

BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS

August 20, 2020

CALL TO ORDER

A meeting of the Cincinnati Board of Park Commissioners was held on this day at 950 Eden Park Drive. Commissioners present: President Brad Lindner and Vice President Jim Goetz. Commissioner Susan Castellini, Commissioner Kevin Flynn, and Commissioner Linda Lee Thomas were present via video conference. President Lindner called the meeting to order at 9:10 A.M. Attendance was confirmed by roll call.

Director Kish requested the Chair amend the agenda to place item III.A. Boat Dock Discussion above item II. New Business to accommodate the schedule of a Commissioner. President Lindner accepted the request.

Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Flynn motioned to approve the July 20, 2020 Special Meeting Minutes. Vice President Goetz seconded. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Retirement Recognition

Director Kish announced two Park Board staff will be retiring September 1, Mr. Jim Godby and Mr. Jim Schmidt. Crystal Courtney recognized Mr. Godby, describing his role and highlighting his accomplishments over the last 30 years in Parks' Natural Resource Management Section. Mr. Godby expressed his gratitude and faith in current staff to continue the land management program. The Board discussed the controlled burn process with Mr. Godby.

Andy Schuerman recognized Mr. Schmidt, describing his excellent work as a facility maintenance specialist and his impact across the parks system.

Public Comments

President Lindner acknowledged public comments submitted via email had been received and reviewed by the Park Board prior to the meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

Boat Dock Discussion

Director Kish explained this agenda item is at the request of Commissioner Flynn.

Commissioner Flynn raised the subject of the Boat Dock to determine if a majority of the Park Board is in favor of pursuing the Boat Dock project. He expressed concern over dedicating more personal and staff time on the project if there is no consensus. He explained, private dollars could be raised, and asked the Board to consider if there would be a willingness to match funds should private funding be made available. Commissioner Thomas re-entered the conversation, expressing she had not heard Mr. Flynn's comments; Mr. Flynn restated his prior comments.

President Lindner commented he did not feel funding a boat dock should be the sole responsibility of Parks and had concerns about the ongoing operations. He was not supportive of dedicating any additional funding to the project and emphasized the potential for partners.

Commissioner Flynn mentioned prior to moving forward, an operator would need be identified. He described potential for low operational costs of the boat dock based on a conversation with Louisville's downtown marina operator. He agreed it was important to fully understand operational costs before committing and expressed operations should be net zero cost or revenue generating.

Commissioner Thomas thanked Mr. Flynn for his work and providing further information to the Board. She expressed although the boat dock would be a positive asset and potential economic benefit for the Banks, the finances are not well defined enough to move forward.

Commissioner Castellini expressed her opinion that significant private dollars needed to be raised and utilized for the project, and she did not believe there would be minimal operational costs after construction.

There was discussion regarding project costs Parks is responsible for and the amount private dollars could potentially cover.

Commissioner Thomas expressed there is not a clear enough picture of funding sources to make a decision on the future of the project.

There were further comments regarding project costs and Commissioner Flynn expressed the Board's funding intentions should be clarified before he focuses on fundraising any further.

Vice President Goetz echoed the sentiments that a decision should be reached as to whether the project is worth further Board and staff time. He expressed when there is a better idea of operating costs, an operator, and third-party contributors, he would not be opposed to committing Park dollars but could not identify an amount at present. He expressed prerequisites for the Park Board to commit additional funds should be determined.

Commissioner Thomas expressed funding should be further clarified as well as parameters for determining whether or not to move forward with the project. Commissioner Flynn echoed these comments and clarified his request to reach a consensus on the pursuance of private dollars with the possibility of further undetermined contributions from the Park Board.

Previous discussions with the operator of the marina in Louisville, Kentucky were discussed, including differences in operational and maintenance needs and associated costs. There was further discussion regarding parameters that would determine the Park Board moving forward with the project, including redesign potential to lower guaranteed maximum price and third-party fundraising. Funding Parks has already committed was discussed. President Lindner suggested spending no further money on the project until a consensus is reached.

Commissioner Thomas expressed the need to understand the funding gap with the current design and location and make decisions on how to fund. Commissioner Flynn expressed a funding contribution from Parks is likely, but operational costs should be net zero for Parks, which may

necessitate rethinking the design. Commissioner Thomas suggested beginning with the current design, which is defined by the grant terms, to determine costs.

Director Kish summarized the discussion from an administrative perspective. She explained there is not yet clarity on whether or not Parks may continue to work with Universal Contracting and this may impact discussions on altering the design to potentially reduce costs. She emphasized the need to define parameters so the Board can make a decision regarding the pursuance of the Boat Dock project and described the associated administrative functions. She furthered, this may result in the Board needing to consider if they are willing to contribute more funding to the project.

President Lindner asked when the Board will know what the funding gap is. Director Kish explained discussions on possible cost reductions and/or design modifications starts with understanding if working with Universal can continue or if the project will need to be rebid.

There was further discussion regarding funds already committed to the project as well as the parameters the Park Board would need to understand before committing more money. Commissioner Flynn noted he felt more comfortable proceeding with third-party fundraising efforts.

Commissioner Flynn announced at 10:30 he had to exit the meeting immediately due to a prior engagement. He expressed his support for the Deer Management Proposal agenda item that he was not supportive of the Wasson Way Trail in Ault Park agenda item.

Rocky Merz alerted the Board that virtual attendees lost audio briefly and President Lindner restated comments that were missed.

NEW BUSINESS

Grant Application/Acceptance: Parks Foundation Grants

Craig Sherman presented two requests for application and acceptance of Parks Foundation grants. The first grant was for an annual \$10,000 contribution for Eden Park and the second was for \$23,890 for the Smale Anniversary Garden.

Vice President Goetz commented on the valuable contributions of the Parks Foundation and commended them for their assistance. He asked if the contract for work at the Smale Anniversary Garden was a Park Board contract. Director Kish confirmed it was.

Director Kish reminded the Board of the current process to approve both the application and acceptance of grant money from the Parks Foundation and that a monthly report of dollars received will be distributed to the Board.

Vice President Goetz motioned to accept the staff recommendation. Commissioner Castellini seconded. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote. Commissioner Flynn was not present.

Grant Application/Acceptance: Parks Foundation In-kind Contributions

Director Kish introduced the agenda item, noting it is a new process to better align the Park Board with the MOU and approve in-kind donations.

Mr. Sherman explained the Foundation provides Parks with in-kind contributions throughout the year that need to be approved by the Park Board. He presented a report with in-kind contributions for FY 2020. He explained, moving forward, these will be presented quarterly. He presented the staff recommendation for the Board to approve the acceptance of in-kind contributions from the Parks Foundation in the amount of \$96,391.

Vice President Goetz asked how moving forward, the Park Board will ensure expenditures will align with the terms of the MOU. Director Kish explained the strong relationship the Park Board has with the Foundation and the present opportunity to seek further clarity on terms of the MOU. She described conversations with the Director of the Foundation regarding the execution of the relationship between both organizations to increase clarity on appropriate expenditures.

Commissioner Castellini motioned to approve the staff recommendation. Commissioner Thomas seconded.

Commissioner Thomas asked for clarification on the in-kind contribution for Contract Services, as her understanding was Parks would not be accepting contract services in-kind. Vice President Goetz expressed a discussion is needed moving forward on the nature of the in-kind contributions being made. He furthered, the intent at present would be to approve the total in-kind contributions that were already expended in FY20 and improve the process moving forward.

The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote. Commissioner Flynn was not present.

Commissioner Thomas asked if moving forward, the Director will determine which contributions are considered in-kind and will be presented monthly. President Lindner confirmed. Ms. Thomas asked if there was a limit on the amount of in-kind contributions. Director Kish explained the MOU does not state a dollar amount limit, but it could be established if the Board felt it necessary. Ms. Kish furthered, if she defines an in-kind contribution as “out-of-the-ordinary,” she will bring it to the Board for discussion prior to accepting.

Grant Application/Acceptance: Electric Charging Station Grant

Jenny Mobley explained the Office of Environment and Sustainability (OES) will be applying for a grant through the Ohio EPA to install electric charging stations throughout the city, and Parks has submitted four possible locations: Sawyer Point, Eden Park, Burnet Woods, and Inwood Park. She described the precise locations for each charging station. Mrs. Mobley explained OES is currently selecting their top locations and the project would be funded in full by the grant. She presented the staff recommendation to approve the acceptance of the grant dollars if selected for electric charging stations.

There was further discussion regarding the details of the grant, the type of electronic charging stations, and the precise location of the proposed Eden Park location.

Commissioner Castellini asked if there is a cost associated with maintaining the stations. Mrs. Mobley explained OES will provide funding for a 5-year maintenance plan.

President Lindner asked if there is a revenue-generating opportunity with the stations. Mrs. Mobley confirmed there is an option, and the decision is at the discretion of the Park Board.

Vice President Goetz motioned to approve the staff recommendation to accept the grant dollars if awarded for the selected charging station(s). Commissioner Castellini seconded. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote. Commissioner Flynn was not present.

Deer Management Proposal Update

Director Kish introduced the item, explaining annually staff present the Deer Management Program to the Board in order to continue with the program. She introduced Crystal Courtney.

Crystal Courtney presented the 2020 Deer Management Plan Update. She described key points of the overall program, including the success, safety, and effectiveness of the program during its 12-year run, and the fact that the Park Board is the only entity in the City that is able to manage the deer population for the long-term health of the forests.

Ms. Courtney explained the main criticism of the program are associated trail closures in controlled bow hunting zones. She presented a proposed solution to keep trails open year-round, including through hunting season. She described the methods for determining this solution, addressed safety concerns and precautions, as well as plans to inform and educate the public through messaging and signage. She explained she will present a follow up on the pilot program next year.

President Lindner commented on the safety of the proposed change, remarking on the short-range hunters must be to their target, lowering risk to hikers. He asked how many deer are culled annually through the system. Ms. Courtney described increased deer populations, as well as increased culling in the East District, and a steady decline in deer population in the West District. Director Kish commented on how highly data-driven the program is.

Deer exclusion areas and transect data were discussed. Ms. Courtney described a partnership with the University of Cincinnati's Biology Department to utilize Park property for a long-term ecological study that will encompass research benefitting Parks.

Vice President Goetz expressed appreciation for the report, commenting the proposed solution responds to a specific community request to increase trail openings and appreciated the approach taken to address and ensure safety.

Commissioner Thomas commended staff for their work on this item. She suggested erring on the side of overcommunicating this new aspect of the program to the public. Ms. Courtney

confirmed the first step in the process will be developing a media package for outreach and communication. Ms. Thomas pointed out a typing error in a chart in the board report.

Commissioner Castellini motioned to approve the staff recommendation to keep the trail system open to hikers who choose to hike within hunting zones as well as to continue with the deer hunting program including the continued use of bow hunting with the September to February calendar, continue the night hunting program from February to March, and to explore options to fund the sharpshooting program for the 2020 season. Vice President Goetz seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote. Commissioner Flynn was not present.

Burnet Woods Invasives Removal Contract

Crystal Courtney provided background on developing the first large scale invasive species removal contract for the Park Board to address removal of a variety of invasive species in Burnet Woods. She described the collaboration with invasive species management experts and active community members. Ms. Courtney explained reasoning for selection of Mad Scientist Associates LLC for the project and presented the draft contract. She continued, describing project management of the site. Opportunities to utilize volunteers to keep the project within the budget were discussed. Director Kish commended staff for their work and expertise.

Vice President Goetz echoed Director Kish's sentiments and suggested documenting this process so best practices can be established for this type of project, as it will likely be needed in other parks.

The quality of work of the selected company and the rating system of the selection committee was discussed.

President Lindner asked about the ongoing maintenance of the site once the initial work is complete. Ms. Courtney confirmed a management plan will be established as well as a comprehensive volunteer program, which will include pesticide application. Types of spot treatment were discussed. Vice President Goetz commented ongoing maintenance will be a great opportunity for volunteerism. Rocky Merz described programs used to organize and mobilize invasive volunteer work.

Commissioner Castellini motioned to approve the staff recommendation to enter into the contract in substance with Mad Scientist Associates LLC for the removal of invasive species in Burnet Woods in an amount not to exceed \$250,000 over a four year period. Vice President Goetz seconded. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote. Commissioner Flynn was not present.

Wasson Way Trail Connection to Ault Park

Director Kish introduced the agenda item. Steve Schuckman presented the background on the Wasson Way Trail, and described a segment is proposed through Ault Park which connects the Wasson Way Trail with the park and existing bike trail system connecting to the Murray Road trail. He explained Parks staff has collaborated with the Department of Transportation and Engineering (DOTE) and Ault Park Advisory Council on the design and alignment. He furthered

the project will create a new amenity and accessible paved link to Ault Park, and DOTE will be responsible for maintenance. He presented the staff recommendation to approve the Wasson Way Trail segment in Ault Park and approve entering into an MOU with DOTE to establish maintenance responsibilities.

Commissioner Thomas asked if this portion was part of the original plan for the Wasson Way Trail. Mr. Schuckman confirmed it was always part of the plan and connects to the regional trail system.

Vice President Goetz motioned to approve the staff recommendation. Commissioner Castellini seconded. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote. Commissioner Flynn was not present.

Construction Contracts over \$50K

Mr. Schuckman explained the requirement for the Board to approve construction contracts over \$50,000. He presented five projects, all budgeted within the capital improvement program budget, which are over \$50,000 and are ready to be constructed: Mt. Echo Playground Replacement; Burnet Woods Playground Replacement; Hoffner Park Stair Replacement; Swing Set Replacements at Glenway, Mayfield, Dunore, French, and Drake Parks and Mt. Airy Forest Area #10.

Commissioner Castellini motioned to approve the presented construction contracts. Vice President Goetz seconded. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote. Commissioner Flynn was not present.

STAFF COMMENTS

Rocky Merz presented staff updates. He announced the Fall show at Krohn Conservatory, *Plum Gorgeous* which will run September 5th to October 25th. He explained Explore Nature! has been working with CRC on Fall programming changes in light of COVID-19, which will include opportunities to utilize recreation facilities and virtual programming. Director Kish commended Explore Nature and Business Services staff for their work on this new programming process. Mr. Merz highlighted volunteer activities planned, including National Public Lands Day on September 26th which will include 15 different volunteer projects in different parks. He encouraged anyone interested to visit the Volunteer page on the Parks website. He announced the Hyde Park Square Revitalization Project is nearing completion and a virtual kick-off event is scheduled for September 10th, which will include a video, virtual tour, and opportunities for the public to visit safely. Mr. Merz described the success of the Fall Releaf Program in partnership with the Foundation and Mad Tree Brewing. He explained UTC flyover data will be used in the future to more strategically distribute trees for this program.

President Lindner asked what Parks' ability is to grow the program and what limits the amount of trees distributed. Mr. Merz clarified Urban Forestry funds can only be used to plant trees on public property, so funding for plantings on private property must be raised independently. He explained opportunities for program growth depend on further fundraising.

Mr. Merz continued with staff comments, announcing a social media campaign in which Parks' created "Silly Walk Zones" to encourage play in the parks.

COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS

Commissioner Castellini thanked Mary Unterreiner for her work on coordinating and producing the Board meetings virtually. Vice President Goetz expressed appreciation to Director Kish for her leadership and the work she has done navigating the organization through a very difficult time.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

President Lindner explained the Board would soon adjourn into Executive Session and discontinue the public live stream for this purpose. He furthered, following the Executive Session, the public live stream will be continued for the purposes of adjourning the public meeting only.

President Lindner motioned to enter into executive session pursuant to R.C. 121.22(G)(3) to confer with Parks' attorney concerning a dispute that is the subject of pending and imminent court action. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote. Commissioner Flynn was not present.

The Board entered into Executive Session at 11:49 A.M.

ADJOURNMENT

The public live stream was continued.

Vice President Goetz motioned to adjourn the meeting at 12:04 P.M. Commissioner Thomas seconded. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote. Commissioner Flynn was not present.

ATTEST:



PRESIDENT



DIRECTOR

[External Email] Please support people to use our city parks all year without fear of bow hunters - NO bow hunting this year!!!!!!!

Millie Schafer [REDACTED] >

Wed 8/19/2020 3:13 PM

To: Parks, Cincy <Cincy.Parks@cincinnati-oh.gov>

External Email Communication

During this pandemic, the need to escape to our parks/preserves is greater than ever. These parks/preserves belong to us taxpayers and should remain open all year. People need to find peace, tranquility and to feel SAFE when they escape to connect to nature. Running into bow hunters is frightening - and I've had this experience. Furthermore, there is a risk to the park users as numerous incidents or on record of hunters shooting hunters accidentally. We are all sick of the violence occurring in this city and the last thing we want to see is someone disguised in hunting gear strutting around with a gun or bow - or witness the blood and gore that occurs!

Millie P. Schafer, PhD
[REDACTED]
Cincinnati, Ohio

[External Email] Comment for Aug 20 Meeting

Larry McDowell [REDACTED] >

Wed 8/19/2020 3:17 PM

To: Parks, Cincy <Cincy.Parks@cincinnati-oh.gov>

External Email Communication

All,

I would like to request that the Parks Board consider changing the deer hunting policy and/or dates in our parks. The request is general in nature but especially important for this year, given Covid-19 and its impact on our community, as many more people are finding calm from this pandemic in nature.

I have been hiking regularly in Mt. Airy Forest for 8 years, and the deer hunting restrictions on trail usage have always seemed very excessive. Closing the trails for a couple of weeks at the end of September and then for almost 3 months does not seem to be in the interest of the greater community good for this valuable public resource. Allowing trail usage for just two days per week from November through January clearly subordinates the needs of many for just a few deer hunters in a process that is of questionable value at best.

There are others who can better articulate the moral and scientific issues around deer hunting. My only comment on this is that I have found baiting on the L trail at Mt. Airy the day before hunting was to begin, and no one considers that sportsmanlike. Also, killing does and fawns is not a common deer hunting practice insofar as I know.

Again, my main point is that you are closing publicly funded parks for roughly 80 days each year and keeping Cincinnati's taxpaying citizens from using them for their intended purposes.

Please act now to change this policy. If not, I and a group of likeminded hikers will take additional actions to have the Parks Board act to support the greater good, which you should be doing anyway in your fiduciary responsibility to the city.

Thank you,
Larry McDowell
[REDACTED]
Cincinnati, OH 45202
[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone

[External Email] Please, when you open the parks...

Gail Silver [REDACTED] >

Wed 8/19/2020 3:37 PM

To: Parks, Cincy <Cincy.Parks@cincinnati-oh.gov>

External Email Communication

Can't we please have some time for peace and tranquility, without bloodshed (and risk to human lives), when you open the parks?

It is hard to imagine feeling good in nature while knowing that bow hunters are slaughtering deer around us. I wish we could stop this expensive, wasteful violence in Cincinnati and instead take a lead on the national stage where more progressive urban areas are turning to more effective and certainly more humane ways to manage deer populations.

But really, during a pandemic? To combine opening the parks and conducting slaughter-- unthinkable. Please don't.

Gail Silver, Mt. Washington resident
and Stanbery Park advocate

[External Email] comment to submit for Park board meeting re: bow hunting

Kathleen Kinsey [REDACTED] >

Wed 8/19/2020 3:55 PM

To: Parks, Cincy <Cincy.Parks@cincinnati-oh.gov>

External Email Communication

Have they really read the recommendation to allow hunters and citizens exercising their right to be in our public parks at the same time???? To me this makes about as much sense as when our legislature voted to allow folks to carry firearms into bars if they were not going to be drinking.

This is a real safety issue. I don't care if they are "sharp shooters" - how many times do we hear about hunters accidentally shooting and killing innocent folk?

And to assume the hunters will have immunity if they hurt or kill someone? Am I reading this correctly?

I think their proposal and description of the "success" of their program is basically a lie. The numbers don't bear out. Other more enlightened communities see the bow hunting for what it really is -- cruel killing and not an effective culling method. This is simply allowing these folk private hunting grounds while depriving our citizens of the right to enter and enjoy their city parks in peace and safety. Other areas have successfully implemented birth control methods. If you truly study the issue you will find the does increase the birth of fawns in response. And I don't even want to get into the killing of fawns..... I am in total disagreement with this recommendation --- someone will get hurt.

kathleen kinsey

[REDACTED]
cincinnati oh 45209

[External Email] Hunting in Parks

Sandra Watson <[REDACTED]>

Wed 8/19/2020 4:00 PM

To: Parks, Cincy <Cincy.Parks@cincinnati-oh.gov>

External Email Communication

To Anybody who will listen:

There is a risk to the park users as numerous incidents are on record of hunters shooting hunters accidentally. We are all sick of the violence occurring in this city and the last thing we want to see is someone disguised in hunting gear strutting around with a gun or bow - or witness the blood and gore that occurs!

These hunters hunt because they enjoy killing. I've seen a dead fawn with an arrow in it left on a trail. So, no, they don't do it to eat!!!!

Sandra Watson
Ault Park

[External Email] NO BOW HUNTING

ELISABETH HEIMLICH <[REDACTED]>

Wed 8/19/2020 4:09 PM

To: Parks, Cincy <Cincy.Parks@cincinnati-oh.gov>

External Email Communication

To those it should concern:

The parks/preserves belong to us taxpayers and should remain open all year — especially in a pandemic.

Stop the hunting. Be open to trying darter birth control.

Bow hunting is NOT a longterm solution and is inhumane.

Please stop it now. WE are encroaching on THEIR turf. Not the other way around.

Thank you,
Elisabeth Heimlich

[External Email] Re: FW: Please support people to use our city parks all year without fear of bow hunters - NO bow hunting this year!!!!!!!

Rama Kasturi <[REDACTED]>
Wed 8/19/2020 4:58 PM
To: Parks, Cincy <Cincy.Parks@cincinnati-oh.gov>

External Email Communication

Dear Park Board of Commissioners,

I am writing to ask that you please consider suspending the bow hunting of deer (does and fawns!!) in our Cincinnati Parks in the midst of a pandemic with mankind being held hostage by a viral particle and with Parks being the safest refuge for our citizens. Please also use this time to ask your staff to investigate and understand non-lethal and sustainable approaches to urban deer management. As Mahatma Gandhi said, "The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated."

Please allow our parks and preserves to be sanctuaries for animals, humans, birds, bees and butterflies. Please maintain the trails and park lands by removing the nuisance that is invasive species!!

Thank you for consideration of my request.

Sincerely,
Rama Kasturi, Ph.D.

On Wed, Aug 19, 2020 at 3:50 PM Millie Schafer <mschafer1@zoomtown.com> wrote:

Here's an example of what I sent - feel free to use words or whatever for your own messages.

Millie

From: Millie Schafer [mailto:[REDACTED]]
Sent: Wednesday, August 19, 2020 3:13 PM
To: 'cincy_parks@cincinnati-oh.gov'
Subject: Please support people to use our city parks all year without fear of bow hunters - NO bow hunting this year!!!!!!!
Importance: High

During this pandemic, the need to escape to our parks/preserves is greater than ever. These parks/preserves belong to us taxpayers and should remain open all year. People need to find peace, tranquility and to feel SAFE when they escape to connect to nature. Running into bow hunters is frightening - and I've had this experience. Furthermore, there is a risk to the park users as numerous incidents are on record of hunters shooting hunters accidentally. We are all sick of the violence occurring in this city and the last thing we want to see is someone disguised in hunting gear strutting around with a gun or bow - or witness the blood and gore that occurs!

Millie P. Schafer, PhD

[REDACTED]
Cincinnati, Ohio

[External Email] Bow hunting has no place in our parks

D D [REDACTED] >
Wed 8/19/2020 5:40 PM
To: Parks, Cincy <Cincy.Parks@cincinnati-oh.gov>

External Email Communication

I strongly oppose bow hunting in Cincinnati parks. It is inhumane.

There are other ways to control the deer population. Several credible organizations have presented these options in detail to the park board.

My sense is that many city residents are not aware of the possibility of bow hunting, at the same time that people are seeking a respite in nature from the COVID crisis. The outdoors is one of the few places for city dwellers to literally breathe easy and it's free.

Cincinnati Parks have enjoyed high marks as a jewel in the Queen City's crown. Bow hunting deer has no place in city parks, most especially now, when we are going through so many terrifying challenges in our city, state, country and planet.

Sincerely,

Denise Deitemeyer
[REDACTED]
Cincinnati OH 45213