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Board of Park Commissioners

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Agency: [Cleveland Metroparks](#)

Date: March 20, 2025

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Summary

- The Cleveland Metroparks 2024 Real Estate report showed the park agency acquired more property. The Marlin Investment Group property near [Rivergate Park](#) was a big acquisition, according to the report.
- Cleveland Harbor Eastern Embayment Resilience Strategy (CHEERS) was also a talking point. *[Editor's note: [Embayment means the formation of a bay or something resembling one.](#)]*
- Officials spoke about the number of days this February that were rained or snowed out as compared to February 2024, resulting in revenue losses at the golf courses and other enterprises.

Follow-Up Questions

- A public commenter spoke about the COVID-19 crisis and raised issues with the way meetings were held online during the height of the pandemic. They also spoke about controlling costs. What is the commenter's proposal for doing so?
- The Board of Park Commissioners meeting went fast, sometimes seeming as if many decisions had already been made. Could they have spent more time detailing the "AWARD OF BIDS/RFPS/CO-OPS/SINGLE SOURCES" section of the agenda?

Notes

I attended this meeting via the WebEx platform online. The registration for the WebEx meeting is easy. All you need to do is provide a name and email, and Metroparks sends you a link. David Calco, who works in IT for Metroparks, hosted the WebEx meeting.

The board meetings typically take place on Thursdays at 8 a.m. at Cleveland Metroparks Administrative Offices in the Rzepka Board Room located at 4101 Fulton Parkway in Cleveland. On the Cleveland Metroparks website, [there is a link](#) that shows you exactly how to join the meeting via WebEx with pictures.

The meeting was called to order at 8 a.m. Roll was called, and [all three board members](#) were present, which is a [quorum](#). Find the [agenda here](#).

Wade Steen, Metroparks CFO, presented the [financial report](#) for February 2025. Property tax revenue was down about \$13 million through the first two months of 2025 compared to the first two months of 2024. Steen said the state was late getting reductions and appraised values back to the county, so the county pushed back collection day. It should normalize by the end of March, with projections set to be around where they were expecting. Wade said the property tax revenue isn't growing as much as he thought it would.

They did have some major construction costs this February. The big project was [the primate forest](#).

Weather will be a recurring theme in this presentation, Wade said. There haven't been many visitors to the zoo or playing golf due to the weather.

[Cleveland Metroparks Enterprises](#) have been affected by the weather as well. Most are down slightly revenue-wise.

New Business (find full list of items on the [agenda](#))

Adoption of multiple revised policies

This includes the Metroparks' policy for processing public record requests. Rosalina Fini, Metroparks Chief Ethics and Legal Officer, said the number of requests from members of the public has burdened police departments around the state. The biggest change is incorporating the [new law in Ohio that allows law enforcement agencies to charge more for requests for video](#). *[Editor's note: The linked story includes a companion video with potentially distressing content].*

The [Metroparks policy](#) raises the cost to \$3, up from \$1, for records delivered on a CD. It also aligns with the maximum an agency can charge for videos under the law: \$750. The Metroparks also updated its [electronic signature policy](#). Motion to approve the policies was approved.

Adoption of 2025 By-Laws

[By-Law changes](#) include allowing for virtual meetings, a new approach to contract amendments, and changes to acknowledge higher insurance deductibles.

Board President Dan Moore asked about an additional change that would allow Metroparks to sell some unused personal property directly to purchasers rather than going through an auction process. Items valued less than \$2,500 would be eligible for the direct-to-buyer option. Fini said this will allow Metroparks to get the best price for the items and not be locked into putting the items into auction.

Authorization of Land Acquisition: Harrison Property (± 18.4 acres) – Hinckley Reservation. Approved.

Authorization to Submit Grant Application and Commit Funds – Recreational Trails Program – Hinckley Reservation. Approved.

Cleveland Harbor Eastern Embayment Resilience Strategy ([CHEERS](#)) – Authorization to Submit Grant Application to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Transformational Habitat Discretionary Grant Program and Commit Match. \$12 million is the total proposed grant budget, with NOAA providing \$9.5 million, Cleveland Metroparks \$ 1 million, City of Cleveland \$1.4 million, and the Port of Cleveland \$100,000.

The [CHEERS project](#) is an effort to improve the lakefront on Cleveland's East Side.

Motion to approve passed.

Professional Services Agreement – RFQu #6910/PID 118700 – CUY-Valley Parkway Bridge Rehabilitation, Rocky River Reservation – Professional Construction Inspection Services for Cleveland Metroparks. Approved.

Amendment No. 2/Guaranteed Maximum Price #2 – Contract #1746 – Construction Manager at Risk, RFP #6803-b, Old Lorain Connector Trail, Rocky River Reservation was approved.

Irishtown Bend Park – Project Development Agreements – Lakefront Reservation was the next on the docket. The National Park Service (NPS) awarded Metroparks \$10.8 million in September 2024 to work on the trail and the park, said Sean McDermott, Chief Planning and Design Officer. This [agreement](#) is required to receive the NPS funding, McDermott said. Approved.

Public Comment was next, and the commenter spoke about controlling costs. The speaker also said Metroparks did not optimally handle virtual meetings during the height

of the COVID-19 pandemic on behalf of the public. Some Metroparks representatives said after the comment that there were half-truths and errors in the comment.

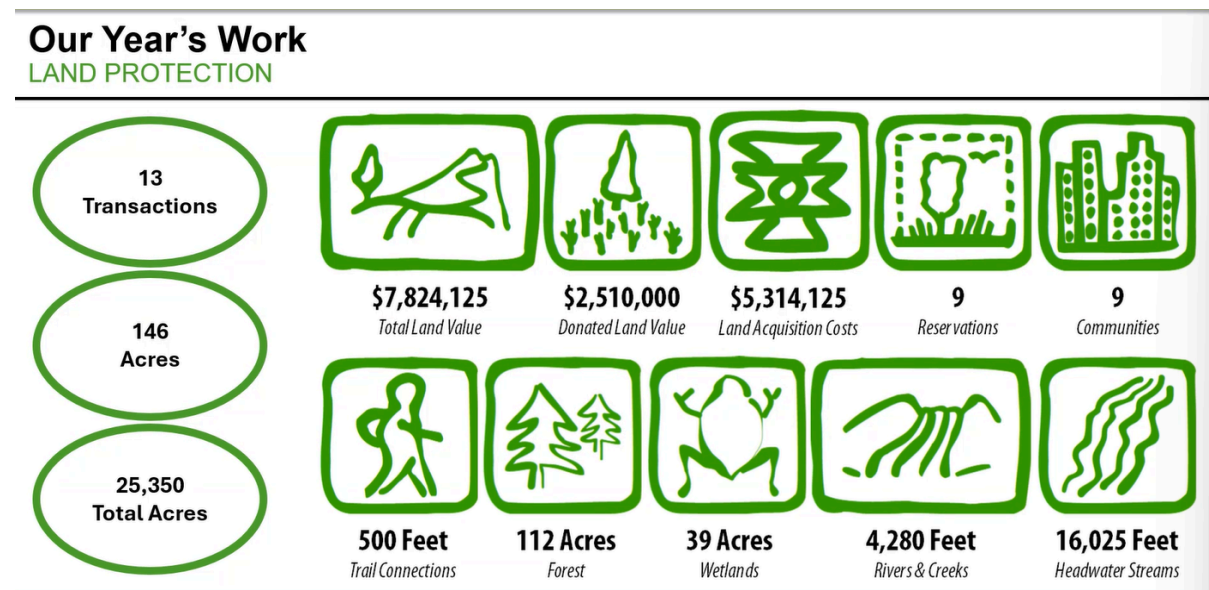
Informational first reading: [Virtual Public Meetings Policy](#)

Ohio law will allow board members to attend the meeting and hearings virtually. This policy would provide guidance for holding those meetings. Fini said they will allow public comments remotely. Also, within 48 hours prior to a meeting, members have to let the president know that they will be virtual. Virtual meetings can't be held if there is a non-routine expenditure, hiring of the CEO or a vote on tax issues.

Board Member Yvette Ittu asked for a clearer definition of one-time infrequent spending requests. Fini said this is her proposal to account for anomalies. Ittu said it sounds a little vague, and Fini said they can further refine this.

[Cleveland Metroparks 2024 Real Estate Report](#)

Stephanie Kutsko, Senior Real Estate Manager, presented.



Land Stewardship

CONSERVATION EASEMENT OVERVIEW

Conservation Easement Acquisitions by Decade	
Years	Conservation Easement Acres Acquired
1996 - 2005	288
2006 - 2015	176
2016 - 2025	347
Total	811



Reservation	Conservation Easement Acres
Acacia	0
Bedford	193
Big Creek	63
Bradley Woods	5
Brecksville	64
Brookside	19
Euclid Creek	0
Garfield Park	0
Hinckley	233
Huntington	0
Lakefront	0
Mill Stream Run	122
North Chagrin	0
Ohio & Erie Canal	22
Rocky River	1
South Chagrin	83
Washington	0
West Creek	5
Zoo	0
Total	811



Kutsko's presentation included highlights of Metroparks' role as stewards in their [conservation easement agreements](#). Board Member Bruce Rinker asked how "aggressive" Metroparks needs to be as conservation stewards working with landowners. Kutsko said they try to make it a friendly relationship. Sometimes the land owner does not allow public access.

If you believe anything in these notes is inaccurate, please email us at cleDOCUMENTERS@gmail.com with "Correction Request" in the subject line.