

Minutes
Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority
Board of Commissioners
Thursday, November 13, 2014

The regular meeting of the Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority's Board of Commissioners was held at immediately following the Budget Hearing on Thursday, November 13, 2014 at the Administrative Office.

Commissioners Present:

John E. La Belle
Timothy J. McCarthy
John C. Hertel
Jaye Quadrozzi
Anthony V. Marrocco
Harry E. Lester
Robert W. Marans

Absent:

None

Staff Officers:

Deputy Director	George Phifer
Controller	Rebecca Franchock
Recording Secretary/Corporation Counsel	Joseph W. Colaianne

Other Attendees:

George Carr, Legislative Consultant
Greg Almas

Chairman La Belle called the November 13, 2014 meeting to order at 11:05 a.m.

1. Chairman's Statement

No statement.

2. Public Comments

Toni Spears, Dexter, Michigan commented that the efforts of the Natural Resources staff in responding to organizations and individual concerns about mowing plans was greatly appreciated. She also commented that the mowing plans designate two mowing categories; "annual mowing" areas to be mowed once per year; and "additional mowing" areas to be included in the regular mowing schedule. Ms. Spears pointed out that the annual mowing areas included Metropark grasslands and that these should be managed for removal of invasive shrubs. With regard to the "additional mowing" areas she stated that the report shows that there was an 11 percent increase in the number of acres mowed. Ms. Spears stated that she believes that there is a disconnect between budget constraints (i.e. staff working hard to reduce costs) and the directive to add 11 percent mowing areas.

3. Minutes – Oct. 9, 2014 Regular Meeting and Closed Sessions; Oct. 23, 2014 Special Meeting

Motion by Commissioner Hertel, supported by Commissioner Lester that the Board of Commissioners' approve the Oct. 9, 2014 Regular Meeting and Closed Sessions; Oct. 23, 2014 Special Meeting as presented.

Motion carried unanimously.

4. Approval – November 13, 2014 Agenda

Motion by Commissioner Marans, supported by Commissioner Marrocco That the Board of Commissioners' approve the November 13, 2014 agenda as recommended.

Motion carried unanimously.

5. Approval – October 9, 2014 Consent Agenda

Motion by Commissioner Marans, supported by Commissioner Marrocco that the Board of Commissioners' approve the consent agenda consisting of the following: Vouchers – October 2014; Financial Statements – October 2014; 2014 Pension Contribution; 2014 Retiree Health Care Trust Contribution; Update – Retiree Health Care Trust Restatement; Approval – Amended 2015 Fees and Charges; Update – 2015 Fireworks Schedule; Approval – Chief Pontiac Programs Committee Amendment to Contract, Kensington Metropark; Approval – TIFA Exemption, City of Allen Park Brownfield Redeployment Authority; Approval – Utility and Drainage Easement (YMCA, Milford), Kensington Metropark; Proposal – Washago Pond Dam Investigation, Willow Metropark; and Proposal – Vehicular and Pedestrian Bridge Inspections, all locations.

Motion carried unanimously.

Regular Agenda

6. 2015 Budget Approval and Resolution

Motion by Commissioner Hertel, supported by Commissioner McCarthy that the Board of Commissioners' approve the 2015 Budget and Resolution as recommended by Controller Franchock and staff.

7. Interim Director's Contract

Motion by Commissioner McCarthy, supported by Commissioner Marrocco that the Board of Commissioners hire Greg Almas as interim-director until the next Board meeting based on an annual salary of \$135,000 pro-rated per pay period (26 pay periods) without benefits, with the understanding that the details of a written employment contract will be worked out, and presented to the Board for approval at the next regular meeting.

Discussion: Commissioner Marrocco expressed concern with certain terms in the employment agreement prepared by Miller Canfield. He specifically questioned the necessity of using the term "part-time" and the listing or limiting of hours in the proposed contract. Chairperson La Belle noted that the contract was prepared to avoid conflicts between Mr. Almas' proposed employment and his pension benefits. He also noted that Mr. Breschami, a previous Metroparks' director, had a similar contract.

Commissioner Quadrozzi indicated that she just recently received the draft agreement and has certain concerns, which she would like to discuss with Miller Canfield. In addition, Commissioner Quadrozzi questioned the necessity and value in the hiring a part-time director. She commented that what needs to be done can be done by the Deputy Director and staff while we conduct a search for a new director.

Commissioner Hertel noted that it is important to have an interim director for a number of reasons, including someone to show up at various Metropark events. He noted that it is not possible for the deputy director, who has been worked very hard over the last six months, to handle both positions. Commissioner Marans agreed that there are many things that simply cannot be handled by one person and that the Metroparks needs an interim director as soon as possible.

Commissioner Lester also indicated that he has not seen the proposed employment contract and that he does not like to make decisions without reviewing a contract. He is concerned with the proposed salary and noted that we should be extra careful when spending the taxpayer's money. Commissioner Lester stated that the Board should follow its Bylaws and appoint the deputy director as interim director.

Commissioner McCarthy indicated that he shared Commissioner Quadrozzi's concerns and proposed that the Board hire Mr. Almas as interim director without a written contract until the next Board meeting while we address the legal concerns. He proposed that the Board approve a written agreement at the next Board meeting. Commissioner Marrocco added that the motion should include the salary rate and without benefits.

Motion Carried.

Vote: 6 yes – 1 nay (Commissioner Lester voting no)

8. Legislative Report

Motion by Commissioner Quadrozzi, supported by Commissioner Marans that the Board of Commissioners' receive and file the Legislative Report as submitted by Legislative Consultant George Carr.

Discussion: Mr. Carr provided an update following the November elections pointing out that there are number of new legislators and new House leadership that will require additional outreach and meetings. He noted that one of the newest representatives from Macomb County, Derek Miller is the grandson of former HCMA Commissioner Arthur Miller from Warren. Commissioner Hertel commented that his nephew, Curtis Hertel was also elected to the Senate. Mr. Carr noted that outreach to new legislative members began this week and a meeting was held with Greg Almas to discuss refinement of the process. Commissioner La Belle commented with regard to a contract with another lobbying firm and their efforts to help with road funding; and that makes sense to cancel that contract. Commissioner Hertel stated that having another lobbying firm is confusing to the legislature. The members want to know who is representing the Metroparks. In his opinion, one of the worst things you can do is not to have appropriate representation. Commissioner Hertel added that George Carr has protected this organization for more than 27 years from actions of the legislature. Commissioner Quadrozzi inquired whether the lobbying contract (with the second firm) could be canceled. Corporation Counsel Colaianne indicated that the contract was for 90 days and was extended another 90 days until the end of the year and ends on December 31. He also noted that he would need to review the contract to determine if there is a 30-day termination clause.

Motion by Commissioner McCarthy, supported by Commissioner Hertel that the Board of Commissioners' approve the Chairperson to send a termination letter to GCSISE terminating the contract.

Motion Carried Unanimously.

9. Reports

A. Lake St. Clair Metroparks

1. Property Acquisition

Motion by Commissioner Marans, support by Commissioner Lester that the Board of Commissioners authorize staff to prepare an agreement to purchase 8.5 acres of property adjacent to Lake St. Clair Metropark from Rita Lozon (Parcel 'E') at the appraised value of \$23,402.50 as recommended by Natural Resources and Environmental Compliance Manager Paul Muelle and staff.

Discussion: Paul Muelle indicated that the proposed property purchase represented the second purchase of five parcels under consideration for purchase by the Metroparks using funds from the MNRTF/NOAA grant.

Motion Carried Unanimously.

9. Reports

B. Administrative Office

1. Update – MDNR Trust Fund Grant and the Washtenaw County Border-to-Border Trail

Motion by Commissioner Lester, support by Commissioner Quadrozzi that the Board of Commissioners receive and file the update and approve continued discussions with Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission on the development and funding of the Border-to-Border Trail on Hudson Mills property north of North Territorial Road.

Discussion: Tim Philips, Park Planner provided an update with regard to MDNR Trust fund projects. He indicated that the Metroparks has applied for two Michigan Department of Natural Resource Trust Fund Grants; one that included Boat Launch Redevelopment Project at Stony Creek; and the other, a Land Acquisition Project at Hudson Mills. The latter project will improve the alignment for the Border-to-Border trail. Metropark's Planning unit has provided additional information to increase the scoring for both projects. In addition, Mr. Phillips requested Board support for Planning's continued discussions with Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation on the development of a two-mile section of trail at Hudson Mills. The Metroparks may be asked to contribute up to \$300,000 as its cost share for this project and will apply for MDNR Trust Fund Development Grant in March 2015.

Motion Carried Unanimously.

9. Reports

B. Administrative Office

2. Update – Property Leases

Motion by Commissioner Marans, supported by Commissioner Lester that the Board of Commissioners receive and file the Property Lease Update as recommended by Natural Resources and Environmental Compliance Manager Paul Muelle and staff.

Discussion: Paul Muelle, Natural Resource and Environmental Compliance Manager provided an update regarding Property Leases. Mr. Muelle noted that Metropark land lease typically fall into three categories: Recreational/Linked greenways, Residential, and Agricultural. There are approximately 449 acres of leased properties for Recreational/Linked greenway; there are no current residential leases; and, there are 12 agricultural leases affecting 595 acres. Most of the agricultural leases are located at Wolcott Mill Metropark. Mr. Muelle noted that property leased for agricultural are one-year leases and the rates are developed based on information from the Department of Agriculture. The agricultural leases provide a modest income after payment of property taxes. Mr. Muelle indicated that the Metroparks does not have a competitive process established for granting agricultural leases. Commissioner Hertel strongly recommended that a competitive process be developed, noting that this may be able generate additional revenue. Mr. Muelle also noted that the hunting permits for crop damage have been removed.

Motion Carried Unanimously.

9. Reports

B. Administrative Office

3. Update – Grassland Management Plan

Motion by Commissioner Lester, supported by Commissioner McCarthy that the Board of Commissioners receive and file the report on Grassland Management as recommended by Natural Resources and Environmental Compliance Manager Paul Muelle and staff.

Discussion: Grassland Management Report was presented by Paule Muelled and Ryan Colliton. Mr. Muelle provided an overview of the plan, noting that the Grassland Management Plan is part of the larger natural resources strategy. He highlighted that the Metroparks consists of over 24,000 acres, of which 80 percent is undeveloped (19,000 acres: grasslands, forested, wetlands, shrubland, lakes and ponds). The remaining 20 percent is dedicated to recreational activities (4,100 acres; picnic areas, roads/walkways, golf course) and Metropark support facilities (800 acres; roads, parking, buildings, etc). Mr. Muelle noted that maintenance of lawn areas (mowing) has historically fluctuated, noting that in 1999 almost 3,300 acres were mowed before dropping to 2800 in 2009. Currently, the Metropark maintains 3,100 acres. Mr. Muelle noted that it is the function of the Metropark staff to integrate diverse land uses (i.e. facilities/operations, active and passive recreation and natural areas) with minimal negative impact on environment but still maintain meaningful recreational experience for park users.

Ryan Colliton provided a brief presentation regarding invasive plant species and provided a handbook on how to identify invasive species to members. He noted that the Metropark has targeted certain species for removal, such as Autumn Olive; Glossy Buckhorn; Bitter Sweet vine; Honeysuckle; Smallwort. He showed before and after examples of park areas following removal of invasive species using Best Management Practices (BMPs). Mr. Colliton highlighted volunteer efforts in the removal of invasive species, noting that more than 600 volunteers and 1,500 volunteer hours at a value of more than \$31,000 were used to remove invasive species from the Metroparks. Mr. Colliton also indicated in response to the statement regarding the increase in mowing costs, that while there may be an initial cost to restore and area to manicured state; once this is done, the cost to maintain is nominal.

Motion Carried Unanimously.

9. Reports

B. Administrative Office

4. Update – Development Activities

Motion by Commissioner Lester, supported by Commissioner McCarthy that the Board of Commissioners receive and file the Update – Development Activities as recommended by Director of Development Molly Bell and staff.

Discussion: Molly Bell, Development Director provided an update regarding the Foundation Membership drive launched in September in partnership with Blue Cross Blue Shield, noting that more than 800 people signed up for the basic membership (\$27 annual permit). The Foundation made its first transfer of contributions to the Authority. The website now has a “link” for various membership levels. Ms. Bell handed out “membership cards” to each Board member. There will be an effort to market memberships for “Black Friday” and “Cyber Monday.” Ms. Bell also noted that the Memorial Bench donation amount was increased to \$2,500, and the foundation has already received two sponsorships contributions. Ms. Bell noted

that there was a meeting of the Foundation Board; that Commissioner McCarthy was elected president and Commissioner Hertel was elected vice-president; the revised bylaws were approved; and, it was decided that the Foundation will have three directors at this time. The next Foundation meeting is planned for December 2014. Commissioner Lester complimented Ms. Bell for her efforts with the Foundation.

Motion Carried Unanimously.

10. Staff Officer Report

Deputy Director Phifer complemented Messrs. Muelle and Colliton with regard to the Grassland Management presentation. Mr. Phifer complemented Controller Franchock and her staff in preparing the 2015 budget. Mr. Phifer also mentioned the "Get-Out-And-Give" initiative and reached out Board members to identify any charities that may want to partner with the Metroparks. Commissioner Marans commented that Washtenaw Parks and Recreation does something similar and the Metroparks may want to partner Washtenaw. Finally, Deputy Director Phifer wished to extend a welcome to Mr. Almas as interim director of the Metroparks.

11. Other Business

No other business.

12. Commissioner Comments

Chairperson La Belle complimented Deputy Director Phifer's loyalty to the organization, especially with his raising the level of importance of the police department and improving the safety and quality of the Metroparks. He also asked the Board members if they would be willing to sign a letter of support to the governor for the re-appointment of Commissioner McCarthy to the HCMA Board.

Commissioner Hertel also complimented Deputy Director Phifer for his work over the last six months and Contoller Franchock with regard to the budget presentation. Mr. Hertel noted that he was very impressed with the invasive species presented by Mr. Colliton.

13. Motion to Adjourn

Motion by Commissioner Hertel supported by Commissioner Quadrozzi that the Board of Commissioners adjourn the regular meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 12:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Joe Colaianne

Recording Secretary/Corporation Counsel