

REGULAR MEETING**June 18, 2025**

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 Melissa Wegman opened the meeting and led the Board, staff, and guests in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL: Present were Commissioners: Wegman, Burwinkel, Lavery, Schuster, Thompson
 Staff: Palmeter, Henninger, Collins, Carleton, Broughton Murray, deJesus, Doellman, Messerschmitt, Rahe, Snow, Knizner, Hughes, Stacy, Stenger, Barkley, Anklan, Herbert, Senefeld, Bell, Hodge, Jones, Bacher, Ference
 Guests: Susan Luken, Terry Rieder

GENERAL

1. PUBLIC COMMENTS: Mr. Rieder is a Sharonville resident who walks and bikes at Sharon Woods. He offered comments regarding the proposed trail realignment for the Sharon Lake loop trail.

2. AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS:

The Board acknowledged the passing of former Commissioner DeVere E. Burt with a Moment of Silence. Mr. Burt was a Great Parks of Hamilton County Board of Park Commissioner from January 1, 2013, until December 31, 2018.

Mr. Thompson asked about the recognition of the service of past Commissioners. Mr. Burwinkel inquired about the past Board member photographs.

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

- Ranger Chief Scott Snow introduced new employee Edwin Knizner, Ranger, West Region.
- Chief of Guest Experiences Rachel Messerschmitt introduced newly promoted employee Tom Hughes, Neighborhood Engagement & Education Manager at Nature Center at the Summit.
- Chief of Conservation & Parks Jason Rahe introduced newly promoted employee Tyler Stacy, Conservation & Parks Technician, Woodland Mound.
- Chief of Conservation & Parks Jason Rahe introduced newly promoted employee Matt Stenger, Conservation & Parks Technician, Woodland Mound.
- 2025 NACPRO Professional Award – New Professional – Rachel Doellman: The award recognizes up-and-coming leaders in the parks and recreation profession with less than 7 years of experience who possess leadership qualities and talents.

- 2025 NACPRO Special Award – Innovative Financing – Farmer Match and the Go Big Campaign: The award recognizes creative, innovative, and entrepreneurial strategies to generate financial resources for park-related capital and operating expenses.
- HighGrain Brewing and Great Parks partner to launch Parks Light Lager.

Mr. Thompson noted the partnership with High Grain was featured on a television news segment. He also requested an update on the revenue after the end of the year. Mr. Burwinkel asked about retail purchase opportunities for the products. Ms Wegman recognized the success of the Pollinator Festival and commented on the band, sponsors, and excellent attendance. Mr. Schuster also noted DeVere Burt’s passing. Mr. Schuster pointed out the First Tee’s recognition of Great Parks and celebrated the staff’s contributions for being a community asset. Mr. Burwinkel pointed out that Mr. Burt was focused on the community and emphasized his role as a great mentor. Mr. Burwinkel also complimented the staff on an outing he attended at the Mill Course.

3. NEXT BOARD MEETING DATES:

Thursday	July 17, 2025	1:00 p.m.	Winton Centre
Thursday	August 21, 2025	1:00 p.m.	Winton Centre

ACTION

4. RESOLUTION #3841 – BILLS & PAYROLL RESOLUTION: Chief Executive Officer Todd Palmeter presented the Bills & Payroll Resolution to the Board. The Board submitted one payment item for Century Equipment, a Jerry Pate Company, for mowers and equipment. The staff led a thorough discussion, providing clarifying information on the scope of the payment item. Upon motion duly made by Laverty, seconded by Wegman, the Board approved the Bills & Payroll Resolution. The Roll Call vote was as follows: Mr. Burwinkel – Aye, Ms. Laverty – Aye, Ms. Wegman – Aye, Mr. Schuster – Aye, Mr. Thompson – Aye.
5. RESOLUTION #3842 – THEN & NOW RESOLUTION: Chief Executive Officer Todd Palmeter presented the Then and Now Resolution to the Board. Ms. Wegman noted she appreciated the effort to reduce the occurrence of then and now instances. Upon motion duly made by Schuster, seconded by Thompson, the Board approved the Then & Now Resolution. The Roll Call vote was as follows: Ms. Laverty – Aye, Ms. Wegman – Aye, Mr. Schuster – Aye, Mr. Thompson – Aye, Mr. Burwinkel – Aye.

6. RESOLUTION #3843 – BUDGET ADJUSTMENT: Chief Financial Officer Andrew Collins presented the Budget Adjustment Resolution to the Board. Ms. Lavery commented on the Wells Fargo transfer being necessary from a past financial report. Upon motion duly made by Lavery, seconded by Burwinkel, the Board approved the budget adjustment as presented in the resolution. The Roll Call vote was as follows: Ms. Wegman – Aye, Mr. Schuster – Aye, Mr. Thompson – Aye, Mr. Burwinkel – Aye, Ms. Lavery – Aye.
7. RESOLUTION #3844 – 2026 TAX BUDGET: Chief Financial Officer Andrew Collins presented the 2026 Tax Budget to the Board. Upon motion duly made by Thompson, seconded by Lavery, the Board approved the 2026 Tax Budget as presented. The Roll Call vote was as follows: Mr. Schuster – Aye, Mr. Thompson – Aye, Mr. Burwinkel – Aye, Ms. Lavery – Aye, Ms. Wegman – Aye.
8. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Mr. Thompson asked about the Board Tour in October. Upon motion duly made by Thompson, seconded by Schuster, and unanimously carried, the Board approved the Final Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of May 15, 2025.
9. BID TAB –WINTON WOODS FARM & EQUESTRIAN CENTER COMPOSTING FACILITY AND ELECTRICAL ADDITIONS: Chief Executive Officer Todd Palmeter and Chief of Conservation & Parks Jason Rahe presented the bid to the Board. Ms. Wegman noted she is pleased with the updates to the electrical facilities for Holidays on the Farm. She requested an update on the biochar process and inquired whether Great Parks would share the product with the city. The staff led a thorough discussion, providing clarifying information on the biochar process, the amount of daily waste generated, the necessity of covered storage areas, and the project completion date. Upon motion duly made by Lavery, seconded by Burwinkel, and unanimously carried, the Board awarded a contract for the base bid and alternates 1, 2, and 3 in the amount of \$1,190,000 to John P. Tumlin & Sons, Ltd., for the Winton Woods Farm & Equestrian Center Composting Facility and Electrical Additions project.
10. BID TAB – FERNBANK PARK PLAYGROUND SAFETY SURFACING REPLACEMENT: Chief Executive Officer Todd Palmeter and Chief of Conservation & Parks Jason Rahe presented the bid to the Board. Ms. Lavery noted the improvements in the safety benefits of modern playground surfaces. Mr. Burwinkel noted that Fernbank is the fifth most visited park, and he receives many questions about when the playground will open. The staff led a thorough discussion, providing clarifying information on the type of safety surfacing and the project completion date. Upon motion duly made by Burwinkel, seconded by Schuster, and unanimously carried, the Board awarded a contract in the amount of \$155,030 to Playground Equipment Services, LLC, for the Fernbank Park Playground Safety Surfacing Replacement project.

11. BID TAB – SHARON WOODS SHARON LAKE LOOP TRAIL – PHASE 1: Chief Executive Officer Todd Palmeter and Chief of Planning Janet Broughton Murray presented the bid to the Board. Mr. Schuster noted that the on-grade crossing of trails with a rapid-flashing beacon works well on Mt. Hope Road at Miami Whitewater Forest. Ms. Laverty pointed out that it is a busy road, but the new safety measures will be good. Mr. Schuster asked about car counts and the use of parking lots near the proposed Kemper Road crossing. Ms. Wegman asked about other traffic control devices that were considered, and also referenced the use of this crossing at Miami Whitewater Forest. The staff led a thorough discussion, providing clarifying information on the design of the project, the scope of the project, and the project completion date. Upon motion duly made by Laverty, seconded by Thompson, and unanimously carried, the Board awarded a contract in the amount of \$1,978,245.05 to Prus Construction for the Sharon Lake Loop Trail – Phase 1 project.
12. PROFESSIONAL SERVICES CONTRACT – PARKS AND RECREATION MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE: Chief Executive Officer Todd Palmeter presented the professional services contract to the Board. Ms. Wegman commented that the process was done well. Upon motion duly made by Laverty, seconded by Wegman, and unanimously carried, the Board awarded a professional services contract in the amount of \$318,490 to Vermont Systems for parks and recreation management software.
13. PROFESSIONAL DESIGN SERVICES CONTRACT – OHIO RIVER TRAIL – OASIS CORRIDOR: Chief Executive Officer Todd Palmeter and Chief of Planning Janet Broughton Murray presented the professional design services contract to the Board. Mr. Thompson asked about the total mileage of the CROWN Network. Mr. Schuster asked about the status of the western side of the Ohio River Trail and the maintenance practices in the various sections. Mr. Thompson inquired about the signage and branding, noting concerns about the maintenance responsibilities of the multiple entities on the CROWN network. Ms. Laverty also asked about specific signage for that purpose. Ms. Wegman and Mr. Thompson pointed out the high standards of care and maintenance at Great Parks. Mr. Thompson and Mr. Schuster asked about safety practices and accountability for safety across the various cooperating agencies. Mr. Burwinkel asked for an update on Price Hill Landing. The staff led a thorough discussion, providing clarifying information on the scope of the project, the project completion date, and Great Parks' importance to the CROWN. Upon motion duly made by Thompson, seconded by Wegman, and unanimously carried, the Board awarded a professional design services contract, including the "if authorized" tasks, in the amount of \$3,194,623 to Arcadis U.S., Inc. for the Ohio River Trail – Oasis Corridor project.

14. PURCHASING CARD POLICY UPDATE: Chief Financial Officer Andrew Collins presented the Purchasing Card Policy Update to the Board. Mr. Schuster asked about cards assigned to a facility. Ms. Lavery asked about changes in purchasing card use. Ms. Wegman inquired about the rebate percentage. The staff led a thorough discussion, providing clarifying information on the cards assigned to the facilities, the number of purchasing cards in circulation, and annual spending and rebates. Upon motion duly made by Lavery, seconded by Burwinkel, the Board approved the updated Purchasing Card Policy as presented.

MONITORING REPORTS

15. FINANCIAL PLANNING/BUDGETING: Chief Financial Officer Andrew Collins presented the Financial Planning/Budget report to the Board. Mr. Schuster asked about Great Parks Forever's revenue. The staff led a thorough discussion, providing clarifying information on philanthropic funding, as well as the reserve, revenue, and expenses outlined in the five-year financial forecast. After a thorough discussion, the Board determined the report to be reasonable and acceptable. The Board then ordered the report filed for the record.

GENERAL REPORTS

16. STATE OF OHIO BUDGET BILL UPDATE: Chief Executive Officer Todd Palmetter presented the State of Ohio Budget Bill Update report to the Board. Mr. Schuster noted that the budget cycle has been unpredictable this year at the state level and identified other potential tax funding sources that the legislature might consider. The staff led a thorough discussion, providing clarifying information on the Budget Bill and Great Parks letter to representatives and senators. After a thorough discussion, the Board determined the report to be reasonable and acceptable. The Board then ordered the report filed for the record.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

A motion was made by Laverty and seconded by Wegman to go into Executive Session at 2:40 p.m. to consider the sale or other disposition of property. The Roll Call vote was as follows: Mr. Thompson – Aye, Mr. Burwinkel – Aye, Ms. Laverty – Aye, Ms. Wegman – Aye, Mr. Schuster – Aye,


Following the Executive Session, a motion was made by Thompson and seconded by Burwinkel to reconvene the Regular Meeting at 2:42 p.m. The Roll Call vote was as follows: Mr. Burwinkel – Aye, Ms. Laverty – Aye, Ms. Wegman – Aye, Mr. Schuster – Aye, Mr. Thompson – Aye.

17. LAND ITEM: Upon motion duly made by Schuster, seconded by Wegman, and unanimously carried, the Board authorized the CEO and his designees to negotiate with Duke Energy and Butler Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc., and to execute the necessary documents for three public utility permanent easements in the west region of Hamilton County.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further matters to come before the Board, a motion was made by Laverty, seconded by Thompson, and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 2:50 p.m.

Board of Park Commissioners
Great Parks of Hamilton County



Melissa Wegman, President



Caren Laverty



Scott Schuster



Marcus Thompson

ATTEST:



Todd Palmeter, Chief Executive Officer