

**BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS**  
**September 17, 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, Vice President Jim Goetz, and Commissioner Susan Castellini. Commissioner Kevin Flynn and Commissioner Linda Lee Thomas were present via video conference. President Lindner called the meeting to order at 9:06 A.M. Attendance was confirmed by roll call.

Director Kish requested the Chair amend the agenda to place item IV.A. MLH Lease above item III. New Business to accommodate guests present for the discussion. She also requested item III.A. Inwood Park Playground be addressed when guests join the meeting. President Lindner accepted these requests.

**Approval of Minutes**

Commissioner Castellini motioned to approve the August 20, 2020 meeting minutes. Vice President Goetz seconded. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

The discussion was delayed momentarily while the public livestream was verified. The active livestream was confirmed.

The approval of minutes was restated for the purposes of recording.

**Retirement Recognition**

Director Kish announced three Park Board staff will be retiring October 1, Mr. James Hail, Mr. Dave Barfels, and Mrs. Patricia Kuhl. Ms. Kish recognized and thanked Mr. Hail for his service to Parks.

Larry Parker recognized Mr. Barfels, explaining his tenure in operations at Parks as well as describing his value and work ethic. He thanked Mr. Barfels for his service to Parks.

Craig Sherman recognized Mrs. Kuhl, explaining her many roles in the City through the years, and described her fabulous work within Operations and Finance as an asset to the City.

President Lindner wished the retirees luck moving forward and thanked them for their service to the City and the Park Board.

**Public Comments**

President Lindner announced no public comments were submitted via email.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Moerlein Lager House (MLH) Lease**

Director Kish announced Craig Sherman would be presenting recommendations for the Moerlein Lager House (MLH) lease and Greg Hardman, President & CEO of Christian Moerlein Brewing Co. was present.

Mr. Sherman described this presentation is a follow up to the July meeting discussion regarding adjustments to the current MLH lease. He provided background on the current lease and recent appraisals completed to estimate the land lease amount, which have been reviewed by City Law and Real Estate. He described the considerations that went into drafting a mutually beneficial lease. Mr. Sherman explained the recommended changes to the MLH land lease which included fixed rent at \$150K annually (increase every 10 years at CPI with a maximum increase of 15%); MLH to be charged 1.875% on revenue greater than \$8M; and waiving of the monthly rent until April 1, 2021 due to the pandemic.

Director Kish commended Mr. Sherman and Mr. Hardman on their collaboration and work on this lease.

Commissioner Flynn asked if Mr. Hardman was supportive of the changes. Mr. Hardman confirmed, yes, and was appreciative of the consideration. Mr. Flynn commended staff and Mr. Hardman on the work done to support this partner, which he expressed will be beneficial in many ways. President Lindner echoed these sentiments.

Commissioner Thomas also commended staff for this collaboration and was appreciative of the effort and outcome. She asked when the waiver of rent will, or had, begun. Mr. Sherman explained the waiving of monthly rent began when the governor ordered restaurants to close in March 2020, so the rent will be waived for a year total. He explained there may be an opportunity to obtain additional rent through the Paycheck Protection Program. This program was discussed further and the rent deferment period of one year was clarified.

Commissioner Flynn motioned to approve the MLH lease terms as presented. Commissioner Castellini seconded. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Reorganization Plan: Overview**

The Inwood Park item was postponed until later in the meeting when expected guests could be present for the discussion.

Director Kish presented background on the process of reviewing and altering the current organizational structure, describing, review methods, reasoning, and opportunities for improved efficiencies, elimination of silos, increased creativity and expansion of services. She explained how the Early Retirement Incentive Program influenced the timeline and necessity of the reorganization discussions. She continued with an overview of the reorganization plan, describing major changes and modifications to the division structure, including the creation of the Division of Urban Forestry and Natural Resources. Ms. Kish explained staff are currently working with City Administration on the implementation of the plan and the request is subject to further review.

Vice President Goetz expressed support for the changes to organizational structure. He asked if Director Kish fully supported the elimination of positions and if this will impede Parks' performance of responsibilities. Ms. Kish announced her full support and explained the opportunity for increased efficiencies.

Commissioner Flynn commended the plan and Director Kish's approach to the reorganization. He expressed the utility of the plan in creating next year's budget.

Commissioner Thomas also commended Director Kish for proactively addressing improving efficiencies through the reorganization plan and viewed positive budget impacts as a bonus.

Director Kish expressed appreciation for the Board's support and explained the plan was a team effort. She furthered, the Leadership team will be involved in ongoing discussions as the plan is fine tuned.

No Board action was recommended.

### **Reorganization Plan: Change to Position Reporting to Director**

Director Kish explained the job functions associated with the Executive Assistant exceed the current job classification of Administrative Specialist. She described the role and responsibilities of the Executive Assistant and explained these duties are reflective of the Senior Administrative Specialist job classification. She presented the staff recommendation for the Board to approve changing the position of Administrative Specialist to Senior Administrative Specialist via the City's add/delete process. She explained the request is further subject to the Vacancy Review process and Civil Service Commission.

The timeline for reviews was discussed and Director Kish was hopeful this item would be presented for final Park Board approval in October.

Vice President Goetz asked for clarification on the approval process and the authority of the Park Board as it relates to personnel. He expressed his support for this specific request.

Kevin Frank and Christine Zimmer, City Law, mentioned they could examine this matter to better establish the separate roles of the City and of the Park Board. Director Kish suggested pursuing this change subject to further insight from Law.

Vice President Goetz motioned for the Park Board to support the request for the presented position change as Director Kish works with the City Law Department. Commissioner Castellini seconded. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Commissioner Thomas asked if the reasoning for the change of classification is due to the need to permanently change the role, or because the individual in the position is performing at a higher level than the classification. Director Kish clarified the duties required of the position are greater than the current job classification, and the classification change reflects this.

## **Inwood Park Playground and Approval/Acceptance of Foundation Grant Funds**

Director Kish announced members of the Inwood Park Playground steering committee were present for this presentation. She expressed excitement for the recommendation and contributions that went into the project.

Steve Schuckman described the collaboration with PNC Bank, the Mt. Auburn community, and the Parks Foundation to create a new universally accessible playground in Inwood Park. He described the location and features of the playground, including a sliding hill, climbing structures, a variety of swings, playhouses, zipline, and universally accessible play features. Mr. Schuckman explained cost is covered mostly by a PNC Bank grant, and supplemented by Parks' capital fund. Mr. Schuckman recognized the steering committee, which drove the design of the playground, including Jessica Yankie and Melanie Arnold, Carol Gibbs, Kara Ayers, Jennifer Spieser, Larry Parker, and project manager, Cindy Witte.

On behalf of the Cincinnati Parks Foundation, Jennifer Spieser recognized PNC Bank for the \$1.2 million they donated to Parks projects and programming since 1996 and commended the consideration within the design process. Jessica Yankie, PNC Bank, expressed PNC Bank's commitment to the Parks and the Parks Foundation and their excitement with the Inwood Playground project and design. Mr. Schuckman expressed gratitude for the steering committee and excitement for the reinvestment in Inwood Park and the development of the Mt. Auburn community.

Director Kish summarized the staff recommendation to approve the design and budget for the Inwood Park playground, as well as the approval and acceptance of the Parks Foundation grant totaling \$142,438.85. Additionally, staff asks the Board to join in thanking the steering committee for their dedication and participation in the design process.

Details of the design renderings and play features were discussed. Eric Schmidt, Playground Equipment Services offered further insight into the function of play features for children with differing sensory needs and physical abilities. Staff further described the design elements. Commissioner Castellini asked about the playground materials for purposes of maintenance. Mr. Schmidt and Mr. Schuckman spoke to the durability of the materials.

Commissioner Flynn expressed appreciation for team effort and design of the universally accessible design and state-of-the-art equipment available for all to enjoy.

Carol Gibbs expressed appreciation for the revitalization of Inwood Park.

Vice President Goetz expressed support for the project. He asked if the existing play equipment on the Vine Street side of the park will remain. Mr. Schuckman explained its deteriorating state and plans to replace. Mr. Goetz expressed concern regarding the possible perception of social inequity of installing the new playground on the Auburn Avenue side if the existing play equipment on the Vine Street side was not maintained. Mr. Schuckman explained equity was a consideration for replacing the existing playground and adding a parking lot. He shared

additional reasoning for installing the new playground on the side closer to Auburn Avenue, including topography, existing features, and security.

Carol Gibbs expressed the community's support for the project and future objectives for walking paths and rehabilitation of the Inwood Park Pavilion along Vine Street.

Commissioner Thomas expressed excitement and support for the design, as well as appreciation for the consideration that went into the design. She echoed Vice President Goetz's sentiments regarding equity and ensuring amenities are comparable throughout the park.

Commissioner Castellini motioned to approve the staff recommendation. Commissioner Flynn seconded. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

The timeline of the project was discussed. Mr. Schmidt estimated it would be completed by Spring 2021.

Commissioner Thomas suggested heavy promotion of the opening of the playground. PNC Banks' involvement in the ribbon cutting and other plans for the opening were discussed.

### **Reorganization Plan: Deputy Director Appointment**

Director Kish presented the recommendation to appoint Jenny Mobley to the position of Deputy Director. Ms. Kish explained the Deputy Director will lead the Division of Operations under the new organizational structure. She described Mrs. Mobley's professional experience and qualifications to serve in this role. Ms. Kish presented the recommendation to approve the appointment effective September 20, 2020 with an annual salary of \$120,000. She explained the request is further subject to the Vacancy Review process and Civil Service Commission.

Vice President Goetz expressed the Cincinnati Recreation Commission is very supportive of Mrs. Mobley and her work. President Lindner expressed his support as well.

Commissioner Castellini motioned to approve the staff recommendation as presented. Vice President Goetz seconded. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Jenny Mobley expressed her excitement and gratitude for the opportunity.

### **Grant Application/Acceptance: Women's Suffrage Markers**

Director Kish introduced Mary Unterreiner, Executive Assistant who presented an opportunity for the Park Board to help celebrate the centennial of Women's Suffrage and its historical significance throughout Cincinnati.

Ms. Unterreiner provided background on the National Votes for Women Trail and the opportunity for the Park Board to be granted up to two commemorative markers celebrating the lives of two historical figures involved in the Women's Suffrage Movement with ties to locations in Eden Park and Smale. She explained Parks has been identified as a partner for a grant

application representing several locations throughout the city, as well as Parks' responsibility to install, maintain, and assist with a PR/marketing component once the marker is installed. Ms. Unterreiner presented the staff recommendation to approve the acceptance of up to two commemorative Women's Suffrage centennial markers for placement in Eden Park and Smale Riverfront Park, if granted.

Commissioner Flynn asked what Parks' involvement would be if the primary proposed location on private property is approved by the property owner. Ms. Unterreiner clarified Parks would only be involved if the private property owner does not approve the location, and Parks is asked to install the marker at Smale.

Director Kish thanked Ms. Unterreiner for preparing the presented recommendation.

Commissioner Flynn motioned to approve the staff recommendation. Vice President Goetz seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

### **NRAC Appointment**

Ms. Unterreiner provided background on the Natural Resources Assistance Council (NRAC) and the role of District 2 in Hamilton County. She explained per the bylaws, a representative of city parks is required to sit on the council and there is a current vacancy created by the retirement of Parks' former Urban Forestry Supervisor and the preceding resignation of the former Parks Director. She explained Director Kish has been nominated to fill this vacancy. Ms. Unterreiner presented the staff recommendation to approve the nomination of Director Kish to the Ohio Public Works Commissioner District 2 (Hamilton County) Natural Resources Assistance Council.

Vice President Goetz motioned to approve the staff recommendation. Commissioner Castellini seconded. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Director Kish thanked the Board for their support and expressed the opportunity to connect with individuals involved in Clean Ohio Green Space Conservation Fund Program and learn the process.

### **Capital Projects over \$50K: Burnet Woods Improvements and Admin. Building Roof**

Steve Schuckman presented two contracts over \$50K ready for board approval. He described the \$55,895 project in Burnet Woods which will extend a walkway at the lake, providing access to the wildlife viewing station, and include stormwater improvements.

Mr. Schuckman described the \$54,780 project to replace the roof on the Administration Building. He recommended the lowest best bid from Triton should be awarded. Mr. Schuckman presented the staff recommendation to approve the presented contracts for the work as described. The roof replacement was discussed further.

Vice President Goetz motioned to approve the staff recommendation. Commissioner Castellini seconded. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

### **Capital Project “Sunsetting”**

Director Kish introduced the agenda item, describing staff’s review of current capital projects and the intention to provide background on the City’s “sunsetting” process and status of Parks projects.

Mr. Schuckman described the annual “sunsetting” overview process and explained a few Parks projects were identified which do not satisfy the spending thresholds of “sunsetting.” He explained Parks has provided satisfactory explanations to the Budget Office regarding these projects. He described the planned outcome for the identified projects, explaining older capital dollars identified for grant funded projects and/or projects with matching funds will be held until the project is ready to move forward, and other projects will be closed by the end of FY21.

Director Kish expressed appreciation to Mr. Schuckman and Mr. Sherman for their work on identifying these projects and determining a path forward for completing the projects and expending the available capital dollars.

Vice President Goetz asked if funding from the Board of Visitors (BOV) was requested for the Yeatman’s Cove Walkway Improvements project listed within the staff presentation. Mr. Schuckman answered no, explaining Yeatman’s Cove is not under the purview of the BOV and the funding originated as CRC dollars transferred to Parks.

No Board action was recommended.

### **STAFF COMMENTS**

Rocky Merz presented staff updates. He announced upcoming Explore Nature! fall public programming. He described the free hikes, virtual story time, eco-friendly home improvement program, and educational sessions on Facebook Live. Mr. Merz further highlighted events including volunteer reforestation in California Woods and Lunch & Learns about the history and features of certain parks.

Mr. Merz announced several events occurring on September 26<sup>th</sup>. He explained several events and activities planned throughout the parks for National Public Lands Day and Great Outdoor Weekend. He also mentioned the Cincinnati Public Library will be hosting a Storytime in the Parks series, which will take place in various parks near library branches, beginning on the 26th. Mr. Merz announced controlled bow hunting season also begins on September 26th and described the outreach campaign with the public and City leadership to promote and educate on changes to the program.

Mr. Merz described the Be.well Fall Adaptive Hiking Program spearheaded by the Parks Foundation in partnership with Children’s Hospital. He described the 8-week program, which encourages children with disabilities and their families to hike in parks. He thanked Luke 5

Adventures who provided special wheelchairs for the program, and the Parks Foundation for taking the lead.

Vice President Goetz commented on the success of the program in Burnet Woods and thanked the Foundation.

Commissioner Flynn echoed Mr. Goetz's sentiments and suggested capturing video of the Be.well program and draw as much attention to it as possible.

Mr. Merz announced the upcoming event, Cirque de Mt. Airy: A Drive Through Circus, which will occur on October 18<sup>th</sup>, conceived by the Mt. Airy Advisory Community in partnership with the Parks Foundation and Parks. He described the event, which will include entertainment by Cincinnati Circus along Trail Ridge Road.

Commissioner Lindner commended staff and partners on the innovation present in these events.

Director Kish commended Explore Nature! and Special Events teams on their creativity and ability to provide a valuable asset to the community, especially with the challenges this year.

### **COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS**

Vice President Goetz expressed appreciation for Parks leadership and to the team for providing the community with beautiful places to be during this time.

Commissioner Castellini expressed appreciation for improved communication.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Commissioner Castellini motioned to adjourn. Vice President Goetz seconded. The meeting adjourned at 10:52 A.M.

ATTEST:

  
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PRESIDENT

  
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DIRECTOR