

BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
January 21, 2021

CALL TO ORDER

A regular meeting of the Cincinnati Board of Park Commissioners was held on this day remotely by video conference. Commissioners present: President Brad Lindner, Vice President Jim Goetz, Commissioner Susan Castellini, Commissioner Linda Lee Thomas, and Commissioner North. President Lindner called the meeting to order at 9:03 A.M. Attendance was confirmed by roll call.

Approval of December 17, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Castellini motioned to approve the December 17, 2020 meeting minutes. Vice President Goetz seconded. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Staff Recognition

Director Kish publicly acknowledged the recent loss of two members of Park Board staff, Vincent Norment and Kenneth Casey. They were recognized with a moment of silence.

PARK BOARD APPOINTMENTS

Recognition of Commissioner Kevin Flynn

Commissioner Flynn was thanked and recognized for his service to the Park Board. The Board and Director Kish expressed appreciation for Mr. Flynn's guidance, perspective, and work over the years. Mr. Flynn expressed his gratitude and that he was honored to have served in this role.

Introduction of Commissioner Molly North

Commissioner Molly North introduced herself, expressing her excitement to begin serving on the Park Board and her personal appreciation for the Parks system. President Lindner presented Ms. North's background, noting her professional experiences, community involvement, and recognitions.

QUARTERLY POLICE REPORT

Director Kish announced the reinstatement of a consistent police report that will be presented to the Park Board quarterly. She introduced Captain Dennis Swingley, Special Services Unit. Captain Swingley presented statistics compiled by CPD's crime analyst, which encompass a radius of 50 feet around the parks. Captain Swingley described activity in the 4th quarter, including 2,118 calls for service to parks and areas around parks, of which 274 arrests were made. He explained the Vice Unit made 21 arrests for sex crimes since October in the parks and the top 3 types of charges were possession of drug paraphernalia, assaults with victims harmed, and drug abuse & possession.

Vice President Goetz expressed appreciation for the report and asked for further context moving forward in future reports. Commissioner Thomas asked for inclusion of an appropriate comparison to understand if Parks is above or below average in police and criminal activity. President Lindner asked to identify parks with a higher level of activity compared to other parks.

NEW BUSINESS

Annual Management Priority Plan

Director Kish provided background on the process for drafting the Annual Management Priority Plan, explaining the process was put on hold in July 2020 with Board support to focus on COVID-19 response and to consider impacts of the Early Retirement Incentive Program on the organization's structure. Ms. Kish presented the Annual Plan and the drafting process. Ms. Kish clarified goals for the Director's Office will be determined after her performance evaluation with the Commissioners. She asked for the Board's feedback and expressed intent to discuss the 2022 Annual Plan prior to July.

Vice President Goetz expressed appreciation for the establishment of goals and priorities to ensure progress tracking and accountability. He requested quantifiable targets for goals and expressed concern for the addition of committees and bureaucratic procedures, including the Park Improvement Community Request Program. Mr. Goetz requested a monthly overview of community requests submitted through the program.

Commissioner Thomas expressed appreciation for having expectations and responsibilities of each Division clearly stated, but would like to see an overall objective or result of completing the listed goals. Director Kish commented on the role of staff in executing the plan. Ms. Thomas asked about the inclusion of people in the plan with regards to professional development. Ms. Kish explained professional development will be under the goals of the Director's Office and elaborated on her ideas.

Commissioner North commented on the amount of goals and suggested trimming down and clarifying goals to be accomplished this year. She also suggested moving Planning & Design to the top of the plan, as it is a major part of the Parks mission. She expressed interest in creating a mid-term plan for Parks, perhaps 3 years.

Director Kish addressed questions and comments. She clarified terminology and timeline, and expressed all planned processes and procedures, or committees are intended to simplify and reduce ambiguity rather than add bureaucracy. She expressed appreciation for the Board's support and comments. She addressed concerns about the ability to achieve goals and explained the capacity of staff was highly considered in their creation.

Vice President Goetz commented on the need for metrics for goals established for Planning & Design projects as well as the need to include the Board on strategy and rebranding efforts in conjunction with the Director.

President Lindner restated the feedback from the Board. Commissioner Thomas commented and asked if priorities should be focused more because of the current circumstances of COVID-19. Director Kish expressed the current plan does reflect immediate priorities put on hold a year ago and COVID-19 response, but staff will reevaluate based on the Board's feedback. President Lindner commented on the progress made by staff despite COVID-19, as well as the positive impacts of an aspirational plan.

Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area

Jenny Mobley presented an overview of the Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area (DORA) concept for The Banks, which would allow licensed liquor permit holders to sell alcoholic beverages in a designated plastic container and permit patrons to leave the establishment to enjoy the beverage within the designated DORA boundaries.

Billy Webber, Chief of Staff to the City Manager, provided a presentation on the DORA concept and related proposal to create a pedestrian plaza on E. Freedom Way. The presentation included an overview; operations including safety, sanitation, and management; community support; policy goals; and process for approval. Mr. Webber presented the concept plans for the Freedom Way Pedestrian proposal to increase pedestrian safety related to the DORA. He also presented the timeline.

Details of the concept were clarified, including container specifications and restroom facilities. Commissioner North asked about the environmental impact of the additional plastic containers and Mr. Webber commented the cups are reusable and recyclable to help minimize environmental impacts. Ms. North commented she felt these measures were not good enough and referenced the City's proactive approach to banning plastic bags and the desire to find a better solution so this is not contributing to additional waste. Mr. Webber verified the specifications of the container can be investigated further for environmental impact.

The revenue generated through the DORA was discussed. Mr. Webber clarified it would not be revenue-generating for the City and is a self-sustained enterprise.

Director Kish presented the staff recommendation to approve the participation of Schmidlapp Lawn and the Smale Riverfront Park Extension on Lot 23 in the DORA.

Commissioner Castellini asked how participation in DORA would impact Parks' special events and rentals of the spaces. Ms. Mobley clarified the event producer of a rented space would have the option of participating in the DORA and boundaries with signage would be optional as well for a private event.

Commissioner North motioned to approve the staff recommendation. Commissioner Castellini seconded. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote. Vice President Goetz voted yes with the feedback that an environmental solution to the plastic containers is strongly recommended.

Easement – Cincinnati Ballet

Director Kish introduced the agenda item, providing background on the new Cincinnati Ballet building adjacent to Johnston Park. Steve Schuckman presented the report, explaining the need for an easement at Johnston Park for a driveway to serve the Ballet and Baldwin Building. He presented the terms of the easement and explained the City Law Department is drafting the language currently. Mr. Schuckman presented the staff recommendation to approve the easement as long as it includes the basic conditions outlined in the report and presented by staff.

Vice President Goetz asked when the Board will be presented with the Johnston Park Steering Committee's design direction for the park and how the driveway fits into those plans. Mr. Schuckman explained schematic designs will be presented in March and the design has incorporated the driveway from the outset. Director Kish clarified the Steering Committee supports the design, but it will ultimately require Park Board approval. Mr. Schuckman described the makeup of the Steering Committee.

There was further discussion about the terms of the easement regarding maintenance and perpetuity. Director Kish expressed the intent to ensure the easement would be transferred to any future owner of the Ballet property. There was discussion regarding the timeline of the execution of the easement. Mr. Schuckman expected the approvals to occur in February. Director Kish clarified the request is for Board approval for the presented conditions and to allow her to execute the easement once drafted.

Vice President Goetz motioned to approve the granting of an easement with the restriction it be reverted back to the Park Board should there be a change in ownership. Commissioner Thomas seconded. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Donation Acceptance: In-Kind Contributions (Quarterly)

Craig Sherman presented the staff recommendation to accept Quarter 4 in-kind contributions from the Parks Foundation in the amount of \$48,745.02. Commissioner Castellini motioned to approve the staff recommendation. Commissioner Thomas seconded. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Donation Acceptance: Direct Donations

Craig Sherman presented the private donations and endowment distributions from the Parks Foundation for the Board's approval. He explained the Parks Foundation typically tries to capture these in the annual budget, but these distributions were not reflected. He amended Ault Park Advisory Council's donation amount to \$11,000. He presented the staff recommendation for the Board to approve the acceptance of donations made in the amount of \$51,780.

Vice President Goetz expressed appreciation to the Parks Foundation. He asked if the endowments were new. Director Kish was not certain and expressed a need for the Park Board to gain a firm understanding of resources available at the Foundation. The distribution process and the Park Board's awareness of the endowments were discussed. Mr. Sherman explained these are direct contributions not requiring a grant request and will be included in future budgets.

Vice President Goetz motioned to accept the donations.

Commissioner Castellini expressed a desire to understand the resources available at the Parks Foundation and establish a process for accessing that information. Director Kish expressed this is an objective for the Park Board and is being addressed in leadership meetings with the Executive Committees of both the Park Board and Foundation.

President Lindner announced the motion on the floor. Commissioner Castellini seconded. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Commissioner Thomas asked if the distributions described as Smale Riverfront Support in the board report could contribute to funding being raised for the Smale Expansion on Lot 23. Director Kish explained she was unaware of what, if any, specific restrictions were placed on the distributions but would work toward further understanding. Mr. Sherman explained the distribution is for operational maintenance support at Smale.

Grant Application/Acceptance: Parks Foundation Grant

Craig Sherman presented the grant application and acceptance request for \$100,000 from the Parks Foundation for the Ezzard Charles Statue Plaza to support design and construction of the statue's accessible plaza. He presented the staff recommendation to approve the application and acceptance of the funding.

Vice President Goetz asked if the \$100,000 was the full amount collected for this purpose, or if the Park Board will accept future funding for this purpose. Director Kish explained the amount presented is for required construction at the site and additional dollars have been raised for the statue and maintenance support. The potential source of the funding was discussed and Mr. Sherman explained staff can provide clarity on the source. Mr. Goetz expressed excitement for the project.

Vice President Goetz motioned to approve the application and acceptance of the \$100,000 donation from the Parks Foundation. Mr. Goetz asked who would be contracting the work. Steven Schuckman explained the donation will be placed into a capital account and a contractor will be procured through the City process.

Vice President Goetz restated the motion on the floor. Commissioner Thomas seconded. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Design Contract: New Operations Center

Director Kish introduced the topic, providing background. Cindy France, Principal Architect presented results of the RFP for a design services, explaining of the three who met qualifications, KZF Design presented the lowest cost and was judged most advantageous to the City. She explained the Board is being asked to approve schematic design services for \$57,750, sourced from existing capital funds, which will provide a cost estimate for the full project.

Vice President Goetz asked about the source of the funding, as he understood the project would be funded from Parks' Permanent Improvement Fund 752. Director Kish noted an error in the board report to the Commissioners and stated her understanding was the funds for schematic design would be sourced from capital. Mr. Sherman noted the availability of funds in Fund 752 and explained accessing the funds does not align with the timeline of the project. The timeline was discussed.

Vice President Goetz noted the contingencies the Park Board set for the sale of the Reading Road property and asked for confirmation the sale had been approved, and approved with contingencies that Parks will receive proceeds to offset the cost of relocation. The status was discussed. Assistant City Manager John Juech provided an update on the property sale, explaining it is still high priority and the intention, with the approval of Council, is for proceeds from the sale to remain with Parks to assist with the relocation.

Commissioner North commented on the timeline of the sale and questioned the need to expedite funds from capital. Vice President Goetz echoed this sentiment and expressed concern for spending Park funds without the commitment and terms of the sale, although he is supportive of the project. He proposed tabling the discussion. Mr. Juech expressed the eventuality that preparations may need to be made prior to closing, but postponing the discussion would be no issue. Mr. Goetz expressed the Park Board should not be asked to pay for the relocation which was not Parks' decision. Mr. Juech commented on Parks' role in advancing funds upfront for the federally-driven project, with the understanding costs will be reimbursed eventually.

Mr. Schuckman broke down the 21-month timeline, expressing it is not as lengthy as assumed. Director Kish explained a gap is expected between cost of relocation and the sale and understanding the cost of construction will assist with potential future arguments to the City for additional resources.

Commissioner North clarified her proposal is not to shelf the pursuit, but to utilize the timeline to access funds from Fund 752 rather than using capital upfront. Vice President Goetz agreed staff could move forward with the process of accessing funds, but to table the discussion. Commissioner Thomas clarified the request.

Vice President Goetz motioned to seek Council approval to access funding Park Permanent Improvement Fund 752 to enter into a contract with KZF, and to table the approval of the contract until Council has approved access to Fund 752. He added the Board would delegate to Director Kish the authority to enter into the contract once the ordinance to use \$57,750 from Fund 752 is approved by Council.

The motion was discussed further but not amended.

President Lindner announced the motion on the floor. Commissioner Castellini seconded. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Commissioner Thomas asked for clarification on the 21-month timeline. Mr. Schuckman explained 21 months is the term of sale, and the amount of time Parks can remain in the current facility after closing.

Contracts Over \$50K

Cindy France presented four construction contracts priced over \$50,000 requiring Board approval: Blue Spruce Road rehabilitation, Inwood playset replacement, and concrete trip hazard repairs at Burnet Woods and French Park. She explained Blue Spruce Road rehabilitation was publicly bid and the others are through set term contracts already in place.

Commissioner Castellini motioned to approve the presented contracts. Commissioner Thomas seconded. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

STAFF COMMENTS

Rocky Merz presented staff updates. He announced participation of more than 150 volunteers in park beautification, maintenance, and Invasive Removal projects as part of the national MLK Day of Service at MLK Park in Avondale, McEvoy Park, Inwood Park, Washington Park, Sawyer Point, Walnut Woods with Civic Garden Center, and California Woods. He announced virtual recognition for completed projects in lieu of in-person events, including the Kyle Plush Pavilion at Stanbery Park and Marian Spencer Statue at Smale Park, as well as the presentation of a check from Ault Park Advisory Council for their donation to fund cherry trees in Ault Park.

Mr. Merz announced the new process for submitting community park improvement requests, developed to allow residents and community organizations to submit Park Improvement Project Requests for consideration by staff through a standardized online submission process. He explained CPACs and groups who have expressed interest in park improvements will be notified when the process is open to the public on February 1. He confirmed submissions can be reported to the Park Board monthly.

Mr. Merz explained although Krohn is closed due to the pandemic, plant sales are continuing to generate revenue and have been successful due to Krohn staff and digital marketing efforts.

Vice President Goetz asked for Mr. Merz to share virtual recognition opportunities with the Park Board.

Mr. Goetz referenced the past presentation from community members proposing a dog park in Dunore Park. He asked about the necessity for them to go through the new Park Improvement Project Request process when they have already presented to the Park Board. Director Kish recommended the proposal filter through the system to be processed equitably. Mr. Goetz expressed concern since additional community input was already requested following the Dunore Dog Park proposal presentation.

There was discussion regarding community input, the necessity for the Dunore Dog Park group to engage in the new process, and project considerations to be identified through the Park Improvement Project Request process. Commissioner Thomas expressed although the new process may guide staff in the case of existing proposals, they should not be asked to participate in a process that did not exist at the time of their original proposal.

Vice President Goetz expressed he felt the new process would add bureaucracy, be time-consuming, and was not Board driven. Commissioner Thomas expressed the need for a system to process

community requests. Past discussions related to improving the community improvement request process were recalled by Commissioners Thomas and Castellini.

Vice President Goetz expressed inefficiencies by establishing a new process and committees at this point in time. Director Kish explained the process is intended to provide efficiency, clarity, consistency, and equity in processing a multitude of community requests. The plan for staff to follow up with the Dunore Dog Park proposal was restated.

The ability for staff to complete existing projects while implementing new processes was discussed and the purpose and benefits of the new process, including its role in prioritizing future capital funding needs, was further clarified. Commissioner North commented on the need to approach requests proactively as opposed to reactively.

Commissioner Castellini asked if staff was prepared to present a recommendation to the Board in February regarding the Dunore Dog Park proposal. Director Kish commented the project is currently unfunded and adequate community engagement has not been conducted to develop a recommendation. The next step to engage in a community engagement process was clarified.

Vice President Goetz referenced Director Kish's comments about funding for the project and cautioned against the use of funding availability as a metric for community requests. Director Kish clarified funding availability of a proposed project is just one of the considerations in the first round of review and not pass/fail. She restated funding information will assist with prioritization and potential inclusion of community projects in the capital budget.

Expected next steps for staff to engage the community in a public input process was restated. Commissioner Castellini asked for a letter to be sent to the Dunore Dog Park proposal group to communicate this.

Rocky Merz addressed a previous question regarding Commissioner notification of virtual ribbon cuttings.

The background of MLK Day volunteer events and future plans to embrace more national days of service was discussed. Commissioner Thomas commended staff on social media coverage of the volunteer events.

COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS

Vice President Goetz asked Director Kish for more information on a recent update to the Board regarding the possible sale of Parks property at Inwood Park. Director Kish explained she has had preliminary discussions with a developer and DCED with interest in purchasing land adjacent to Inwood Park known as Hollister Recreation Area managed by CRC. She expressed concern regarding the current utilization of the space and felt the proposal could add value to the community in other ways. Engagement of CRC in the discussion as well as consideration of Commissioner involvement was discussed. Vice President Goetz emphasized the need to consider the sale with public input and establish a process for Commissioners engaging with developers to provide clarity

and transparency. Director Kish agreed and reiterated discussions are preliminary and were communicated to the Board for awareness in her routine Director's Updates.

Vice President Goetz asked for a status update on the Public Marina project. Director Kish explained it was determined the project should be put out to public bid through the RFQ/RFP process. Steven Schuckman explained staff have met with Law, Purchasing, and DEI and they determined to engage in the two-step RFQ/RFP process. He continued, the RFQ is currently under City Manager review. Mr. Schuckman explained a final recommendation from an RFP selection committee will be presented to the Park Board for approval. Location requirements in the RFQ were discussed and Mr. Schuckman clarified it provides minimum standards but is open to creative solutions, and teams can propose locations between the Public Landing and the Roebling Bridge. The ability for events and large commercial ships to dock at the Public Landing was discussed. Vice President Goetz referenced the Public Landing study and commented on the need to consider commissioned opinions in project recommendations.

Vice President Goetz shared he was requested by Tom Jones to meet with Spotlight Solar to discuss opportunities for solar lighting at Tom Jones Commons. He reported his findings and expressed a desire to embrace solar lighting throughout the system and mentioned he will forward the information to the Board.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

President Lindner announced the plan to move into Executive Session. He explained the public livestream would be discontinued for the session and would continue when the public meeting reconvenes for the sole purpose of adjourning the meeting.

President Lindner motioned to enter into Executive Session pursuant to ORC Section 121.22(G) to consider the employment, compensation, and discipline of public employees. Commissioner North seconded. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

The Board entered into Executive Session at 12:32 P.M.

ADJOURNMENT

The Board entered back into public session at 12:54 P.M.

Commissioner Castellini motioned to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 12:55 P.M.

ATTEST:



PRESIDENT



DIRECTOR