

***Minutes***

**May 15, 2024**

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Commissioner Miears called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM in the Commission Room of the Maple Grove Center, Osborn MetroPark, Huron, Ohio.

**ROLL CALL**

Park Commissioners Present:           James “Don” Miears, Chairperson  
  Troy Wisehart, Vice Chairperson  
  Margaret Murray, Vice Chairperson

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

(1) Commissioner Wisehart moved to waive the reading of and approve the draft minutes of the April 10, 2024, meeting.

Second:           Commissioner Miears

Action:           Motion carried unanimously with two affirmative votes.

**FINANCIAL REPORTS**

April Fund Activity Summary, Citizens Bank Checking Account Reconciliation, Citizens Bank MMIA Reconciliation:

Members of the Park Commission have received copies of these reports.

(2) Resolution 2024-09: May Schedule of Payables

Ms. Ferback distributed copies of the Schedule of Payables and a new sheet for the Capital Projects Fund Budget & Expense Year to Date Report via email. She reported that she received the full pledged donation from Ms. Hahler-Johnson. She added that the Schedule of Payables was larger this month mainly due to two payments to Turner Construction totaling over \$1,000,000.00. Ms. Ferback asked the Board if they had any questions.

Comm. Miears inquired if all of the payments for the nature center are reflected in the cost of the nature center. He would like to see all charges for the nature center charged in the nature center budget. Ms. Ferback and Mrs. Price assured him that they were. Comm. Miears asked about the \$3,734.68 and a \$2,765.64 payment to Ohio Edison for electricity. He wanted to know how we were generating that much electricity. Mr. Malone explained that Turner was using four heaters to get the moisture out of the air so that the drywall would dry. The nature center electricity is coming off of our panel for now and we are being billed for it. Comm. Miears and Wisehart expressed that the nature center electricity should be billed to Turner during construction. We should not be paying for it; they could be using generators. Mr. Malone explained that we would be paying for it either way, if not directly, then Turner would add it to the price of the building. Mr.

Malone and Mrs. Price said that they will ask about it in the building meeting on Thursday. The Board stated that they were not happy about paying for it, and Mrs. Price stated that she would look into the contract.

Comm. Mears inquired about the \$600.00 payment to Back to the Wild for a Birds of Prey exhibit at the Earth Day Extravaganza event. He said that he thought that they should come for free, and he did not think that we should pay them. Comm. Mears expressed that it might be time to talk to them about partnering with them again. Discussion ensued on this matter. He asked Mrs. Price to reach out to them and see if they are interested in a partnership.

Comm. Mears asked about the \$2,439.50 purchase of a disk harrow. He did not see that on the equipment replacement. Mr. Malone explained that it was purchased from the natural resources budget through a 50/50 matching grant from the ODNR Prescribed Fire Step Grant program. Comm. Mears also inquired if a \$2,054.00 and a \$4,254.25 purchase on page four for the nature center were charged to the nature center budget. Ms. Ferback stated that yes, they were. He then inquired about the \$756.03 payments on page nine and a \$567.50 payment on page six to Garner Sanitation for portable restroom rentals. It was explained that since we do not have permanent restrooms in most of the parks, several units are rented in several locations over the year as a service to our patrons. Discussion ensued.

Commissioner Murray moved to approve Resolution 2024-09 Schedule of Payables as presented.

Second: Commissioner Wisheart

Action: Motion carried unanimously with three affirmative votes.

### (3) Budget Transfer

Ms. Ferback distributed copies of the budget transfer information via email and hard copies at the meeting. She requested a transfer from the General Fund and the Other Financing Uses Fund total amount \$29,500.00 into the Purchased Services Fund for security services and utilities for the new nature center. This transfer does not change the 2024 Final Budget Balance bottom line. Ms. Ferback asked for authorization to transfer from fund to fund.

Commissioner Wisheart moved to approve the Budget Transfer as presented.

Second: Commissioner Murray

Action: Motion carried unanimously with three affirmative votes.

### (4) Budget Revision

Ms. Ferback distributed copies of the budget revision information via email and hard copies at the meeting. She requested a total \$26,750.00 additional increase to Capital Projects Fund Capital Outlay appropriations to cover the cost of the murals and tv monitors in the new nature center. She explained that this revision would change the 2024 Final Budget Total Projected Expenditures and Balance bottom line.

Commissioner Murray moved to approve the Budget Revision as presented.

Second: Commissioner Wisheart

Action: Motion carried unanimously with three affirmative votes.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Ms. Price moved Erie Metro Live Steamers to public comment from new business. Mr. Dave Foster introduced himself as the president of the Erie Metro Live Steamers and explained the background of their club and what they do. He invited the Board to come out to attend one of their nine public mini train rides this year; or he would be happy to do a private ride and tour for them. Mr. Foster explained that they average anywhere from 250 to 600 people during a two-hour public ride. The Erie Metro Live Steamers are donation based, no fee. They receive support in the way of grants from the local foundations. They have approx. 9,000 feet of track. Mr. Foster said that the staff are excellent partners.

Mr. Foster explained that they were using typical wooden railroad ties and the swampy areas have been rotting the ties and rusting the screws. Therefore, their club will replace all of the wooden ties with molded plastic ties and stainless-steel screws for sustainability, utilizing the funding from their grants.

Comm. Mears inquired as to where the liability lies if someone gets hurt during a ride. Mr. Foster explained that Erie Metro Live Steamers carry liability insurance. Mr. Peters, legal counsel, asked that they list Erie MetroParks as a third party insured. He said that they do. Ms. Price explained that all groups that use our parks through a special permit have to show us proof of insurance before the event and name Erie MetroParks as a third party insured. The Board then thanked Mr. Foster for coming in and providing the update.

## **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Ms. Price referred to her report sent via email. Ms. Price added the following to her Director's Report:

-Mrs. Price stated we are hitting the busy season.

-She stated that there will be a larger bill from Mr. Peters, due to a public records request from Lonnie Bristow aka Joseph Clark, who is a convict and has a history of asking public entities to produce large amounts of public records in a short window of time, and when they don't comply, he takes them to court and makes a profit off of the fines. Mrs. Price immediately reached out to Sheriff Sigsworth and Jim Peters. Sheriff Sigsworth was aware of Bristow and recommended to comply to his request. Mr. Peters was also familiar with Bristow, as were his colleagues, and he handled it right away, worked with Mrs. Price to supply the requested information, and received confirmation that nothing further was needed.

-Mrs. Price received emails and phone calls from Mayor Forthofer and the Wakefield family about Mr. Roland van Rijn. Although our Board voted against his proposal for artwork at Wakefield MetroPark, Mr. van Rijn told the Vermilion Historical Society that he had permission from Erie MetroParks to proceed. Ms. Price assured the Vermilion city officials and the Wakefield family that EMP had not approved any such project, and the Wakefield family thanked us for protecting the integrity of this park.

-Firelands Area Pickleball Association will be helping the staff install the windscreens on Thursday.

-Melissa met with the Erie County Chapter of the Ohio Horseman's Council.

-She and Sue Daniel met with Beth Maiden, Executive Director of the Erie County Community Foundation, regarding ideas for signage (esp. donor signs) and a soft opening for large donors, commissioners, area officials, staff, local vendors, subcontractors, etc. This would tentatively be held in July, and she will let the Board know as soon as a date is finalized.

(5) Commissioner Murray moved to approve the Director's Report as presented.

Second: Commissioner Wisehart

Action: Motion carried unanimously with three affirmative votes.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

A. Building Site Review- Mark Malone

-Mr. Malone reported that he had Mrs. Daniel email the pictures from the inside of the nature center to the Board to view. The building is progressing. The base for the parking lot light has been installed and the artist Derek, has completed his mural in the front area of the nature center that was sponsored by the Friends of Erie MetroParks.

B. Hart Billboard Update- Jim Peters

-Mr. Peters stated that he had not heard anything back from the owner since the last meeting. Discussion ensued and Comm. Miers asked Mr. Peters to write them a letter stating that if they do not provide the proof of ownership/ rental agreement, etc. by a certain date, that Erie MetroParks will move forward with the removal of the billboard. The other commissioners agreed.

C. ODOT Update- Jim Peters

-Mr. Peters stated that he is waiting for Hartung Title to complete the full title research on all the affected properties. Then they can evaluate any restrictions, etc., and will meet with ODOT.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

A. Erie Metro Live Steamers Update

Moved to public comment.

B. Position Title Change- Park Operations Manager

Mrs. Price requested permission to change Jay Yochem's job title from Facilities Manager to Park Operations Manager. That title infers that he just manages the shelters and facilities, but he does so much more. He oversees the operations department, has a law enforcement background and is the most senior manager with 31 years of service. The job description does not change at all, only the title reflects his duties more accurately.

(6) Commissioner Wisehart moved to approve the title change from Facilities Manager to Park Operations Manager as presented.

Second: Commissioner Murray

Action: Motion carried unanimously with three affirmative votes.

C. 2025 Planning Budget

Mrs. Price explained that we are preparing for the 2025 budget and in the past, we have completed our strategic plans in house. Since 2025 budget discussions are happening, Mrs. Price

solicited Board input for allotting money to hire planning consultants to assist in building a 5-year strategic plan with community and stakeholder input, as we have not done it before. Mrs. Price said she would utilize those plans to apply for larger grants, including state and federal money. Discussion ensued and Comm. Miers stated no, that he was not in favor of hiring consultants to conduct a strategic plan. Discussion ensued and Comm. Murray and Comm. Wisehart agreed with Comm. Miers. The commissioners agreed that Mrs. Price should continue to meet and reach out to community stakeholders as well as consult staff in leading a strategic plan.

**INFORMATION ITEMS:**

Travel & Training Summary NONE

Special Permit Summary (acknowledge and file)

There was one new special permit to acknowledge and file this month.

(7) Commissioner Murray moved to acknowledge and file the Special Permit Summary provided.

Second: Commissioner Wisehart

Action: Motion passed unanimously with three affirmative votes.

Credit Card Summary (acknowledge and file)

Ms. Price asked the board to acknowledge and file the Credit Card Summary as presented.

(8) Commissioner Murray moved to acknowledge and file the Credit Card Summary provided.

Second: Commissioner Wisehart

Action: Motion passed unanimously with three affirmative votes.

Disposal of Surplus Personal Property & removal from inventory- NONE

Other (Misc. items from Board or Administration)

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

None

**ADJOURNMENT**

With there being no further business brought before the Park Commission,

(9) Commissioner Murray moved to adjourn the meeting at 2:20 PM.

Second: Commissioner Wisehart

Roll Call: Commissioner Miers: aye

Commissioner Murray: aye

Commissioner Wisehart aye

Action: Motion passed unanimously with three affirmative votes.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The foregoing is a true and accurate account of the May 15, 2024, meeting of the Park Commission and has been formally adopted by the Commissioners as such and shall be placed in and become part of the official Proceedings of the Board of Park Commissioners.

APPROVED:

\_\_\_\_\_  
James L. "Don" Miers, Chairperson

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Melissa Price, Executive Director

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date