

Regular Board Meeting – June 17, 2020

Resolution Summary

Resolution	Description	Byers	Dalton	Doneghy	Luetke	Savage	
Resolution No. 35-20	Ratification of Schedule of Payables	2 nd		Motion			Approved
Resolution No. 36-20	Authorization to Request Funding Through the United States Forest Service/Great Lakes Restoration Initiative		2 nd		Motion		Approved

The mission of Metroparks of the Toledo Area is to conserve the region's natural resources by creating, developing, improving, protecting, and promoting clean, safe, and natural parks and open spaces for the benefit, enjoyment, education, and general welfare of the public.



Board Minutes

METROPOLITAN PARK DISTRICT OF THE TOLEDO AREA
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17, 2020, 8:30 A.M.
WARD PAVILION – LIVE STREAM

Commissioners Present:

Scott Savage, President
Fritz Byers, Vice President
Lera Doneghy, Vice President
Molly Luetke, Officer
Kevin Dalton, Officer

Dave Zenk, Executive Director

Dave Smigelski, Legal Counsel

Staff Present: Matt Cleland, Jill Molnar, Ally Effler, Carrie Alexander, Emily Ziegler, Joe Fausnaugh, Matt Killam, Scott Carpenter, Tim Schetter and Bethany Sattler.

1. NON-RESOLUTION BOARD ITEMS

President Scott Savage called the meeting to order at 8:34 a.m.

Mr. Savage called for a moment of silence to honor the current events taking place in the country.

Mr. Savage led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

Mr. Savage requested to change the sequence of the agenda items to consider the resolutions first, followed by the staff reports.

Mr. Fritz Byers made a motion to approve the consent agenda with the presented amendment and for the disposition of the minutes for the regular Board meeting held on May 20, 2020. This motion was seconded by Mr. Kevin Dalton and approved.

3. BOARD APPROVAL OF CONTRACTS, DEEDS, AGREEMENTS, ETC.

- A. Ms. Lera Doneghy offered and moved for adoption of the following resolution, with a second by Mr. Byers:

Resolution No. 35-20– Ratification of Schedule of Payables

After discussion and upon unanimous vote the resolution was declared duly adopted and recorded in the appendix to these minutes.

- B. Ms. Molly Luetke offered and moved for adoption of the following resolution, with a second by Mr. Dalton:

Resolution No. 36-20 – Authorization to Request Funding Through the United States Forest Service/Great Lakes Restoration Initiative

Mr. Tim Schetter explained that the funds would be utilized to support the planting of several thousand trees across the park district.

After discussion and upon unanimous vote the resolution was declared duly adopted and recorded in the appendix to these minutes.

4. CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS FROM DIRECTOR AND EMPLOYEES OF THE DISTRICT FOR REVIEW

- A. Matt Cleland, Deputy Director & Treasurer – Treasurer’s Report

Mr. Matt Cleland provided an overview of the Treasurer’s Report. The financials are trending largely as expected, with the only uncertainties being how the earned and governmental revenue will come in through the rest of the year. Metroparks has received the first half of the Homestead Rollback funds, and local government funds have continued to arrive on time, although the amounts have varied. The expectation is that Metroparks will receive the full budgeted amount of local government funds by the end of the year. Mr. Savage inquired about short-term interest rates for Metroparks’ investments. Mr. Cleland responded that it is expected that the rates will be lower for the remainder of the year and the return will be lower than initially budgeted. The goal is to contain any necessary budget adjustments to 2020, and avoid affecting future years to the extent possible.

- B. Promises Made, Promises Kept – Dave Zenk, Executive Director; Carrie Alexander, Chief of Strategic Planning and Business Development; Joe Fausnaugh, Chief of Operations; Emily Ziegler, Chief of Construction and Planning

Mr. Dave Zenk presented about the promises made and fulfilled by Metroparks Toledo over the past ten years. Metroparks is starting a new chapter in its history and for the community. Starting ten years ago, there were nine parks in the system, with only one park within City of Toledo limits; Metroparks is now poised to have six parks within City of Toledo limits along with various other park areas and trails. Metroparks intentionally undertook this effort to ensure all Lucas County residents can enjoy the benefits Metroparks brings to the area. This year, Metroparks anticipates achieving the vision to place a Metropark within five miles of every Lucas County resident. The next step is to connect each park with the other parks to allow for greater connectivity and access for all park users.

Metroparks began its urban Metropark development with Middlegrounds along the west side of the Maumee River. In doing so, Metroparks has engaged in conservation and restoration work and efforts. In the past six years, eight new Metroparks have opened. Additionally, Metroparks assumed the operations of Toledo Botanical Garden, bolstering operations with over \$1 million in deferred maintenance, improving infrastructure, and providing new experiences to draw visitors.

Metroparks Toledo boasts the strongest conservation team in the state of Ohio. Over 2,000 acres were restored or improved in the past ten years with 180 acres of new forest, 570 acres of coastal marsh, and 1,500 acres of

existing habitat improved.

Metroparks' programming department has expanded to connect more people to parks and nature. The park district's hiking program is a highlight, and has allowed beginner hiking participants to learn the skills necessary to hike a section of the Appalachian Trail within a year of starting. Metroparks' strong partnership with The Ability Center has helped achieve a goal of accessibility for all people to participate in Metroparks' programs and offerings. This year, a barrier-free inclusive garden will open at Toledo Botanical Garden.

Metroparks' visitation has grown to an all-time high over the past few years, reaching over 5.5 million visits per year and growing. The Toledo area was named second in the nation as the best place to live if you love the outdoors. Metroparks has become one the driving factors to entice people to choose to live in the Toledo area. Metroparks is also one of the four finalists to be named the top park system in the country by the National Recreation and Parks Association.

Ms. Carrie Alexander reported on Metroparks' ongoing promises and new ones to be presented. Metroparks provides meaningful experiences to connect people to nature. The Cannaley Treehouse Village will open in July and represents a large project to bring an entirely new experience to the community. The opening of Manhattan Marsh Preserve in north Toledo this fall will fulfill the promise of having a Metropark within five miles of every Lucas County resident.

Glass City Metropark construction is well underway. The park will connect people, promote development in downtown Toledo, preserve and conserve natural resources in the heart of the City, and become a destination for those outside of the City. Special features include an event pavilion and lawn, recreation features in and out of the water, and trail systems. Visitation to Glass City Metropark is anticipated to be over two million annually.

Mr. Joe Fausnaugh reported on his experience with the Metroparks, indicating that recent years have been the most exciting for growth. Metroparks is committed to maintaining current facilities and parks and keeping conservation at the forefront. New projects do not come at the expense of existing commitments and maintenance. Each year Metroparks spends between two and five percent (2-5%) of its budget on maintenance of existing infrastructure, and maximizes efficiency and quality for the expenditures of taxpayer dollars.

Planned maintenance and improvement for existing parks includes upgrades to the Otsego Road corridor at Bend View Metropark. Better access to the river at that site will be created along with new camping features to encourage visitors. Blue Creek Metropark will have a barrier-free loop trail around the quarry, additional kayak opportunities, and improved shelter facilities. An additional trail will be added to the northeast corner of Wildwood Preserve, which previously was inaccessible. A partnership with University of Toledo engineering students provided a design that will create access to this area without damage to the natural ecosystem. The Andersons' property adjacent to Brookwood will be developed over the next few years to connect to Brookwood and create a new Metropark. Howard Marsh will move into Phase II, expanding the park by an additional 200 acres, and adding new marshland and recreation opportunities. All parks will see improvements and continued high quality maintenance in the coming years.

Ms. Emily Ziegler provided an overview of the regional connectivity plan in place to connect parks to parks, and parks to people. The first major piece of the plan is the Swan Creek trail, which will connect the bike path on the east side of Swan Creek to the Eastgate bike path, and connect the University of Toledo to Maumee. Metroparks completed the first phase of the University Parks Trail in 2019, with additional expansion planned to connect Secor Metropark in Berkey all the way to the University of Toledo. The first section of the Moseley Trail connecting Secor Metropark to Wiregrass Lake Metropark opened in 2019, with additional southern expansion planned to eventually provide a six mile continuous trail connecting all the way to the Wabash Cannonball Trail and the Oak Openings region Metroparks. The Wabash Cannonball Trail currently connects from Oak Openings east to Fallen Timbers Battlefield and west to the Fulton County line. Water trails are also planned to provide additional connectivity, including a water trail along Swan Creek to connect the Anderson/Brookwood property to Swan Creek Metropark.

Glass City Metropark is the ultimate example of connectivity for the community. Neighborhood connections to the waterfront in downtown are integral to the project, with multiple trails and greenway corridors planned to bring the residents surrounding the park to the riverfront. Year-round activity at the park is planned to allow users to enjoy the parks at all times. A building currently on the site of the new park will be utilized to create the Glass City Enrichment Center, providing shared resources with community partners to connect more residents to the park.

Phase II planning for Glass City Metropark is underway, with the input of the community greatly influencing the features to be included. Partnerships with other agencies will heighten the conservation on the site. Additionally, a treated water facility that mimics the Maumee River basin will be installed to provide recreation and educational opportunities. In the winter, an ice skating ribbon will be available to encourage visitation in the colder months. The same trail will be a water play and walking trail during the summer. The Phase II plans will be finalized by the end of 2020 as construction continues on Phase I.

Mr. Zenk highlighted Metroparks' ability to enhance and improve the community and the intention to build on the momentum over the past ten years to bring the area to a new level. Outdoor spaces are not just nice to have, but rather are necessary to healthy, thriving communities, as recent events have proven.

The future vision of Metroparks is twofold: creating new experiences and natural areas for the community, and refocusing the community on the downtown riverfront to create a vibrancy and renaissance for Toledo. Other communities have taken this approach and bolstered their riverfronts, which has reinvented those cities and brought new development and life. Metroparks believes that the vision for the riverfront will be the spark that brightens Toledo moving forward. With that said, Mr. Zenk discussed the proposed five-mile Glass City Riverwalk which will provide a continuous connection on both sides of the river. The Riverwalk will connect both sides of the Maumee Riverfront in downtown Toledo, bringing an incredible change to an under-developed part of the community. This will allow access for not only the six neighborhoods closest to the Riverwalk and the businesses downtown, but also an opportunity for growth in this community and ultimately a point of destination. The neighborhoods surrounding the immediate downtown area include over 30,000 residents who will soon be connected directly to their riverfront. Public-private partnership will be leveraged to accomplish this grand vision.

Mr. Savage expounded on the great work Metroparks' employees have accomplished to bring the park system to the high standing place it has earned and to poise the agency for growth moving forward. Mr. Savage expressed his recent reflections on the mission and vision of Metroparks and how those fit into the progress needed in current times of social unrest. More work is needed to instigate change and Metroparks will play an integral role in the changes to come to break down barriers and create a truly inclusive community.

The first marker of the promises kept is Metroparks' naming as a finalist for the National Park and Recreation Association Gold Award and consideration as one of the best park systems in the country. A video was created to submit to the award committee to show why Metroparks should be awarded the distinction, highlighting the importance of Metroparks in the community and how it has partnered with the entire community. The award is a way to express how Metroparks is an integral part of the Toledo area.

The second part of the vision is to serve as a centerpiece of the region and reason for people to choose to live in and visit Toledo. Metroparks is a respite center for the community during recent times of quarantine, allowing people a clean, safe, natural place to get outside and enjoy nature. Metroparks continues to gather input from all areas of the community on how it can be the catalyst for the next phase of Toledo's development and growth. The need for Metroparks to be a significant partner in the community is greater than ever based on the conversations held to date. The projects Metroparks pursues will take into consideration the demand from the community and resources available.

The centerpiece of the funding for Metroparks' vision is a 2-mil property tax levy to be placed on the November 2020 ballot. This local taxpayer investment will be leveraged by connecting with federal and state grants totaling over \$50 million. Tax-increment funding districts will also be utilized to enhance the funding for this project. Additionally, private philanthropy will bolster the funding and bring more elements that will take the project to the next level. Numerous community partners have stepped forward to express their support of this project.

Mr. Savage emphasized the economic impact that this project will provide. Just the riverfront investment alone will stimulate a private response of over \$1 billion; preserving and protecting greenspace begets up to a 20:1 return on investment. Preserving, protecting, and enhancing what is already in place will take Metroparks to the level of the country's best park system, and promote Toledo as one of the best cities in the country for quality of life and development.

Ms. Doneghy expressed her thoughts that parks should be a place for all members of the community to be included and to enjoy. Metroparks has taken the parks to the people and enhanced that vision, placing a park within five miles of every resident in Lucas County. Physical, mental, and emotional benefits are the reason so many enjoy the parks. Ms. Doneghy has become aware through personal experience of the need for all people, regardless of disability or background, to have connections to nature and their parks. Parks are more than just natural spaces; they provide common ground and investment in the community. Connecting to more people and neighborhoods is needed now more than ever; this is the right goal and the right time. Ms. Doneghy expressed her confidence in the Metroparks team and the timing of this project.

Ms. Luetke acknowledged that the taxpayer support up to this point is the reason Metroparks has been able to achieve all it has done so far. The tax levy request from the Metroparks to the community is significant and the request is not made lightly. Ms. Luetke has seen how individuals have chosen to return to Toledo or expressed the desire to return because of the amenities that Toledo has to offer all people and families. Metroparks' presence has vastly affected the quality of life in the area. Additionally, the diverse offerings of Metroparks encourage people to explore the entire area and invest in the entire region. Metroparks is a draw for visitors and is a reason Toledo stands out from other cities. The addition of Glass City Metropark and Glass City Riverwalk will provide additional reasons to draw new people to our community. While current events are difficult, this is the right time to pursue this development.

Mr. Dalton expressed his longtime appreciation for the Metroparks and discussed his experience as an educator using the Metroparks for educational opportunities. The availability of the parks brings a better quality of life to the area. Including the community in the development and funding of their Metroparks allows everyone to have a stake in the future of the community and move the region forward.

Mr. Byers expressed the great opportunity that Metroparks is poised to provide at this pivotal moment. It is an unusual time in the world, but Metroparks is here at the right time with the right initiative to impact great change for the community. The Glass City Metropark and Glass City Riverwalk vision aligns with Metroparks' mission and the needs of the community at this time. Mr. Byers thanked all of Metroparks' staff for creating a great agency and for stewarding taxpayer dollars appropriately and efficiently. The accomplishments of Metroparks and research have proven that the taxpayer investment will provide additional private and public investment to the area.

The times of civic dislocation that the country is experiencing have laid bare the needs of the community, and further proves the need for the public-private partnership that is planned for this project. Tremendous division and cynicism exists right now, but Toledo is showing how united it can be during these times. The overwhelming response to Metroparks' downtown plan has been support and offers to contribute. The development of Metroparks in the past has been a catalyst for reviving the community during the times of the Great Depression, and Mr. Byers expressed his confidence in this plan now to do the same for the community in these divisive times. Metroparks can be a unifying factor for the Toledo area, removing barriers between east and west Toledo, urban and suburban communities, and between people. The economic development, civic unity, and environmental preservation will be a great bolstering factor. This is the right project and the right time to bring the change needed.

Mr. Savage concluded that the upcoming years will provide for growth and opportunity in the community. He expressed his gratitude for Metroparks' staff and Board of Park Commissioners for poising the agency to take on this next important step. The partnerships necessary to support this initiative on the ballot in November 2020 coming into place, with full confidence placed in the initiative. The Board of Park Commissioners will vote at the July 2020 meeting to officially place this initiative on the ballot and display the support of the numerous community organizations and partners that have already committed to this cause.

5. BOARD INITIATED TOPICS AND DISCUSSIONS

With no further business or action to be taken, Mr. Dalton made a motion to adjourn the Board meeting at 10:03 a.m., which was seconded by Ms. Doneghy and approved.



Scott Savage, President

Attest: 

Dave Zenk, Executive Director

DDZ/bas
06/17/20