

**REGULAR MEETING****December 14, 2023**

The Regular Meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners of Great Parks of Hamilton County was held on this day, 1:00 p.m., at 10245 Winton Road, Cincinnati, OH 45231.

Board President Caren Laverty opened the meeting and led the Board, staff, and guests in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL: Present were Commissioners: Laverty, Abrams, Burwinkel, Thompson, Wegman  
Staff: Palmeter, Henninger, Collins, Carleton, de Jesus, Doellman, Messerschmitt, Rahe, Snow, Zelek, Helmes, Masella, Busofsky, Swigart, Rottmueller, LaGory, Broughton – Murray, Stanley, Ference

Guests: Scott Weikel, Kevin Berndsen, Tom Stapleton

**GENERAL**

1. PUBLIC COMMENTS: Kevin Berndsen addressed the Board about the opportunity to host Adventure Racing in the parks. Adventure racing is a multidisciplinary team sport involving navigation over an unmarked wilderness course. The principal disciplines in adventure racing include but are not limited to trekking, mountain biking, and paddling.

2. AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS:

Ms. Laverty thanked the Board and the staff for the opportunity to serve as Board President. She was proud to serve as President during the opening of the Beechmont Connector and the Glenwood Gardens Music Garden and is looking forward to serving another three-year term.

Chief Executive Officer Todd Palmeter notified the Board of the following:

- Chief of Guest Relations Rachel Messerschmitt introduced newly promoted employee Amy Swigart, Guest Experiences Manager, Central Region.
- Ranger Chief Scott Snow introduced newly promoted employee Dan Rottmueller, Ranger, Miami Whitewater Forest.
- Great Parks received the following awards:
  - Ohio Parks & Recreation Association Award, 3<sup>rd</sup> Place in the Marketing Innovation category for Find Your Winter Wild
  - Ohio Parks & Recreation Association Award, 2<sup>nd</sup> Place in the Recreation category for Kids Outdoor Adventure Expo
  - Ohio Parks & Recreation Association Award, 3<sup>rd</sup> Place in the Recreation category for Urban Thrive Festival
  - Reach Magazine – Best of Reach, Great Parks Golf Courses were selected 1<sup>st</sup> in the Golf Course category

- Community's Choice Award – Cincinnati's Best, Sharon Woods Golf was selected Cincinnati's Best in the Golf Course category.
- In 2023, Great Parks donated to 240 charities, schools, and community organizations. The donation package includes:
  - 1 – Motor Vehicle Permit
  - 2 – Daily Highfield Discovery Garden admissions
  - 2 – Greens fees for Meadow Links & Golf Academy
- In 2023, Great Parks issued 104 Motor Vehicle Permits (MVPs) to Armed Services Veterans. Since 2012, Hamilton County residents who have a 100% service-related disability as determined by the Department of Veterans Affairs, or are a former prisoner of war, or Medal of Honor recipients may apply for free MVPs.
- In 2023, Great Parks issued 1138 Motor Vehicle Permits (MVPs) to Ohio EBT Card Holders. Hamilton County residents with a valid food assistance card can receive a free annual Motor Vehicle Permit.
- In 2023, Great Parks issued 587 free admissions to Highfield Discovery Garden to Ohio EBT, Ohio WIC Nutrition, and Ohio P-EBT cardholders. Since January 2021, Hamilton County residents can stop into the Cotswold Visitor Centre and show their valid assistance card and state-issued photo ID for free entry.

Mr. Burwinkel thanked Ms. Lavery for her service as Board President. He also mentioned a conversation with Hamilton County Auditor Brigid Kelly, and she thanked the staff for the amazing Board Tour in October. Ms. Kelly also acknowledged Talent Development Specialist Nate Davis for his efforts during the tour and for honoring her with a Marine Corps pin.

Ms. Wegman was also complimentary of the Holiday Breakfast, thanked Ms. Lavery for her service as Board President, and was appreciative of her own experience as a first-year Commissioner.

Chief Executive Officer Todd Palmeter thanked Commissioners Abrams, Burwinkel, and Wegman for attending the Great Parks Employee Holiday Breakfast.

3. NEXT BOARD MEETING DATES:

Thursday	January 18, 2024	1:00 p.m.	Winton Centre
Thursday	February 15, 2024	1:00 p.m.	Winton Centre

**ACTION**

4. RESOLUTION #3783 – BILLS & PAYROLL RESOLUTION: Chief Executive Officer Todd Palmetter presented the Bills and Payroll Resolution to the Board. Mr. Thompson inquired about a Ranger uniform piece. Upon motion duly made by Abrams, seconded by Wegman, the Board approved the Bills & Payroll Resolution. The Roll Call vote was as follows: Mr. Abrams – Aye, Mr. Burwinkel – Aye, Ms. Lavery – Aye, Mr. Thompson – Aye, Ms. Wegman – Aye.
5. RESOLUTION #3784 – THEN & NOW RESOLUTION: Chief Executive Officer Todd Palmetter presented the Then and Now Resolution to the Board. Upon motion duly made by Burwinkel, seconded by Wegman, the Board approved the Then and Now Resolution explanation as presented. The Roll Call vote was as follows: Mr. Burwinkel – Aye, Ms. Lavery – Aye, Mr. Thompson – Aye, Ms. Wegman – Aye, Mr. Abrams – Aye.
6. RESOLUTION #3785 –BUDGET ADJUSTMENT: Chief Financial Officer Andrew Collins presented the Budget Adjustment Resolution to the Board. Upon motion duly made by Abrams, seconded by Lavery, the Board approved the budget adjustment as presented in the resolution. The Roll Call vote was as follows: Ms. Lavery – Aye, Mr. Thompson – Aye, Ms. Wegman – Aye, Mr. Abrams – Aye, Mr. Burwinkel – Aye.
7. RESOLUTION #3786 – 2024 FINAL BUDGET: Chief Financial Officer Andrew Collins presented the 2024 Final Budget to the Board. The staff led a thorough discussion, providing clarifying information on the 2024 final budget, including wages for part-time staff, departmental budget changes, the number of open positions, grant funding during the current levy cycle, and investment rates and terms. Ms. Wegman inquired about the winter campaign and its impact on the budget for the Marketing and Brand Strategy department. Mr. Burwinkel requested a document about inflationary costs to share with constituents. Upon motion duly made by Thompson, seconded by Abrams, the Board approved the 2024 Final Budget as presented. The Roll Call vote was as follows: Mr. Thompson – Aye, Ms. Wegman – Aye, Mr. Abrams – Aye, Mr. Burwinkel – Aye, Ms. Lavery – Aye.
8. RESOLUTION #3787 – REQUESTING THE COUNTY AUDITOR TO MAKE ADVANCE PAYMENTS OF TAXES: Chief Financial Officer Andrew Collins presented the Resolution to the Board. Upon motion duly made by Wegman, seconded by Abrams, the Board approved the Resolution Requesting the County Auditor to Make Advance Payments of Taxes. The Roll Call vote was as follows: Ms. Wegman – Aye, Mr. Abrams – Aye, Mr. Burwinkel – Aye, Ms. Lavery – Aye, Mr. Thompson – Aye.
9. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Upon motion duly made by Wegman, seconded by Abrams, and unanimously carried, the Board approved the Final Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of November 16, 2023.

10. BID TAB – SHARON LAKE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT: Chief Executive Officer Todd Palmeter presented the bid to the Board. The staff led a thorough discussion, providing clarifying information on the rejection of the last bid, bid alternates, the engineer's estimate, and the project's start date. Upon motion duly made by Wegman, seconded by Abrams, and unanimously carried, the Board awarded a contract, including Alternates 1, 2, 3, and Additional Work in the amount of \$11,477,329.75 to Prus Construction for the Sharon Lake Improvement Project.
11. BID TAB – MITCHELL MEMORIAL FOREST MAINTENANCE BUILDING ADDITION & STORAGE BUILDING PROJECT: Chief Executive Officer Todd Palmeter presented the bid to the Board. The staff led a thorough discussion, providing clarifying information on the bidding overage threshold, the alternate for solar panels, and the project's funding. Upon motion duly made by Abrams, seconded by Burwinkel, and unanimously carried, the Board awarded a contract in the amount of \$1,019,500.00 to John Tumlin and Sons LTD. for the Mitchell Memorial Forest Maintenance Building Addition and Storage Building project.
12. BID TAB – WINTON WOODS WHITE HOUSE RENOVATION: Chief Executive Officer Todd Palmeter presented the bid to the Board. Ms. Lavery said she was excited to see the project completed in May 2024. Upon motion duly made by Thompson, seconded by Wegman, and unanimously carried, the Board awarded a contract in the amount of \$297,915.00 to Triton Services, Inc. for the Winton Woods White House Renovation project.
13. PROFESSIONAL DESIGN SERVICES CONTRACT – SHAKER TRACE NURSERY IMPROVEMENTS: Chief Executive Officer Todd Palmeter presented the professional design services contract to the Board. The staff led a thorough discussion, providing clarifying information on the One-Time Strategic Community Investment Fund (OTSCIF) grant request and the project completion date. Mr. Burwinkel commented about the economic impact of Great Parks and the annual visitation numbers, as referenced in Chief Executive Officer Todd Palmeter's presentation to the Ohio Capital Budget Prioritization Task Force on December 5, 2023. Ms. Lavery commented that she was happy to see so many projects under design and construction and was excited for their completion. Upon motion duly made by Wegman, seconded by Abrams, the Board awarded a professional design services contract in the amount of \$906,000.00 to emersion DESIGN for Part 2 Design Services of the Shaker Trace Nursery Improvements project.
14. PROFESSIONAL SERVICES CONTRACT – MEDIA BUYING AND CREATIVE SERVICES: Chief Executive Officer Todd Palmeter presented the professional services contract to the Board. Upon motion duly made by Wegman, seconded by Abrams, the Board awarded a professional services contract in the amount of \$750,000.00 to St. Gregory for media buying and creative services for 2024.

15. PURCHASING CARD POLICY UPDATE: Chief Financial Officer Andrew Collins presented the purchasing card policy update to the Board. The staff led a thorough discussion, providing clarifying information on the highlighted items in the report. Upon motion duly made by Wegman, seconded by Abrams, and unanimously carried, the Board approved the updated Purchasing Card Policy as presented and the appointment of Lauren Hake, Guest Relations Coordinator, as the Compliance Officer for 2024.
16. MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING GREAT PARKS FOREVER: Chief Executive Officer Todd Palmeter and Chief of Philanthropy Tom Carleton presented the Memorandum of Understanding to the Board. The staff led a thorough discussion, providing clarifying salary information for Philanthropy staff, gift acceptance policy, naming policy guidelines and Great Parks Forever investments. Mr. Burwinkel requested copies of the capital campaign naming rights levels and the naming rights policy for the Board. Ms. Lavery inquired about the firm that manages the Great Parks Forever investments. Upon motion duly made by Thompson, seconded by Abrams, and unanimously carried, the Board authorized the Chief Executive Officer to execute the updated Memorandum of Understanding with Great Parks Forever.
17. APPOINTMENT OF BOARD PRESIDENT: Upon motion duly made by Burwinkel, seconded by Abrams, and unanimously carried, the Board appointed Melissa Wegman to serve as the next Board President for a two-year term from January 1, 2024, to December 31, 2025.

Ms. Wegman thanked the Board for their nomination and said she was excited to be the new Board President.

#### **MONITORING REPORTS**

18. FINANCIAL PLANNING/BUDGETING: Chief Financial Officer Andrew Collins presented the Financial Planning/Budgeting report to the Board. Mr. Thompson asked for a copy of expenditures from the Board's Capital Project at the end of the 2023 fiscal year. Ms. Lavery inquired about the next projected need to go before voters for a levy. Mr. Burwinkel asked about non-tax revenue and the reserve fund balance in 2027. After a thorough discussion, the Board determined the report to be reasonable and acceptable. The Board then ordered the report filed for the record.
19. CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER SUCCESSION: Chief Executive Officer Todd Palmeter presented the Monitoring Report for Executive Limitation Policy – Emergency Chief Executive Officer Succession to the Board. The Board determined the report to be reasonable and acceptable and ordered the report filed for the record.

20. GLOBAL EXECUTIVE CONSTRAINT: Chief Executive Officer Todd Palmeter presented the Monitoring Report for Executive Limitation Policy – Global Executive Constraint to the Board. The Board determined the report to be reasonable and acceptable and ordered the report filed for the record.

#### **GENERAL REPORTS**

21. EMPLOYEE BENEFIT PLAN SUMMARY: Chief of Human Resources Molly deJesus presented the Employee Benefit Plan Summary to the Board. Ms. Wegman inquired about the cost savings of self-insured plans versus traditional ones. Mr. Burwinkel encouraged staff to review and research the healthcare brokerage services in the next year. After a thorough discussion, the Board determined the report to be reasonable and acceptable. The Board then ordered the report filed for the record.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further matters to come before the Board, a motion was made by Wegman, seconded by Abrams, and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 2:37 p.m.

Board of Park Commissioners  
Great Parks of Hamilton County



Caren Laverly, President



William J. Burwinkel



Marcus Thompson



Melissa Wegman

ATTEST:



Todd Palmeto, Chief Executive Officer