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Board of Park Commissioners (in-person only)

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Agency: [Cleveland Metroparks](#)

Date: July 17, 2025

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Summary

- The weather has affected some Metroparks revenue streams in the first six months of the year.
- Metroparks officials are anticipating possible cuts from Columbus and are considering an agreement with the Ohio Lottery in order to diversify their revenue streams.
- The county's collection and disbursement of property tax delinquencies, as well as Metroparks receiving cash advances for projects, helped Metroparks financially weather the first six months of the year, despite the bad weather.

Follow-Up Questions

- Do the commissioners always reply to public commenters like they did in this meeting? That was off-putting to me. Making clarifying comments for the public's benefit, like Board President Yvette Ittu asking the Metroparks finance officer to explain the potential Ohio Lottery agreement, makes sense to me and was appreciated. But there were a few points where I felt like they were all ganging up on the public commenter and talking defensively. That felt low-key hostile to me.

Notes

1. ROLL CALL

- All three commissioners were present: Yvette Ittu, president; Bruce Rinker, vice president; and Dan Moore, vice president.
- The meeting began right on time at 8 a.m. and followed this [agenda](#).

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (June 19)

- Approved

4. **FINANCIAL REPORT** - Given by CFO Wade Steen

Metroparks overall

- Steen began by addressing the weather in the first half of 2025, pointing to 67% more rain between May 15 and June 30, 2025, than during the same time period in 2024. Colder, snowier December through February. More cloudy days, more wind.
- Rough weather led to lower park attendance and some lower revenue from certain streams.
- Despite the weather, June park district financials were OK, Steen said, up about \$7 million from June 2024. A \$6.5 million grant came in from Solon for the [Solon to Chagrin Falls Trail](#). Some cash advances and collected property tax delinquencies also came in.
- Revenue was up 6.5% and expenses were up 6.45%.
- “We’re running well,” Steen said.

Zoo

- Zoo: “General admission revenues are down 32% [through the first six months of 2025 compared to the same time last year]. That’s directly impacted by the weather,” said Steen. “All in all, revenues for the zoo right now are down about 20%.”
- Steen: The zoo has done a great job of holding expenses in line, limiting the impact the bad weather has had on the financials.

Golf

- Month over month, June 2025 beat June 2024, even given all the weather issues.
- Attendance revenue was down, but some of that is due to a recent rate hike.
- Mastick Woods, Sleepy Hollow, and Shawnee Hills are all ahead of where they were at the same time last year.

Enterprise

- Still profitable but not quite where it should be. Merwin’s Wharf made a huge difference in keeping financials healthy. Merwin’s positive operating surplus went from roughly \$18,000 in June 2024 to \$91,000 in June 2025 on revenues that

were about the same. The Flats restaurant lowered its operating costs from about \$977,000 to \$840,781.

5. NEW BUSINESS/CEO'S REPORT

Action Item (a) - 2025 Budget Adjustment- requested increase of \$8.7 million was approved

The following amendments are requested for Board approval:

CLEVELAND METROPARKS Appropriation Summary - 2025							
Object Code	Object Description	Original Budget			Total Prior Budget Amendments	Proposed Amendment #6 7/21/2025	Total
		Baseline Budget	Carry Over Encumbrances	Total			
OPERATING							
51	Salaries	\$ 73,399,278	\$ -	\$ 73,399,278	\$ 104,162	\$ 8,289 A	\$ 73,511,729
52	Employee Fringe Benefits	25,356,338	121,139	25,477,477	35,000	-	25,512,477
53	Contractual Services	20,467,911	1,996,507	22,464,418	134,610	(85,349) B	22,513,679
54	Operations	33,738,465	4,189,319	37,927,784	587,576	(151,762) C	38,363,598
	Operating Subtotal	152,961,992	6,306,966	159,268,958	861,348	(228,822)	159,901,484
CAPITAL							
571	Capital Labor	\$ 1,053,294	\$ 39,691	\$ 1,092,985	\$ -	\$ -	1,092,985
572	Capital Construction Expense	94,780,279	16,182,752	110,963,031	3,301,619	8,946,715 D	123,211,365
574	Capital Equipment	3,949,389	1,618,677	5,568,066	627,315	-	6,195,381
575	Zoo Animals	100,000	500	100,500	-	-	100,500
576	Land	2,500,000	59,573	2,559,573	-	-	2,559,573
	Capital Subtotal	102,382,962	17,901,192	120,284,154	3,928,934	8,946,715	133,159,804
TOTALS							
Grand totals		\$ 255,344,954	\$ 24,208,158	\$ 279,553,112	\$ 4,790,282	\$ 8,717,893	\$ 293,061,287

An explanation of adjustments, by category, can be found on pages 26 to 27. The net effect of all adjustments is an increase of \$8,717,893 which is funded by increased revenue, donations, grants, or received but previously unappropriated funds.

Action Item (b) - Adoption of Revised Codified Rules and Regulations was approved

- Updates in line with Ohio Revised Code; added language for potential collaboration with Ohio Lottery.

- (b) ***Adoption of Revised Cleveland Metroparks Codified Rules and Regulations – 2025***
(Originating Sources: Brian M. Zimmerman, Chief Executive Officer/Rosalina M. Fini, Chief Legal & Ethics Officer/Kelly Stillman, Chief of Police/Marisa Marniella, Chief Prosecuting Attorney/Ken Schabitzer, Captain/Matthew L. Shearn, Lieutenant)

Background

Pursuant to Article 1, Section 1 of the Board of Park Commissioners of the Cleveland Metropolitan Park District By-Laws, the Park District's Codified Rules and Regulations must be amended to ensure conformity with State and Federal law and address other public policy issues. In this review, the following modifications are hereby proposed:

1. **General Required Changes:** Several changes occurred to the Ohio Revised Code and require the Board of Park Commissioners to further update its Codified Rules and Regulations as recommended by the Walter H. Drane Company, who annually performs the comprehensive code revisions for Cleveland Metroparks. A Summary of Changes to Traffic and General Offenses Codes for 2025, is provided on pages 28 to 29.
2. **Additional Changes to Regulations:** After review of the Codified Rules and Regulations, the following changes are proposed by staff. The proposed new language is underlined and proposed language to be removed is stricken as noted below.

The Resolution to Approve, Adopt and Enact Revised Rules and Regulations of the Cleveland Metropolitan Park District; and Authorizing the Required Publication, is found on page 30.

A. Part 5 General Offenses Code

i. 517.02 GAMBLING.

(a) No person shall engage in bookmaking, betting, schemes of chance, games of chance, possess or use a gambling device or shall engage in any other gambling in any form on park district property except as authorized by a permit from the Executive Director for charitable purposes or to generate revenue as expressly permitted by law and by the Ohio Lottery Commission.

(b) Whoever violates this section is guilty of gambling, a misdemeanor of the first degree. If the offender previously has been convicted of a gambling offense, gambling is a felony and shall be prosecuted under appropriate State law. (ORC 2915.02)

Action Item (c) - Garfield Boulevard Trail and Green Infrastructure Project: Maintenance Agreement

- The board authorized the chief executive officer to enter into a maintenance agreement with the City of Garfield Heights for the Garfield Boulevard Trail and Green Infrastructure Project and any other documents/agreements as may be necessary to effectuate the above, in a form to be approved by the chief legal and ethics officer.

Action Item (d) - Contract Amendment for Cleveland Metroparks Community Sailing Center at Lakefront Reservation

- The board authorized the CEO to amend the guaranteed maximum price (GMP) contract with Whiting-Turner Contracting Co. for the construction of the Patrick S. Parker Community Sailing Center, Lakefront Reservation, for a total contract

valued at \$16.6 million in a form of contract to be approved by the chief legal and ethics officer.

Action Item (e) - Award of Contract – Professional Services – Irishtown Bend Park

- The board approved a contract for the schematic design and design development of the Irishtown Bend Park with Osborn Engineering, for \$1.4 million.

Action Item (f) - Amendment to Preliminary Engineering Services agreement with Norfolk Southern Railway Co.

- The board approved the amendment to the preliminary engineering agreement with the Norfolk Southern Railway Co. for additional preliminary engineering review services, resulting in a total revised amount of \$114,280.

Action Item (g) Amendment to contract for Cleveland Metroparks Gordon Park Improvements – Lakefront Reservation – Professional Design Services

- Brief presentation given by Sean McDermott, Metroparks chief planning and design officer, on [Gordon Park updates](#).
 - Restoration has already happened. Ready for construction.
 - The community was asked for what they wanted; access to open space was No. 1 request.
 - Safe and well-lit space, inviting entrances, thoughtful placing of structures such as pavilions and sport courts to emphasize “great lawn” experience are a focus.
- The board authorized an amendment to the contract with MKSK, Inc. for professional services for \$535,300, resulting in a total revised contract amount of \$885,300 for design services.

[Editor’s note: More details about the above action items [begin at this point in the agenda](#).]

6. PUBLIC COMMENTS

- One person, Marty Leshner of Olmsted Township, spoke in the meeting’s public comment portion. She is the same individual who gave public comment the last time I covered this meeting. The commissioners addressed her by name, indicating to me that she is a regular at these board meetings.

- She spoke against in-house enterprises and said these enterprises should be run by the private sector.
- She spoke on scaling back “bigger, grander” projects and emphasized the need to focus on “the essentials,” like trails and giving people access to nature.
- She also spoke against the potential collaboration with the Ohio Lottery.
- The commissioners indirectly replied to her concerns without addressing her directly. The manner of address suggested good intentions and a need to explain, but it came across to me, a member of the public, as a little dismissive and slightly defensive.
- In regards to the potential collab with the Ohio Lottery, Metroparks Chief Legal and Ethics Officer Rosalina Fini, at the request of Board President Ittu, said the Metroparks is aware of potential cuts coming from Columbus and of the Ohio General Assembly saying that governmental entities need to “diversify their revenue streams.”

7. INFORMATION/BRIEFING ITEMS/POLICY - None

8. OLD BUSINESS - None

9. EXECUTIVE SESSION- Public portion of the meeting ended at 8:40 a.m. The next meeting will be Thursday, Aug. 21, at 8 a.m.

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