

# Documenters

POWERED BY CITY BUREAU & SIGNAL CLEVELAND

## Board of Park Commissioners

Documenter name: Annie Maglicic

Agency: [Cleveland Metroparks](#)

Date: March 20, 2025

[See more about this meeting at Documenters.org](#)

---

## Summary

- Golf course revenue is down in February 2025 compared to February 2024. Inclement weather is causing a significant decrease in the utilization of the Metroparks golf courses, according to Metroparks CFO Wade Steen. Metroparks hopes to see an increase in revenue and utilization as the weather improves.
- The board authorized the CEO to enter into project development agreements that will continue the progress of the [Irishtown Bend Park project](#).
- As a result of a change in the [Ohio Revised Code Section 121.221](#), the board is considering a policy to guide a return to using the virtual public meeting format utilized during the height of COVID-19. This will allow board members to attend meetings virtually. *[Editor's note: A remote option for the public already exists as a holdover from the peak-pandemic meetings.]*

## Follow-Up Questions

- Does Metroparks have ideas for offsetting the decrease in golf course revenue if the weather does not improve?
- Do they plan to make any improvements to the virtual public meeting format if they plan to utilize that more in the future?

## Notes

I attended this meeting virtually via WebEx. The regularly scheduled meeting was preceded by a pre-audit conference from 7:30 to 8 a.m. In summary, the audit conference involved a discussion between auditors and officials regarding the audit process, findings, and other related matters. It does not have to be conducted in an open public setting, according to Section 121.22(D)(2) of the Ohio Revised Code.

.

The regularly scheduled meeting began promptly at 8 a.m., following this [agenda](#).

Roll call of the Board of Parks Commissioners was conducted and in attendance were:

- President Dan Moore
- Vice President Bruce Rinker
- Vice President Yvette Ittu

All commissioners being present constituted a [quorum](#), and the meeting proceeded.

There were four other individuals from the Metroparks staff seated at the conference table. They were not included in the roll call. I have deduced from the previous meeting's minutes, this meeting's agenda, and the meeting's proceedings that the other individuals present were as follows:

- Chief Executive Officer Brian Zimmerman
- Chief Legal and Ethics Officer Rosalina Fini
- Chief Financial Officer Wade Steen
- An unidentified staff member

I could not see from the WebEx meeting how many individuals were seated in the audience, but the virtual attendance peaked at 38. It varied whether or not the person speaking was visible on camera, and they did not clearly identify who was speaking.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

The first item on the agenda was to approve or amend [the minutes of the previous meeting](#), which was held on Feb. 20. All commissioners voted for approving them.

**[Financial Report](#)** - Presented by Chief Financial Officer Wade Steen

Steen highlighted items from Cleveland Metropark's financial performance as of Feb. 28:

- Property tax revenue:
  - The current number through the first two months of 2025 is lower compared to the first two months of 2024 due to the timing of collections by Cuyahoga County. The state was late in providing reduction factors and assessed value information back to the county, so the county had to move the collection date from January to February.

- The final settlement was received in March, so at the end of March “everything will be trued up,” Steen said.
- A commissioner inquired about the property tax projections.
- Steen responded that the projection will be similar to where they were. He said they are making an effort to understand why tax revenues aren’t growing as much as expected in Cuyahoga County.
- Payroll:
  - Payroll was up \$4 million in Jan.-Feb. 2025 compared to that time in 2024 due to having three pay periods in January.
- \$5.4 million in construction expenses in February 2025:
  - Included the [Primate Forest](#), [Hinckley Dam](#), [Heritage Boat Docks](#), [Sailing Center](#), and various smaller projects
- The zoo finances are right where they were expecting, but the Enterprise Operations are slightly down across the board due to weather. Most notably, golf course revenue is down. In 2025 year-to-date (YTD), 292 rounds of golf were played. Same time last year, they had 7,918 rounds played.
- Steen said that they are hopeful that there will be improvements as the weather improves.

**New Business/CEO’s Report** - Presented by Chief Executive Officer Brian Zimmerman

- The board:
  - Approved a budget increase of \$1,822,261, all related to grants or reimbursements (largely for capital construction expenses).
  - Authorized payment of \$6,500 to Club Metro (the nonprofit employee club for Cleveland Metroparks) for 2025, with Club Metro’s pledge to match the funding of \$6,500 through membership dues and fees.
  - Updated their investment policy to be more consistent and in compliance with Ohio Revised Code.
  - Adopted the revision of multiple policies including:
    - Processing Requests for Public Records
      - The number of requests from the public for video records had become a financial and administrative burden to police departments around the state, according to Fini. Under new Ohio law, Metroparks can recoup those labor and material costs. The [new policy](#) reflects that.
    - Electronic Execution of Contracts, Instruments and Documents

- They are permanently moving to electronic documents and signatures because it is more efficient.
- 2025 By-Laws
  - Embraces new Ohio law by including permission for the board to meet virtually and a provision to give the public at least 72 hours' notice if the board will hold a virtual meeting. (A pending new Virtual Public Meetings Policy was addressed later in the Information/Briefing Items/Policy agenda section.)
- Authorized the purchase of about 18.4-acre property for \$735,000 to expand the Hinckley Reservation
- Authorized the submittal of a grant application and commitment of funds to the Hinckley Recreational Trails Program
- Authorized and agreed to submit an application to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration for funding assistance from the Transformational Habitat Program for the [Cleveland Harbor Eastern Embayment Resilience Strategy \(CHEERS\)](#).
  - Moore raised concerns about the viability of this grant due to uncertainty regarding federal funding.
  - Zimmerman said they are “cautiously optimistic.”
- Approved RFQu #6910 to enter into a professional services agreement with DLZ Ohio Inc. for the Valley Parkway Bridge Replacement in the Rocky River Reservation
- Authorized the chief executive officer to amend the Construction Manager at Risk Contract with Nerone & Sons, Inc., for the construction of the Old Lorain Connector Trail.
  - Advertised a Request for Qualifications (RFQu #6803) to make improvements after a 10-year-old was injured in that location.
  - These improvements will enhance access and safety in that area.
- Authorized the Chief Executive Officer to enter into project development agreements with other entities, agencies and project partners to continue the Irishtown Bend Park project.
  - Chief Planning and Design Officer Sean McDermott made the case to the board that these project development agreements are required to receive funding from the National Park Service and explained how the Metroparks is directing funding and where else the funds for the project are coming from.
- Tabulation and Award of Bids/RFPs/Co-Ops/Single Sources

- The board approved all proposed bids, RFPs, Co-Ops, and Single Sources [on the agenda](#).
- [Approval of Vouchers and Payroll \(Resolution No. 25-03-032\)](#) - All in favor
- [Approval of Arborwear Only \(Resolution No. 25-03-033\)](#) - Vice President Ittu and Vice President Rinker were in favor, President Moore abstained

## **Public Comment**

Marty, a public commenter, voiced their frustrations about the number of policy changes on the agenda. They expressed frustration about the delay of construction and the conservation contradictions of the paving of areas with asphalt. They voiced concern over the new public meeting policy, citing that they feel it favors the board over the public. They claim that during the height of COVID-19, Metroparks violated the law by not allowing viewers to determine who was speaking in the virtual meetings. They claim that Metroparks has the money and means to post the video recordings of the board meetings but chooses not to.

Fini expressed her frustration with the “inaccuracies” and “half-truths” in these comments. She pointed to Metropark's efforts to be transparent and efficient and the acknowledgments from the state auditor to refute those comments.

Zimmerman said public comments are opinions and not necessarily facts.

## **Information/Briefing Items/Policy**

- New Virtual Public Meetings Policy - Presented by Fini
  - As a result of the change in the Ohio Revised Code Section 121.221, they are allowed to return to using the virtual public meeting format that was utilized during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - The board members will be allowed to attend virtually.
    - Virtual attendance by the board members requires 48 hours of notice.
    - Virtual attendance will contribute to quorum and roll call votes.
    - Exceptions to virtual attendance by the board:
      - The hiring of a CEO/CFO
      - Proposal of a tax issue
      - Major non-routine expenditures

Ittu expressed concern over the definition of a “major non-routine expenditure.” Fini said that they are open to clarifying this definition. Zimmerman said that they are continuing to look to other agencies for guidance on this definition.

Fini said they will continue to work on that definition before the policy goes into effect.

- [Cleveland Metroparks 2024 Real Estate Report](#) - Presented by Director of Real Estate & Senior Legal Counsel Stephanie Kutsko
  - In 2024, Cleveland Metroparks acquired 146 acres in 13 transactions, bringing Cleveland Metroparks’ total acreage to 25,350 acres.
  - The land acquired in 2024 was largely acquired through the donation of conservation easements ([A conservation easement is a voluntary, legal agreement that permanently limits uses of the land in order to protect its conservation values](#))
  - Highlighted efforts to plug orphan oil and gas wells
    - 11 wells plugged from 2022 - 2024
    - These efforts are funded by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) and the Infrastructure, Investment, and Jobs Act of 2021.

All voted in favor of adjourning the meeting at 9:05 a.m.

---

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