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## Board of Park Commissioners

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Agency: [Cleveland Metroparks](#)

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## Summary

- The Cleveland Metroparks financial revenue is up and seems to be doing very well, according to a presentation.
- The parks engage in programs to get students with Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD) involved in learning with the STREAM project and others.
- There are many projects the parks work on.

## Follow-Up Questions

- A public commenter said there has never been a breakdown of specific money spent for the public to view. Is that true, and if so, why?
- Who comes up with the idea for the zoo research projects? For example, who came up with what Metroparks Research Curator Noha Dunham went over about the gorilla research program and the colobine monkeys?

## Notes

Board Of Park Commissioners, Cleveland Metroparks, July 18

Meeting started at 8 a.m. Meeting began with the roll call.

First up for general [agenda items](#) was the swearing in of three new Metroparks police officers and two promotions (background details from Chief of Police Kelly Stillman and the agenda);

- **Deven Hall** is a six-year veteran of the Ohio Investigative Unit. He received his training from the Ohio State Highway Patrol Basic Police Academy.
- **Matthew Malone** recently completed his Ohio Peace Officer Training at the Police Academy at Polaris Career Center in Middleburg Heights.
- **Jorge Villarreal** resigned from Cleveland Metroparks Police Department to pursue a new career. He left the park 40 days ago, but came back to the department.

Next the board swore in **Lawrence Rieck** as sergeant. Riecke has over 24 years of experience as an officer. He spent a lot of his time training others as a field trainer.

The board also swore in **Stephan Howard** as lieutenant. Howard joined the Metroparks in 2015 and since then has supervised and managed many in the field.

**Brian Zimmerman**, Metroparks chief executive officer had the following retiring guests (background details from Zimmerman and the agenda):

- **Joseph P. Gearo** - Grounds Maintenance, was with the parks for 10 years.
- **James E. Kamps** - Director of Parks. James started his career as a handy man and worked his way up to the Director of Parks. He has been a dedicated employee of The Metroparks for 41 years. He is known as a father figure to the Metroparks as a whole.
- **Theresa M. Moore** - Admissions Manager, was with the parks for over 35 years.

### **Financial Report**

Metroparks Chief Financial Officer Wade Steen presented a comparative summary of revenues and expenditures 2024 vs. 2023 year-to-date.

Budget wise things are going well, Steen said. Metroparks is up on charges for service by about \$3 million. Year to date the biggest contributors to that are an \$840,000 increase in revenue from the zoo and a \$1.1 million increase from golf. Revenue from Metroparks golf greens fees is up 14%.

### **General action items**

Several amendments to existing contracts were discussed and approved by the board. In general the amendments pertained to mostly the new construction at the zoo, including the planned [Primate Forest](#).

### **Public comment**

A public attendee urged Metroparks to make detailed, line-item expenses readily available to the public.

### **Information/Briefing items/Policy**

The board learned about the STREAM (science, technology, research, engineering, art and math) student after school initiative at the Watershed Stewardship Center at the West Creek Reservation. Bethany Majeski, the center manager, explained that in 2023 the

center served 12,000 students in educational programming. A quarter of those students were from CMSD and 50 percent were from the inner-ring suburbs.

She spoke of the barriers they know schools face and how Metroparks is trying to find solutions. Barriers include transportation for schools and schedule changes for middle school and high school students. It's important for the community to have safe and engaging after school programming opportunities for students, Majeski said, adding that's where STREAM came into play. Applied for and received a federal grant for funding the program in a pilot year (2023-24 school year) and the next year. It offers a project-based learning opportunity, she said.

### **New Construction: Slavic Village Downtown Connector North**

Metroparks staff presented plans for a connecting trail of 3.2 miles from Slavic Village to Downtown Cleveland. The Morgana Run Booth Ave Extension, when completed, will be a trail of 3.1 miles. The funding source is \$19.5 million of RAISE ([Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity](#)) funds from the U.S. Department of Transportation.

### **Zoo Science Program**

Metroparks Research Curator Noha Dunham spoke on a few research projects. The Zoo Science Program is researching colobine monkeys. He explained about their diets and behaviors, as well as the [ongoing gorilla research program](#) centered on behavior issues and heart disease.

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