

**Minutes**  
**Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority**  
**Board of Commissioners**  
**Thursday, July 10, 2014**

The regular meeting of the Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority's Board of Commissioners was held at 10:30 a.m. on Thursday, July 10, 2014 at the Environmental Discovery Center at Indian Springs Metropark.

Commissioners Present:

John E. La Belle  
Timothy J. McCarthy  
Harry E. Lester  
Robert W. Marans

Staff Officers:

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

Absent:

Anthony V. Marrocco  
John C. Hertel  
Jaye Quadrozzi

Others:

Legislative Consultant	George Carr
Farmington Hills City Manager	Steve Brock
Assistant to Farmington Hills City Manager	Nate Geinzer

Chairman La Belle called the July 10, 2014 meeting to order at 10:31 a.m.

**1. Chairman's Statement**

Chairperson La Belle indicated that he knows of no other organization that has lead the region ecologically than the Metroparks. However, this does not mean that we shouldn't listen to the concerns of the public. He also noted the reason the Board does not respond during Public Participation is to give the public a chance to speak and for the board to listen, and to avoid debating issues.

**2. Public Comments**

- (a) Lee Alden, White Lake, addressed the Board about his concern, disruption and change due to the mowing at Lake St. Clair Metropark. Specifically raising the concern that volunteers came out and planted plants, and now years of growth are gone. He believed that it was a slap in the face to the volunteers that he was unable to get any answers. He believes that the change in leadership was the reason for the change in the mowing policy.
- (b) Barb Baldinger, Clinton Township and Macomb Audubon Society, spoke about her first visit and memories of Lake St. Clair Metroparks as a teenager and subsequently after college when she moved to the east side where Metro Beach was her Metropark. She noted that she started birding and became involved in the Macomb Audubon Society. She expressed dismay when she learned from emails the mowing of a meadow at Lake St. Clair Metropark. She stated that she observed dead birds, frogs and snakes, but also the loss of milkweed habitat essential for the Monarch Butterfly. She also stated that while she appreciated the response from Metropark staff, that she was more concerned with the decision for the mowing. (See attached statement).
- (c) Heather Slayton, Warren, and Macomb Audubon Society noted that she is the past president of the Macomb County Audubon Society and long-time volunteer and supporter, along with her husband, of the Metroparks. She expressed concern with the recent mowing of the

wildflower meadows at Indian Springs, Kensington and Lake St. Clair Metroparks. She was dismayed by the mowing at Lake St. Clair for reptile deaths and habitat loss; the mowing of the wildflower meadow at Indian Springs; and worst of all the mowing of fields at Kensington which she maintains was used by Bobolink and Eastern Meadowlark, both at risk bird species. In addition, she expressed concern regarding the removal of bluebird boxes from the golf courses. She was also concerned with the response she received from the Metroparks and the mowing directive from park staff. (See attached statement).

- (d) Kathy Hanson, New Hudson, stated that the within the Metropark system there was not one forester or naturalist. Rather we have a person with a law enforcement background making decisions. She stated that the parks are to provide diverse habitats, and she believes that the recommendations of staff were disregarded and questioned, "if you cannot respect staff opinions, why have staff?" In addition, Ms. Hanson stated that what was done was pathetic and she was not happy.
- (e) Anne Gilmore, Bloomfield Hills, stated that she was present to protest the mowing of the wildflower fields at Lake St. Clair, Indian Springs, and Kensington Metropark. She expressed dismay for the loss of animals, birds and reptiles and loss of habitat. She raised the concern regarding an edict to mow up to the new ponds at the parking lots at Lake St. Clair Metropark and whether this was in non-compliance with EPA directions and grant stipulations. Ms. Gilmore also raised concerns regarding the removal of bluebird boxes at the golf courses and whether the boxes contained eggs and chicks. She cited the Metropark mission statement regarding being stewards of the natural resources and question the directive regarding the mowing that took place. She expects that those responsible should be held accountable and to hold the board accountable as well. (See attached statement).
- (f) Jane Hug, Commerce Township, stated she uses the various facilities at the Metroparks. She expressed concern regarding the development in areas affecting endangered species of birds. She supports her fellow birders and hopes the Board will address the concerns expressed.
- (g) Doris Applebaum, Oak Park and Michigan Butterfly Network, stated that she participates in a statewide butterfly monitoring project where each person chooses one location to monitor butterflies during the summer. Ms. Applebaum monitors butterflies at Indian Springs Metropark. She stated that she was shocked to see that the mass of wildflowers around the Environmental Discovery Center were mowed and that according to park staff, someone in the Huron-Clinton hierarchy made the decision. She said it looked like a moonscape and was a hideous mistake. (See attached statement)
- (h) Kim Smith, Rochester Hills, indicated that she was shocked and disappointed by the mowing of the wildflower meadows at several Metroparks. She stated that she is part of a very active Facebook group called Birding Michigan that is very passionate about sharing bird information in the Metroparks. She expressed dismay with that the mowing and destruction of habitat took place during peak breeding season, and that the Metroparks have to do better, and expects assurances that it would not happen again. (See attached statement).
- (i) Annie Crary, Grosse Pointe Woods noted that she is annual Metropark permit holder and frequent user of the parks. She expressed concern about the recent habitat destruction in a number of the parks, specifically with the meadows with prairie wildflowers at Lakes St. Clair, Kensington and Indian Springs Metroparks. She stated that the mowing of the meadows during peak avian season is a direct violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. She expressed concern for the endangered Eastern Meadowlark and Bobolinks at Kensington Metroparks which she noted have experienced steep population declines. She suggested that the Huron-Clinton Metroparks adhere to its mission by seizing this opportunity to educate the public about grassland ecosystems and proper management on non-native plant species. (See attached statement).

**3. Minutes – June 12, 2014 Regular Meeting**

Motion by Commissioner Marans, supported by Commissioner McCarthy that the Board of Commissioners' approve the June 12, 2014 regular meeting minutes as submitted.

Motion carried unanimously.

**4. Approval – July 10, 2014 Agenda**

Motion by Commissioner Marans, supported by Commissioner Lester that the Board of Commissioners' approve the July 10, 2014 meeting agenda as revised adding a brief presentation from Farmington Hills regarding the Grand River Corridor Improvement Authority, as recommended by Director McCulloch and staff.

Motion carried unanimously.

**5. Approval – June 12, 2014 Consent Agenda**

Motion by Commissioner McCarthy, supported by Commissioner Lester that the Board of Commissioners approve the July 10, 2014 Consent Agenda consisting of the following: Vouchers – June 2014, Financial Statements – June 2014, 2014 Second Quarter Budget Appropriation Amendments, Proposal – Professional Services, Pool Discharge Modifications for Lake St. Clair and Lake Erie Metroparks, and Approval of DTE Underground Easement (for power at new maintenance building at Huron Meadows Metropark)

Motion carried unanimously.

**Regular Agenda**

**6. Legislative Report**

Motion by Commissioner McCarthy, supported by Commissioner Marans that the Board of Commissioners receive and file the legislative report as presented by Legislative Consultant George Carr.

*Discussion:* Mr. Carr indicated that no action will be taken in legislature until after the elections. Commissioner McCarthy inquired regarding whether there was any polling with regard to the Proposal 1. Mr. Carr indicated that if there was any polling he is not privy to it.

Motion carried unanimously.

**6(B). Grand River Corridor Improvement Authority Presentation**

Moved by Commissioner McCarthy, supported by Commissioner Marans that the Board of Commissioners receive and file the Grand River Corridor Improvement Authority as presented by the City of Farmington Hills.

*Discussion:* Director McCulloch introduced Farmington Hills' City Manager, Steve Brock and his associate, Nate Geinzer, regarding a presentation of the proposed tax increment financing authority, the Grand River Corridor Improvement Authority. Mr. Brock expressed his appreciation from the Board in taking the time for the presentation. Mr Geinzer, provided a handout of the presentation as well as a copy of the Grand River Corridor Visioning Plan. The cities of Farmington and Farmington Hills are proposing a 20-year redevelopment of Grand River corridor in their respective cities financed in part with tax increment revenues derived by enhancements. Mr. Geinzer encouraged the Board and administration to review the development plan and other information which can be found on website. (see attached documentation).

Motion carried unanimously.

## **7. Update – Park Operation**

Motion by Commissioner McCarthy, supported by Commissioner Lester that the Board of Commissioners receive and file the Park Operations Update as presented by staff.

***Discussion:***

1. Jerry Cyr, Park Operations Manager, Western District provided event and activity highlights for the month of June 2014. He noted that on June 7 there was a ribbon cutting for the Equestrian crossing at the Milford Road entrance at Kensington Metropark (KMP); and a Border-to-Border grand opening at Hudson Mills Metropark. New park shelter at KMP under construction. Other activities from the western district for the month of June included disc golf competition, International Mud Day, Summer Solstice, Water Cycle program and junior golf clinics (at Indian Springs Metropark). Mr. Cyr noted that at River Day program in Detroit, the Metroparks had over 1000 people stop by the booth. Commissioner Marans indicated he was impressed with the number and variety of programming taking place at the parks. Commissioner Lester indicated his concern with respect to the two separate incidents involving hot coals and injuries sustained by young children. It was noted by staff that despite making available containers for the disposal of hot coals adjacent to grills, some patrons continue to dump them on the ground. Operation staff has been instructed to watch for improper disposal; and, educate and communicate to the public regarding proper disposal. In addition, operational staff will be investigating new containers for the higher volume parks.
2. Andrew Smith, Operations Supervisor, Lake Erie Metropark, noted that the weather was exceptionally nice the past month. He noted via slide presentation the reconstruction of hike/bike trails at Lower Huron and Willow Metroparks; and relocation and updating of sign with new logo at Willow. Mr. Smith described event and activity highlights for the month of June, which included "Catching Critters Camp" at Oakwoods Metropark. Revenue from wave pool operations are up from the previous year.
3. Steve Sebert, Park Operations Supervisor, Stony Creek Metropark highlighted the events and activities from the eastern district for the month of June which included "Paddling Toward Health," "Sprint and Splash," summer discovery cruises, "War in the Wilderness," annual fireworks, and Macomb Community College Retreat Day. Mr. Sebert noted that the Detroit Symphony Orchestra performance on June 21 was a success, and that it featured retired HCMA Employee Jack Liang as guest conductor.
4. Susan Schmidt, Wolcott Mill Metropark Operations highlighted the annual "Dairy Day" festival where the dairy industry provided milk products to the public; and the "DIA InsideOut Program. Commissioner Marans inquired whether the staff received feedback from the public as to the DIA program.

Motion carried unanimously.

## **8. Update – Capital Improvements**

Motion by Commissioner McCarthy, supported by Commissioner Lester that the Board of Commissioners receive and file the Capital Improvements Update as presented by Asset and Development Manager Mike Brahm-Henkel and staff.

***Discussion:*** Mike Brahm-Henkel, Manager of Assets & Development provided an update with regard to current capital and maintenance projects. He noted that the new maintenance building at Huron-Meadows Metropark is underway. Road paving at Kensington currently underway. Other projects underway and near completion include repairs to maintenance building roof at Lake Erie.

Motion carried unanimously.

## **9. Reports**

### **A. Stony Creek Metropark**

#### **1. Bids – 26 Mile Road Sanitary Sewer Connection**

Motion by Commissioner Marans, supported by Commissioner Lester that the Board of Commissioners award Contract No. 2-509-14T to the low responsive, responsible bidder, DiPonio Contracting, Inc., in the amount of \$457,067.00 and transfer \$348,100.00 from the Supplement Major Maintenance Fund and transfer \$77,000.00 from Capital Fund Balance to cover the difference between the budgeted Capital amount and the proposed work order amount of \$123,000.00 as recommended by Manager of Assets and Development Mike Brahm-Henkel and staff.

*Discussion:* Mr. Brahm-Henkel noted that project will allow the Metroparks to eliminate a pump station and construct a gravity sewer connection to Shelby Township for treatment.

Motion carried unanimously.

## **9. Reports**

### **B. Administrative Office**

#### **1. Update – Marketing and Communications**

Motion by Commissioner McCarthy, supported by Commissioner Marans that the Board of Commissioners receive and file the Marketing and Communications Update as presented by Community Relations Administrator Chip Tischer and staff.

*Discussion:* Chip Tischer, Community Relations presented the Marketing and Communications update. He played the television commercial promoting the Metroparks and golf courses featuring Director McCulloch that has been distributed to cable stations. On public access television there will be a 30 minute television show called “Get Out and Play” which will be filmed on a quarterly basis and distributed to local public access channels.

Motion carried unanimously.

## **10. Staff Officer Report**

1. Director McCulloch thanked the Metropark staff for hard work and organization for the firework events at the various Metroparks.

Director McCulloch addressed the mowing issues raised by the public at today's meeting, indicating that staff will be reviewing current mowing policy; identify visually, areas to be mowed; identify a point person to address the issues and identify those areas to be preserved and those areas to be mowed. He noted that Deputy Director Phifer has identified Ryan Colliton from our Environmental Resources staff to be the point of contact with the community and park staff. Mr. Colliton will coordinate meetings, will work to address citizen and Audubon Society concerns going forward.

2. Controller Franchock indicated that she is in the process of developing a request for proposal (RFP) for auditing services and will be looking for Board input.

## **11. Other Business**

None

## **12. Commissioner Comments**

1. Commissioner McCarthy – no comment.

2. Commissioner Lester – noted that the injuries to small children from hot coals that park superintendents will need to communicate with the public the importance regarding the use of hot coal containers.
3. Commissioner Marans – expressed the concerns raised by the public regarding the mowing and to what extent park staff was consulted. He also inquired as to why bluebird boxes removed, as to the compliance with EPA regulations, and as to the natural resource role with regard to mowing policy. At some point he would like to have answers to these concerns.

**13. Motion to Adjourn**

Motion by Commissioner Marans, supported by Commissioner McCarthy that the Board of Commissioners adjourn the regular meeting.

Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 12:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Joe Colaianne  
Recording Secretary/Corporation Counsel