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Board of Park Commissioners

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Agency: [Cleveland Metroparks](#)

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Summary

- Finances for the Cleveland Metroparks through the first quarter of calendar year 2025 are pretty close to budget.
- Park visits (both recreation and non-recreation) were down about 2% last year compared with 2023, but recreation-only visits were basically the same between 2023 and 2024.
- More than 7,000 volunteers donated more than 135,000 volunteer hours to Cleveland Metroparks last year, with more than 90% enjoying their experience.

Follow-Up Questions

- Why did Commissioner Dan Moore abstain from the Arborwear vote? Does he have a conflict of interest?
- How are Cleveland Metroparks commissioners selected or elected? How are the Metroparks funded? Do the Metroparks operate under Cuyahoga County government (even though the Hinckley Reservation is in Medina County)? *[Editor's note: [Cleveland Metroparks](#) is a political subdivision of the state of Ohio funded largely by real estate and personal property taxes from Cuyahoga County and Hinckley Township. The judge of the Cuyahoga County Probate Court appoints commissioners.]*
- Do policies become adopted after a second reading? I thought that was the case in this meeting with the policy allowing virtual attendance and participation from commissioners at board meetings, but I wasn't sure.

Notes

The agenda can be found [here](#).

The meeting began precisely at 8 a.m. with a roll call of commissioners and the Pledge of Allegiance. Commissioners Yvette Ittu (board president), Dan Moore and Bruce Rinker

were present for the meeting, with no commissioners absent. After this, the board commissioned two new police dogs for the K-9 unit of the Cleveland Metroparks Police Department.

Financial report

Chief Financial Officer Wade Steen presented to the board the [financial report](#) for Cleveland Metroparks through March 31. Steen said that March was a “pretty good month overall” and that revenue through the first quarter was in line with the yearly budget. Steen noted that revenues were lower than projected in areas such as golf (“all weather-driven”) and boat docks/marinas, but that this should even out during the course of the year.

New business/CEO’s report:

Employee retirement - The board recognized the retirement of Tina Faykus. Faykus has worked for the Metroparks for 20 years in a variety of roles and in 2014 was the first administrative assistant in the Natural Resources department, a Metroparks official said.

Budget adjustments - The board approved three small increases to the current budget thanks to new grants and donations that were added to the budget. The changes total about \$1.17 million.

Rock salt - The board approved contracting with the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) to purchase 2,500 tons of rock salt from an ODOT-chosen supplier for the 2025-26 winter season.

Virtual meetings - The board held a second reading of a [new policy](#), which allows commissioners to attend meetings and vote virtually. This second reading was passed unanimously and has been adopted.

Contract-related issues - The board approved several contract issues related to construction in the Metroparks, including:

- 1) A bridge replacement ([“culvert”](#)) in the Garfield Park Reservation (to be completed separately from a nearby ODOT project).
- 2) Entering into a development agreement with the City of Cleveland for work on the Ohio & Erie Canal Reservation and Euclid Creek Reservation.

- 3) Application for about \$1 million from the 2025 Congestion and Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) program, run by the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA), to help with completion of the Cleveland Foundation Centennial Lake Link Trail.
- 4) A discussion was held regarding a billboard off I-480 at the Grayton Road exit, which is adjacent to the Rocky River Reservation. Metroparks has worked with the billboard owners over the years to reduce light pollution from the billboard, according to Chief Legal Officer Rosalina Fini. From the discussion, it appears that the Metroparks could have worked to have the billboard removed, but in return for allowing the billboard to remain, Metroparks received free advertising on that billboard and other billboards owned by the company. The board approved a [resolution agreeing to those terms](#).

In response to a question from Moore, Sean McDermott, chief planning and design officer, told the board that Metroparks is seeing the impact of recent tariffs imposed on many countries by the Trump administration on materials for “finishes,” but not basic materials such as steel or concrete because they can buy those things locally.

Bids and approval of vouchers/Arborwear - All bids and the approval of vouchers and payroll as seen on the [agenda](#) were approved unanimously. The purchase of [Arborwear](#) goods was approved by Ittu and Rinker, with Moore abstaining.

Public comments

Marty Leshar of Olmsted Township said she was threatened with criminal trespass when walking to the maintenance building at the Rocky River Reservation to share information with Metroparks staff (she said she had copies of this information for the board commissioners). After her comments, Fini said that Leshar was in areas closed to park guests and had walked past three signs stating those places were off-limits. Fini said Leshar’s claim that the board is not responsive to public commenters is “ridiculous” and that Metroparks only appreciates its workers when they retire is “misinformation,” adding that Leshar’s comments were “offensive.”

Information/briefing items/policy

Park district visitation - Beth Coduti, research and analytics manager for Cleveland Metroparks, informed the board that during 2024 there were approximately 51.8 million park visits (for any reason, including just driving through) and approximately 19.3 million recreation visits (for example, parking and

walking into the park, etc.). While the number of park visits was down by about 600,000 from 2023, the number of recreation visits was virtually the same. Coduti informed the board about increases in visitation for certain programs/buildings during 2024, including a 3% increase for zoo visits, a 19% increase for golf rounds (some but not all of which was due to the opening of a new golf course), and a 38% increase in visits at the Stewardship Center at West Park Reservation (after a campaign to inform guests that they could actually visit the building).

Lower Cuyahoga Valley Planning Coordination update - The board received an update on the history of redevelopment efforts in this part of the Cuyahoga River near downtown and the Flats. The board was informed about ongoing efforts for the interconnection of trails and other development projects along the river (including the Cuyahoga Riverfront Trail).

2025 Cleveland Metroparks Volunteer Services Report - Lynne Lisner, director of Volunteer Services, informed the board that last year 7,104 volunteers donated 135,282 volunteer hours to Cleveland Metroparks. Lisner said that surveys of volunteers show that common motivations are to support the vision of the Metroparks, for health and exercise, and education. More than 200 companies completed more than 430 projects in the Metroparks last year, and 93% of volunteers were satisfied with their experience.

The meeting adjourned into [executive session](#) at 9:29 a.m. to discuss issues related to employee compensation and evaluation. The next scheduled board meeting is at 8 a.m. on May 14.

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