to Mr. Smalley to construct a letter voicing the board's support to construct this portion of the North Coast Inland Trail. Ms. Rose seconded. A roll call vote was conducted with all in favor. Motion carried.

Mr. Smalley stated the last item in his Director's report is to solidify a board meeting schedule, which can be subject to change due to current health pandemic issues and other items. Mr. Smalley submitted a draft schedule to the board for review, and looking for board approval. Mr. Smalley added the February 15th date is not a typical 2nd Tuesday, it is the 3rd Tuesday of the month, due to attending the OPRA Conference that week. Mr. Parish inquired if Mr. Smalley is stating he's like to continue the meetings on Tuesdays. Mr. Smalley replied it's up to the board's discretion, whatever day will work the best for the majority of the board members. Ms. Rose stated due to the overwhelming amount of material received in the board packet each month, it would be nice if the department heads were in attendance if any questions were to arise. Ms. Rose suggested perhaps moving the time ahead, to help with department head attendance. Mr. Smalley stated moving the meeting time up would make it easier for department heads to attend. Mr. Parish stated the meeting starting time used to be 3:00pm, so it was easier for the department heads to attend. Mr. Parish also stated Mr. Munger had moved the time to later in the day, so flex/comp time could be used. Mr. Parish stated they had discussed moving the time to 1:00pm, but Mr. Munger thought at the time it might be a little disruptive to attend a board meeting at 1:00pm, then go back on the job for the remainder of their shift. Mr. Smalley stated during his first years of employment with Wood County Park District, the board meeting time was 1:30pm so the department heads could attend before the end of the day. Mr. Smalley stated since the board meeting time was moved to 4:00pm, it's a little tougher for staff to attend the meeting due to busy schedules. Ms. Rose stated she'd be willing to move to bump it up to 3:00pm, but she's unsure how flexible the other board member's schedules are at this time. Mr. Smalley suggested this discussion could be moved to the February 15th meeting, due to all board members being in attendance. Ms. Rose made a statement to table the discussion until the February meeting, so that all board member could participate. Mr. Smalley agreed to table the discussion, and also stated the February meeting time would remain at 4:00pm, until further discussion. Mr. Smalley stated in the meantime he would have a conversation with department heads regarding the potential change in meeting time.

Mr. Madison made a quick statement of thanks to the board and his committee looks forward to working with the Wood County Park District.

Mr. Smalley stated regarding incoming mail to the board members, it will all be collected as it arrives and distributed at board meetings, including training materials, official letters, etc.

6. DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

Ms. Rose stated all board commissioners have received copies of the head of departments reports and have had a chance to review. Ms. Rose asked if there were report. Mr. Myers stated the statistics shared were interesting because it showed volume, demographics and specifics. Mr. Myers also stated it showed what the park police actually do in a given day, and he appreciated the detail. Ms. Rose agreed with Mr. Myers' statement. Mr. Smalley stated that Officer Troy Bateson completed the annual report and extended kudos.

7. APPROVAL OF PAYABLES

Mr. Parish moved to approve payables. Mr. Myers seconded. A roll call vote was conducted with all in favor. Motion carried.

8. OLD BUSINESS

No Old Business brought to the meeting.

9. NEW BUSINESS

No New Business brought to the meeting.

10. FRIENDS OF THE PARKS

No representative from Friends of the Parks in attendance.

11. HEARING OF VISITORS

No visitor presentations or statements

12. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Ms. Rose made a motion to adjourn and move into an Executive Session to discuss confidential matters. Ms. Rose stated nothing will be voted on. A roll call vote was conducted with all in favor, motion carried.

13. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Parish made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Myers seconded. Meeting ended at 4:40pm.



Sandra Wiechman, Chair



Chris Smalley, Director

Wood County Park District, 18729 Mercer Road, Bowling Green, OH. 43402