

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS OF MILL CREEK  
METROPARKS HELD MONDAY, MARCH 13, 2023

A Regular Meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners of Mill Creek MetroParks was held on Monday, March 13, 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;	Absent

The Board was presented with the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of February 13, 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 #89073 - #89273 for a total of \$846,809.23 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 #89073 - #89273 for a total of \$846,809.23. 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
Voting Nay:	None

Aaron Young, Executive Director was absent from the meeting. Megan Hanley, Human Resources & Administrative Services Director served as Board Secretary during the meeting. No executive director report was provided.

Justin Rogers, Planning & Operations Director presented the bid award recommendation for the Mill Creek Golf Course Indoor Training Center. It is recommended that United Contractors, Inc. be awarded the contract for the project named Mill Creek Golf Course Indoor Training Center at the grand total bid amount of \$693,400.00. Lee Frey moved, at the request of the Planning & Operations Director, to award the contract for the project named Mill Creek Golf Course Indoor Training Center to United Contractors, Inc. at the grand total bid amount of \$693,400.00. The motion was seconded by Tom Frost after discussion, the roll being called upon its adoption, the vote resulted as follows:

Voting Aye:	Bennet, Frey, Frost, Harvey,
Voting Nay:	None

Justin Rogers, Planning & Operations Director presented the bid award recommendation for the 2023 Mill Creek Park Trail Improvements (E. Cohasset). It is recommended that Yarian Brothers, Inc. be awarded the contract for the project named 2023 Mill Creek Park Trail Improvements (E. Cohasset) at the grand total bid amount of \$86,619.52. Lee Frey moved, at the request of the Planning & Operations Director, to award the contract for the project named 2023 Mill Creek Park Trail Improvements (E. Cohasset) to Yarian Brothers, Inc. at the grand total bid amount of \$86,619.52. The motion was seconded by Germaine Bennett after discussion, the roll being called upon its adoption, the vote resulted as follows:

Voting Aye:	Bennet, Frey, Frost, Harvey,
Voting Nay:	None

Justin Rogers, Planning & Operations Director presented the bid award recommendation for the East Golf Hike & Bike Trail Parking Lot Improvements. It is recommended that Eclipse Company, LLC. be awarded the contract for the project named East Golf Hike & Bike Trail Parking Lot Improvements at the grand total bid amount of \$196,859.00. Lee Frey moved, at the request of the Planning & Operations Director, to award the contract for the project named East Golf Hike & Bike Trail Parking Lot Improvements to Eclipse Company, LLC. at the grand total bid amount of \$196,859.00. The motion was seconded by Tom Frost after discussion, the roll being called upon its adoption, the vote resulted as follows:

Voting Aye: Bennet, Frey, Frost, Harvey,  
Voting Nay: None

Justin Rogers, Planning & Operations Director presented the bid award recommendation for the 2023 MetroParks Bikeway Improvements. As all bids exceeded the mandatory 10% bid cap, it is required that all bids are to be rejected for the project named 2023 MetroParks Bikeway Improvements in accordance with Section 153.12 of the Ohio Revised Code. Lee Frey moved, at the request of the Planning & Operations Director, to reject all bids for the project named 2023 MetroParks Bikeway Improvements in accordance with Section 153.12 of the Ohio Revised Code. The motion was seconded by Jeff Harvey after discussion, the roll being called upon its adoption, the vote resulted as follows:

Voting Aye: Bennet, Frey, Frost, Harvey,  
Voting Nay: None

Justin Rogers, Planning & Operations Director presented and requested approval of a consent to vacate a paper street in partnership with YNDC near 1114 Parkview Ave. Lee Frey moved, at the request of the Planning & Operations Director, to approve a consent to vacate a paper street in partnership with YNDC near 1114 Parkview Ave. The motion was seconded by Jeff Harvey after discussion, the roll being called upon its adoption, the vote resulted as follows:

Voting Aye: Bennet, Frey, Frost, Harvey,  
Voting Nay: None

Megan Hanley, HR & Administrative Services Director presented and requested approval of the 2023 Golf Course Restaurant Lease. Lee Frey moved, at the request of the PGA Director of Golf & Recreation and the HR & Administrative Services Director, that the 2023 Golf Course Restaurant Lease be approved. 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,  
Voting Nay: None

Megan Hanley, HR & Administrative Services Director presented and requested approval of the following special event/request to raise funds; Mill Creek Distance Classic Half Marathon/5K on 03-26-23 at MCP. Lee Frey moved, at the request of the HR & Administrative Services Director, that the special events be approved. 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,  
Voting Nay: None

Megan Hanley, HR & Administrative Services Director presented and requested approval of the following special event/request to raise funds; Canfield XC Twilight Run 5K on 06-16-23 at MCMP Bikeway between Canfield HS & Herbert Road. Lee Frey moved, at the request of the HR & Administrative Services Director, that the special events be approved. 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,

Voting Nay: None

Chris Litton, Development Director presented the MetroParks Foundation deposit report for the period of February 1-28, 2023, at a total of \$11,958.17. Lee Frey moved at the request of the Director of Development to accept the deposit report for the period of February 1-28, 2023, at a total of \$11,958.17. 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,  
Voting Nay: None

Nick Derico, Natural Resource Manager gave a presentation on the status of White-tailed Deer in the MetroParks II. The presentation outlined the recommended management options to address the overpopulation of deer within the MetroParks. Nick will be looking for the Board to approve the recommended management plan at the meeting in April.

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

- John Arduis: Forty-year resident of properties adjacent to park, questioned accuracy of data in deer count. Asked the board if they later find that data is incorrect would they initiate a pause in the harvesting operation.
- Edward Norman: Believes Mill Creek MetroParks is one of the greatest resources. Strongly supports cull hunt for deer but would suggest it be limited to doe. Believes that doe having an average of two fawns per year is the reason the population has gotten as large as it is. Stated that people may not see the deer but they are there.
- Janet Bernard: Lifelong resident of the West Side. Seeing a deer especially the white ones make her walk complete. Questioned who is going to remove deer if a hunt occurs and who is paying for deer population control. Believes that the park should instead spend money completing projects.
- Jerry Serville: Resident of Westside of Youngstown. Stated that the Park received a good deal on property purchased near his home and the property has not been taken care of.
- Debbie Fender: Frequents the park regularly. Has walked every mapped trail and some unmapped trails over the last couple of years. Does not believe there are not 387 deer per square mile. She is not against hunting but is against hunting in the park since the deer have gotten accustomed to people.
- Pearl Sinestro: Has lived on Pine Drive for sixty years. Stated that they love the deer and feed them in the wintertime. Questioned cementing and black topping everything. Stated that all they want is for the park board to listen to the taxpayers. Stated that people who complain about the deer eating their flowers should move to the city.
- Melinda Rulli: Stated that she went to church today and read an excerpt out of PSALM 42 relating to deer. Asked if the MetroParks could afford to lose votes on the next levy. Stated that the Park is appealing to a minority who look at the deer as target practice. Asked if the park could guarantee the safety of visitors while a hunt is occurring.
- Celeste Sinestro: Questioned the accuracy of the deer count. Stated that there would be more deer dead in roads if numbers were accurate. Stated that she has seen a decline in all wildlife. Recommended to stop using asphalt. Stated there were already plenty of areas that were wheelchair accessible. Opposed to the expansion of the parking lot at the east golf hike bike trail.
- Jerry Dixen: He is not a hunter. Questioned if hunters would be interested in taking part in a hunt if they could not hunt deer with antlers. Stated that a hunt should only include doe.
- David Holeck: Questioned why he could not hunt in the park. Stated that he was a taxpayer and questioned why hunting was taken away from him.
- Michael Colyer- Member of Lowville Rod and Gun Club. Shared that he appreciates the value of Mill Creek Park. He is a hunter and he cares about plants and wildlife. He acknowledged that the audience is free to have their views about the deer but the MetroParks has the data. He expressed that there is a need to preserve the whole fauna, trees and birds.

- Joshua Dechant: As an avid runner does not support East Cohasset trail development. He would be opposed to more aggregate being placed; it would take away from the beauty of the park.
- Kathy Maine: Questioned the accuracy of deer count. Stated that other animals may have been included in the count.
- Bo Marchionte: Stated that he sent emails to the board and did not receive a response. Disagrees with trails getting an aggregate cover. Stated that the deer are starving but gravel is being placed.
- John Barron: Against a hunt. He loves the deer and the park but thinks the numbers are exaggerated. He is most bothered by the archery option. He believes archery is the most inhumane way to handle the problem.
- Liz Snyder: Disagrees with numbers in presentation. Over the past month she has seen zero deer. Stated the park is supposed to preserve nature.
- Jason Shamp: Questioned the accuracy of infrared pictures. Questioned who did the survey and why couldn't they use drones instead. Stated that if numbers were correct there would be deer feces everywhere.
- Lynn Anderson: Twenty-four years living near the park. Shared an article that contained natural gas well locations. Stated that methane is a heat source so using the method of heat sensors would not be accurate. Questioned how soon the board could get a follow up study done.
- Michelle Zielensky: Walks the park five to six times a week. The most deer seen are three to five. Stated that if exaggerated numbers are used too many deer may be killed.
- Mickey Drabison: Has been living on the westside for 70 years. Stated that white deer Faith meant a lot to him. Stated that she was not an albino and was not sick in the photo shared by the media. Stated she had worms and was later treated. Disagreed with the deer survey count.
- Tony Parish: Lifelong resident, and member of Youngstown Road Runners. Stated that there are small herds being recounted over and over in the infrared photos. Stated there are not more than 100 deer in the park. Disagreed with putting aggregate on East Cohasset trail.
- Chris Flak: Lifelong resident of Mahoning County. Expressed displeasure with the landscaping and the grooming along trails and roadways. Stated there was an absence of mountain laurel because park employees are cutting it down. Asked the board to please be mindful of the trees that are cut down by staff.
- Sean O'Toole: Has lived next to the park for twelve years. Stated that there seems to be a lot less deer. Referenced a quote about how we who cannot manage ourselves can think we can manage nature.
- Mike Ray: Believes that the problem is the people don't trust the board and they don't trust the information. Suggested that the board needs to do a better job communicating with the public.
- Lana Spes Van An Yen: Shared that killing programs don't result in long term success. Shared that fertility options are available. Asked the board to look up the Humane Society and ways they have controlled deer populations by using birth control.
- Gary Davenport: Compared State Parks to Mill Creek Park stating that trails looked so messy at State Parks and Mill Creek looks clean. He shared that he learned this was due to deer browse pressure and no forestry generation/understory. Stated that he sees the deer with their ribs showing in his yard eating plants that they are not supposed to eat. Stated he was speaking for the trees tonight and supported deer population control.
- Wendy Marchionte: Started running consistently in the park training for a marathon. Stated that there is a whole trail running community that does not want trails paved. Stated that running on roadways is hazardous and there is no place for walkers or runners to escape to. Provided the following solution: Instead of destroying the natural state of trails mark the trails for difficulty (marking those with rocks/roots as more difficult).
- Kelly Dunleavy: Read an excerpt from Images of America Historic Mill Creek MetroParks. Shared that her family takes out walking sticks and want to go hiking on trails. Shared that historically they planted flowers they did not throw gravel on our parks.
- Unknown (did not use sign in sheet): Referenced an article in the Vindicator featuring ODNR conveying they can make recommendations but they can't tell the MetroParks what to do about the deer population. Asked if the MetroParks was given other options other than killing? Stated ODNR is against bow hunting.

Commissioners Comments:

- Jeff Harvey: Shared that he supports wildlife. Stated that the MetroParks planted more trees than were cut down. Each of those newly planted trees needed to be protected from deer. Addressed the comments on E. coli in the water. The sewer system is part of the city of Youngstown and outside of MetroPark control. Addressed comments questioning the accuracy of the deer population count. The company that performed the count is certified in what they do. Shared that Summit MetroParks, Cleveland MetroParks and Cuyahoga National Park all participate in deer management plans.
- Germaine Bennett: Showed appreciation for those that came up to speak. Shared her disappointment in those who were disruptive and talking during the presentation. Stated that the board will have to come to a conclusion on deer population control and the trails.
- Lee Frey: Referenced the public comments on birth control and noted that fertility control methods are not allowed in Ohio at this time. This would not be an option according to ODNR. Thanked the members of the public who spoke stating that it is good for the board to hear different points of view. Asked the board to check their calendars for Saturdays in May and June so that they can schedule their annual retreat.
- Tom Frost: Referenced the comments on accuracy of the deer population data. Stated the board has not seen proof that the numbers are wrong only proof they are right. Asked Nick Derico for an answer to the question of who would remove the deer from the MetroParks after population control took place. Nick Derico stated that USDA teams or hunters will be responsible for deer removal depending on what method is used. Tom stated that public opinion is important and that is why two public meetings were held on this topic.

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

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at approximately 8:11 p.m.

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Presiding Officer

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Secretary