

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS OF MILL CREEK
METROPARKS HELD MONDAY, JUNE 12, 2023

A Regular Meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners of Mill Creek MetroParks was held on Monday, June 12, 2023.

The meeting opened at 6:00 p.m., with recitation of The Pledge of Allegiance.

Lee Frey, Board President welcomed staff and guests.

Roll Call was as follows:

Germaine Bennett;	Present
Lee Frey;	Present
Tom Frost,	Present
Jeff Harvey;	Present
Paul Olivier;	Present

The Board was presented with the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of May 8, 2023. Lee Frey accepted the minutes into the record as written.

Kevin Smith, Finance Director/Treasurer presented the Department Report for Finance and requested that disbursements #89730 - #89973 for a total of \$924,619.79 be approved. Lee Frey moved, at the request of the Finance Director, the funds having been certified as on hand and duly appropriated, that disbursements #89730 - #89973 for a total of \$924,619.79. The motion was seconded by Tom Frost after discussion, the roll being called upon its adoption, the vote resulted as follows:

Voting Aye:	Bennett, Frey, Frost, Harvey, Olivier
Voting Nay:	None

Kevin Smith, Finance Director/Treasurer requested to increase appropriations to account 100-3303-5097 Annual Road Capital Improvements by \$28,252.96. This is money saved from previous work on construction projects and would be used for necessary drive improvements. Lee Frey moved, at the request of the Finance Director, to increase appropriations to account 100-3303-5097 Annual Road Capital Improvements by \$28,252.96. The motion was seconded by Germaine Bennett after discussion, the roll being called upon its adoption, the vote resulted as follows:

Voting Aye:	Bennett, Frey, Frost, Harvey, Olivier
Voting Nay:	None

Aaron Young, Executive Director thanked everyone for attending the grand opening of Springfield Forest and urged anyone who has not yet visited the new facility to do so.

Aaron Young also shared that The Ford Nature Center (FNC) has recently won several revitalization and historic preservation awards. FNC has won the Community Revitalization Award from the Mahoning Valley Historical Society and a preservation award from the Cleveland Restoration Society. Aaron and Justin Rogers will be attending both award ceremonies on behalf of Mill Creek MetroParks.

Aaron Young, Executive Director on behalf of Justin Rogers, Planning & Operations Director presented the bid award recommendation for Hawkins Marsh Improvements for approval. It is recommended that Foust Construction, Inc. be awarded the contract for the project named Hawkins Marsh Improvements at the grand total bid amount of \$85,451.00. Lee Frey moved, at the request of the Planning & Operations Director, to award the bid to Foust Construction, Inc. for the project named Hawkins Marsh Improvements at the grand total bid amount of \$85,451.00. The motion was seconded by Jeff Harvey after discussion regarding Ohio's public bidding requirements, the roll being called upon its adoption, the vote resulted as follows:

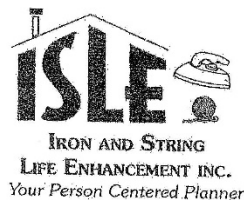
Voting Aye: Bennett, Frey, Frost, Harvey, Olivier
Voting Nay: None

Chris Litton, Development Director presented the MetroParks Foundation deposit report for the period of May 1-31, 2023, at a total of \$8,358.00. Lee Frey moved at the request of the Director of Development to accept the deposit report for the period of May 1-31, 2023, at a total of \$8,358.00. The motion was seconded by Tom Frost, after discussion, the roll being called upon its adoption, the vote resulted as follows:

Voting Aye: Bennett, Frey, Frost, Harvey, Olivier
Voting Nay: None

Public Comments to the Board: (see sign-in sheet)

- Mike Drabison declined to comment after signing in.
- Jimmy Sutman and a visitor named Scotty spoke on behalf of Gabba Camp which is currently being built in Coitsville Township. The camp is for adults with disabilities and mental challenges. They were hoping to use the former pond and accessible dock at the McGuffey Wildlife Area for their proposed activities. They would like to see MCMP restore the pond and dock and/or partner with ODNR on the same type of activities. Jimmy provided the Board with a copy of a the following letter dated April 2, 2023:



April 2nd, 2023

Mr. Lee Frey, President
Mill Creek Metroparks
7574 Columbiana Canfield Rd.
Canfield, OH 44406

Dear Mr. Frey,

The Iron and String Life Enhancement (ISLE) family of organizations which include ISLE, The Purple Cat and Golden String, Inc., have provided services for adults with disabilities in the Mahoning Valley for over 20 years. The Purple Cat Day Program at Farmer Casey's Ranch and Golden String's 30 acre resort development, Gabba Camp, are located nearby the McGuffey Wildlife Preserve. The removal of the dock and the lack of maintenance of the pond at McGuffey Wildlife Preserve denies those living with a disability access to the only park facility in the northeast part of Mahoning County that has a water feature. In recent years we have seen significant planning and financial investment in the ongoing efforts to improve quality of life for the underrepresented in our area as well as efforts to attract repeat visitors to our area. The current state of the McGuffey Wildlife Preserve is antithetical to these efforts.

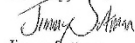
I respectfully request the park district to do the following:

Restore, maintain and preserve the McGuffey Family Pond and Dock, to be handicapped accessible.

Transfer ownership of the McGuffey Wildlife Preserve, to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), as a State Nature Preserve or enter into joint management of the preserve, with ODNR as a State Nature Preserve.

A State Nature Preserve will promote tourism, spark economic development, bring state dollars to the valley and add prestige to the county. Over 1 million dollars has already been invested in the development of our Gabba Camp project which will also attract visitors from outside of our region to the Mahoning Valley. We have already received inquiries from as far as Tennessee and Massachusetts due to the accessibility Gabba Camp will offer those living with a disability. I would gladly be willing to discuss how our Gabba Camp project can connect with a fully maintained McGuffey Wildlife Preserve.

Sincerely,


Jimmy Sutman
President and Director of Operations
Iron and String Life Enhancement

12 S. Phelps Street • Youngstown, OH 44503 • (330) 743-3444 • Fax (330) 743-3363
Giving Choices to Persons and Families with Special Needs

- Jeff Crossman did not sign in but asked to speak. Jeff asked to hear more information on the deer management program and if anything had changed. Lee suggested he visit the MCMP website.

Commissioners Comments:

- Lee suggested that people go to the MCMP website to see any update on the deer management plan. Lee also provided the following written statement for the record regarding trees:

From the Cary Institute of Ecosystems Studies researches the environmental issues you care about because you can't make the world a better place without knowing how it works – Messy woods serve a critical purpose in forest management

Standing dead trees are known as snags; they provide food, shelter and resting places for wildlife. As fungi and insects attack living trees and dead snags, they soften the wood, making it possible for woodpeckers and other cavity makers to create holes. These holes are used by other animals. At least 85 species of North American birds are known to either create nesting holes, use natural cavities resulting from decay or use holes created by other species. Honeybees, mice, squirrels, racoons and even bears take advantage of abandon cavities. Other animals are attracted to snags to feed on the abundance of spiders, ants, beetles, and other insects they house.

Once felled by decay, wind, snowstorm or other forces, tree trunks and large branches play other important ecological roles on the forest floor. Coarse wood debris is ^{one} term ecologists give to dead wood that is on the ground. Woody debris also retain, reduce soil erosion on slopes and provide food for many organisms, including bacteria, fungi, lichens and mosses. Woody debris also retain moisture and trap fallen leaves, which in turn, decompose into rich, organic matter suitable for the germination of other plants. Thus woody debris often become nursery sites for plant establishment. It can also protect new seedlings, as herbivores find it difficult to forage among a tangle of dead branches. Imitating nature, foresters know that leaving tree tops in large pieces after logging is one way to keep deer from eating all the seedlings that will be required to establish the next forest.

Studies of northeast forests have found ^{more} that 40 vertebrate species rely on the presence of woody debris. It helps retain small pockets of moisture cover critical for the survival of small animals when other parts of the forest dry out. Turn over a rotting log and watch the invertebrates scurry for cover. These small animals in turn attract amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals that find woody debris a hospitable and well-stocked grocery store.

Carbon storage in both living and dead wood has important global implications, as it is delayed from being added to escalating carbon dioxide levels. Carbon stored in woody debris is slowly moved into the soil or released into the atmosphere as trees decay. Unlimited clearing and burning woody debris from woodlands removes valuable food and shelter for wildlife, but also speeds up the release of carbon back into the atmosphere.

Fallen leaves are left to decompose on forest floors. Removing them can disrupt the natural cycle of nutrients including carbon and nitrogen, which are essential for plant growth and development. When leaves are dropped, they decompose into the soil, releasing essential nutrients which help make the soil more fertile and rich in organic matter. Leaving the leaves in the fall is one way to replenish those natural soil nutrients.

During the winter months, it is important that plant roots receive protection from those extremely cold temperatures. This can be achieved through leaf litter retention where the leaves act like a blanket. Keeper everything below them warmer. Additionally, leaf litter can have similar moisture retention properties as wooden mulch. Organic matter insulates the soil and holds heat underground so that the soil microbes can remain active during the coldest months of the year. It allows for moisture to slowly be released into the soil so that it doesn't dry out. Urban trees and shrubs are exposed to additional stresses, so the natural soil moisture retention and temperature regulation is a bonus.

Insect larvae, microbes and worms often reside in leaf litter where they overwinter as pupae. Toads and salamanders use leaf litter to hide and hunt. Turtles, earthworms, chipmunks, and insects rely on leaf litter in the winter to shield them from the cold. Many birds use leaf litter for foraging insects on the forest floor. Removing this important source of food and shelter for local wildlife can negatively impact them.

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, July 10, 2023, at 6:00 p.m., in McMahon Hall at the MetroParks Farm.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at approximately 6:14 p.m.

Presiding Officer

Secretary