

# Documenters

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## Board of Park Commissioners

Documenter name: Nani Faye Palmer

Agency: Cleveland Metroparks

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## Summary

- There is some disagreement about bikes vs. horses on the trails.
- Managing invasive plants is crucial for ecosystem restoration.

## Follow-Up Questions

- What was Dan Moore's *second* recommendation in regards to the bikes vs. horses debate?
- How can we as individuals contribute more to helping to restore native ecosystems? Are there landscaping companies that specialize in native landscaping (companies people can hire for their lawns, for example)?

## Notes

President Dan T. Moore

Vice President Yvette M. Ittu

Vice President Bruce G. Rinker

Chief Executive Officer Brian M. Zimmerman

Chief Financial Officer Wade Steen

Chief Legal and Ethics Officer Rosalina M. Fini

On Webex, the meeting began with Metroparks IT Director David C. Calco hosting and approval of the previous meeting's minutes. Then the CEO's report and general action items were introduced and discussed. All were approved.

### a) 2024 budget adjustment No. 8

- Cleveland Metroparks Appropriation Summary 2024
- Provided extra money for contractual services, operations, capital construction expense and capital equipment
- A total of \$703,334 (which is funded by increased revenue, donations, grants, or funds received but previously unappropriated).

**b) Award of RFP #6840 - Depositories**

- Depositories request for proposal (RFP).
- PNC Bank emerged as the lowest and best bidder.

**c) Authorization of land acquisition: Diocese of Cleveland Facilities Services Corporation Property (± 1.9 acres) – West Creek Reservation**

- Carmelita's House in Parma on West Ridgewood Drive
- Owner: Diocese of Cleveland F.S.C.
- Highly strategic piece of real estate acquisition that would allow better access into the old Parmadale site, which was essentially landlocked in all other areas with no way into that portion of the park
- For the last 14+ years, they have tried to work with the diocese
- Finally the legal team's diligence paid off and they were able to negotiate a price
- Future possibilities: strategic redesign of West 29th Street, realigning it with the park; adding a parking lot on top of the hill

**d) Land acquisition from West Creek Conservancy: Olson Property (±0.65 acres) - West Creek Reservation**

- A continuation of land acquisition in West Creek conservancy.
- This is a ±0.65 acre parcel of land.
- Part of a longstanding commitment to the City of Parma and their partnership with West Creek conservancy.
- This parcel is a missing link in the greenway corridor that would extend the future West Creek Greenway north from West Ridgewood Drive to Grantwood Drive.

**e) Amendment No. 6/guaranteed maximum price #5 – Contract 1543 – Construction manager at risk, RFP #6484-b, Gorilla Primate RainForest addition, Cleveland Metroparks Zoo**

- Project will continue for many years, but at this stage The Albert Higley Co. is asking to amend the guaranteed maximum price #5 in the amount of \$19.7 million.
- Tremendous amount of work compared to the current rainforest, including rerouting all the utilities and everything else that is being done to move the gorilla project forward.
- Groundbreaking within the next 30 days.

**f) Amendment No. 5 – Contract #1696 – Single/sole source #1622 – Professional services agreement – [Barge 225](#) Permanent mooring professional design services (at Euclid Beach)**

- With NETSCo (Northeast Technical Services Company Inc.)

- This proposal includes permanent mooring which will allow for full renovation, utility connections, and access from shore for the future nature-based education center.
- Looking into potentially sinking it down and actually mooring it on the bottom and having an orientation change to make sure this project is successful long-term
- Needed a space for all the work that Metroparks Director of Outdoor Experiences [Mary Rouse](#) is doing with the [Greater Cleveland Food Bank](#) and programming
- Excellent opportunity, but it has created some very unique challenges
- Yes, it is still floating!

**g) Second amendment to professional services agreement: Cleveland Metroparks Zoo and Dr. Robert Marquez**

- Andean Bear Conservation Alliance (ABCA) is a long-standing program with Cleveland Metroparks.
- Professional services agreement effective August 2024 through 2028, not to exceed 1,000 hours per year for a cost of \$140,000
- Funded in a wide variety of ways, including the Cleveland Zoological Society and other external sources.

They skipped the next agenda item because (and this is unusual, they said) there are no “Award of Bids” today.

Next item they looked at is Resolution 24-08-100, which approved payment for a number of expenditures in the amount of \$14 million. The commissioners approve that as well

**Public comments**

1. The first speaker wants to bring attention to the perceived disruptiveness of bicycles hurtling down the same trails that are used primarily for horseback riding, walking, hiking, running, and bird watching (all of which, she says, get along just fine). The speaker said that bicyclists seem to be oblivious and a tad frightening to those on foot or horseback.

The board responded to her comments with some corrections and comments of their own.

Board Chair Moore spoke to the concerns about bicycles versus horses. He pointed out that there are far more miles of horse trails than there are bike paths, yet the horse population is a tiny percentage of users while about half the people

have bicycles. So perhaps they are really undeserving the bike community with respect to bike trails.

He also said it has been proven all over the nation that bikes and horses can coexist, although there is surely a learning period. He made a recommendation: Determine what trails don't see very much horse traffic and maybe open those up to bike traffic. But many of the regular trails don't allow bicycles so they are really restricted to trails just for bikes, he said.

Next comment.

2. The second public speaker agreed with the first one about bicyclists being unaware of the other people on the trails. She said she has been a volunteer for MetroHealth for more than 10 years and came today to say that she is grateful for the MetroHealth and Metroparks partnership that brings the doctors and aging populations together for Q&A. "Parks are medicine," she said, adding that she is disappointed that transit is not part of the discussion concerning the mobility plan, for which [Toole](#) is the design firm. And she said she is hopeful that the [Warner-Broadway](#) intersection can be "humanized." She said she also would like to see the Metroparks apply for mobility grants and help RTA apply for grants too. And she would ask that at least part of the bridge be snow-shoveled in the winter so that they can access the Brookside Loop Trail.

Zimmerman responded that the Metroparks does try to partner with RTA on projects. But he doesn't know why the RTA paratransit locations do not include a dedicated zoo stop. He said it makes no sense, considering they get over a million visitors each year. "It's hard to understand some of the way they reroute some of their buses around some of the institutions and attractions."

#### **Information/briefing items/policy**

##### **a) 2024 National Procurement Institute (NPI) Achievement of Excellence Award**

- 14th consecutive year that Cleveland Metroparks Purchasing Team won.
- A procurement team of three people for an almost \$200 million organization
- Only 25 special districts nationwide have been given this award, which means that they are the best of the best.
- One of only three agencies in Ohio.
- The people that do the hard work are the people in finance who keep everything happening so that "you can rest assured that the money is

accounted for, the purchases are done properly, and the information you get is accurate.”

- Constantly trying to stay cutting edge, continuing to be innovative and creative for the park district.
- Round of applause.

**b) Invasive plant management contract in support of SOM Wetland Enhancement Project**

- A presentation by Jennifer Crickett Hillmer, Metroparks Invasive Plant Management coordinator
- Ecologist John Reinier is managing this multi-year restoration of a forested wetland mosaic on the west side of the North Chagrin Reservation.
- One major component of all ecosystem restorations is management of invasive plants.
- Funding for this project came from Willoughby Hills following a civil action for violations of the [Clean Water Act](#).
- Proposals requested for contract invasive plant management for about 300 acres over the next three years; about 30 acres will be in-house (Cleveland Metroparks staff and volunteers) focused on areas of high conservation priority or high visitation.
  - When Cleveland Metroparks acquired the properties, there were a few pockets of high quality wetlands and remnant populations of native wetland plants, scattered throughout 20th century farmland and pasture that had since grown into low-diversity red maple forests. The now-forested land shows where drainage ditches subsurface drain tiles and old agricultural furrows continue to move water off what was most likely a mixture of swamp and upland forests, shrub swamps, wet meadows and vernal pools.
  - Vernal pool breeding amphibians such as wood frogs and spotted salamanders are documented from this site. These creatures need seasonal wetlands for late-winter breeding and spring larval habitat, as well as ample forest habitats around the pools.
- Selective tree harvesting to improve the diversity of the tree and shrub layers; find/break old drain tiles; fill old ditches; build dams across old furrows; create shallow vernal pools
- Invasive plant management is an integral component of habitat enhancement or restoration projects at every stage.

- When new gaps are opened in the forest canopy, aggressive plants have a chance to establish on the forest floor and significantly impact how long and where water stays on the site
- Goal is to reduce the extent and severity of invasive plants that are early colonizers of newly disturbed ground.
- As vernal pools are dug, drainage is disrupted and soil gets moved around. Inevitably, even just a root fragment can sneak a weed in.
- Vital to monitor recently disturbed sites, access points, and established invasive plant populations.
- Invasive plants can move in quickly, but it can take years to re-establish a native population.
- Short-term results timeline for establishing native trees and shrubs is about 10 years.
- We expect more high bush blueberry and white grass – they look similar yet they function very differently.
- Invasive plant management removes one major obstacle to healthy ecosystems. The more robust the ecosystem, the better it withstands extreme weather and other shocks to the system. The restoration actions set the stage for nature to take over.
- Hillmer mentioned a few of her favorite native species that are already on the site: the shrub winterberry holly and a “fabulous” plant called [mad-dog skullcap](#).
- The next two to three years of work will reset the direction and recovery of long-abandoned farmland; natural resources staff, volunteers and selected contractors will nudge the natural growth here towards a flourishing and diverse habitat for hundreds of species, park officials said.

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