



Hancock Park District

HANCOCK PARK DISTRICT BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS Public Meeting Notice and Agenda

Date: Tuesday, February 8, 2022
Location: Brugeman Lodge at Riverbend Recreation Area
Time: 3:30 p.m.

Roll Call

Approval of Minutes

1. Approval of Board Meeting Minutes dated January 11, 2022

Financial Status

1. Review of the Financial Statement dated January 31, 2022, presented by Hancock Park District Business Manager Vicky Stozich

Old Business

1. Request to hunt waterfowl in the Wetland Restoration Area at Oakwoods Nature Preserve

New Business

1. Update on the 2021-2022 Hunting with Permission Game Management Program
2. Request authorization to submit a Clean Ohio Green Space Program grant application for the acquisition of land and park development located adjacent to Blue Rock Nature Preserve
3. Request authorization to submit an application requesting funds from the state capital improvement budget for major renovations at Litzenberg Memorial Woods

Discussion

1. Hancock Park District Report:
 - Director – Gary Pruitt
 - Park Operations Manager – Tyler Fredritz
 - Naturalist – Michelle Rumschlag

Public Input

Adjournment

Next Meeting: Tuesday, March 8, 2022 at 3:30 p.m. in Brugeman Lodge at Riverbend Recreation Area

HANCOCK PARK DISTRICT BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
Staff Report / Agenda Supplement
February 8, 2022

Request to hunt waterfowl in the Wetland Restoration Area at Oakwoods Nature Preserve: There are three hunting issues that can be considered at this time, although only one issue (issue number one) is on the agenda (see letter from Rick Kidwell, which was not requested by staff, but rather submitted voluntarily):

Issue #1

The most pressing matter (only because it has been tabled since September) is a request by Todd Richards to hunt waterfowl in the Wetland Restoration Area at Oakwoods Nature Preserve. The decision by the Board should be an easy one since granting permission to an individual to hunt at Oakwoods Nature Preserve would set the wrong precedent.

If the Board permits one person to hunt at Oakwoods Nature Preserve, then it may have to permit other persons who make the same request. By doing that, a haphazard situation would occur rather than a sound management approach.

If the Board wants to extend hunting opportunities to the Wetland Restoration Area at Oakwoods Nature Preserve, then the area should be added to the hunting lottery so that all hunters have the same chance. Hunting permits for the general public should not be generated in any other way. That brings us to issue number two.

Issue #2

If the Board wants to extend hunting opportunities to the Wetland Restoration Area at Oakwoods Nature Preserve, then it should answer certain philosophical and policy-related questions before a motion is made and a vote is taken:

- Does the Board want to extend hunting opportunities beyond the south side of Litzenberg Memorial Woods by permitting hunting in the Wetland Restoration Area at Oakwoods Nature Preserve? If so, why?
- Does the Board want to close another park area (i.e., the Wetland Restoration Area) to the general public in favor of hunting? If so, why?
- Why shouldn't there be a policy statement that designates the south side of Litzenberg Memorial Woods as the only area in the Hancock Park System where hunting is available for the general public?

Answers to the questions above will assist the Board with its decision-making and policy-setting task (if the Board decides to pursue this particular issue in the form of a vote and as a matter of policy) and give staff the explanation it needs to answer the following question from the media, peers, and general

public, which is inevitable: Why did the Board permit hunting in the Wetland Restoration Area at Oakwoods Nature Preserve?

Hancock Park District staff should understand the Board's rationale so that it can formulate a position statement and communicate the Board's position to Hancock County residents in a clear and effective manner, especially since there is staff opposition to the idea.

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If the Board establishes a policy that permits hunting at Oakwoods Nature Preserve, then at least seven signs (maybe more) similar to those used at Litzenberg Memorial Woods should be installed at designated trailheads and at strategic locations along County Road 9 and County Road 144 that warn park visitors about closed areas and hunting activity. The signs are a bit obnoxious, but necessary in terms of liability and risk management (see photographs of the signs on page 5).

In preparation for a Board meeting in September 2021, Hancock Park District staff (naturalist/program manager, park manager, and natural resource manager) contemplated the issue of hunting at Oakwoods Nature Preserve over the course of 60 days and provided thoughtful input from both the manager's perspective and the hunter's perspective (two managers who provided input in opposition to hunting at Oakwoods Nature Preserve are hunters). By consensus, staff recommended against hunting at Oakwoods Nature Preserve.

Hunting at Oakwoods Nature Preserve was not even contemplated until a request was made by one individual (that should tell you something). Managers entertained the request, evaluated several factors, and determined that hunting was incompatible with Oakwoods Nature Preserve and not in the best interest of the general public. That recommendation was presented to the Board in September.

Managers who provided input will be at the meeting. They will be prepared to elaborate on the following points. Their input focused on A) safety, B) closing the park or just the wetlands to the general public in favor of exclusive use by hunters, C) disgruntled park patrons, D) user conflict, E) restricting hunters to certain areas and shooting directions, F) proximity of the church, house, school, trails, and people such as hikers, program participants, and school children to the hunting area, G) limiting programs to ensure that they do not coincide with hunting, H) bad public image, I) realization that Oakwoods Nature Preserve is a popular park - and with the attention the wetlands have been getting - pedestrian traffic may be even greater, J) differences between Oakwoods Nature Preserve and the south side of Litzenberg Memorial Woods in terms of how the areas can effectively support and facilitate hunting, K) timing (i.e., the Wetland Restoration Area was just completed in December 2021; trails have not been established; vegetation has not grown; wildlife presence is not fully known, etc.), and L) excessive staff time needed to facilitate hunting compared to hunting at Litzenberg Memorial Woods.

As an organization, the Hancock Park District should be satisfied with the designation of the south side of Litzenberg Memorial Woods as the only area in the Hancock Park System where hunting is permitted for the general public. The south side of Litzenberg Memorial Woods works. The hunting program has been at that location for almost three decades. There is no need to deviate from that, especially if doing so has the potential to create a multitude of problems at Oakwoods Nature Preserve that do not exist today.

Anticipation of the Wetland Restoration Area transforming Oakwoods Nature Preserve into something quite wonderful because of interest in the wetlands (local and perhaps regional interest), nature-based

outdoor recreation (such as hiking, photography, and wildlife observation), and public programs and educational opportunities (on a year-round basis) is exciting and inspiring. The Wetland Restoration Area is an accomplishment to be celebrated and an area to be proud of. The thought of closing the area for hunting and all that that entails may change the perspective.

Hunting at Oakwoods Nature Preserve is not necessary (10 waterfowl hunting permits are already offered each year for Litzenberg Memorial Woods, and in time the Wetland Restoration Area will look just like it). It would be a shame if the Wetland Restoration Area had to be closed to the general public in late summer, autumn, and early winter (depending on the time chosen) for the purpose of hunting. It would be nice to keep the Wetland Restoration Area open year-round and keep the sound of gunshots out of the nature preserve.

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Issue #3

So far, the issue has been hunting for outdoor recreation. Internal discussion has also centered on the possibility of deer and Canada goose damaging the newly planted trees, live stakes, and native vegetation. The Wetland Restoration Area was finished in December 2021, at which time the Hancock Park District took control of the site from a management and maintenance standpoint. Monitoring the site in terms of animal damage to the vegetation will be part of that ongoing responsibility.

If a controlled hunt is needed and can be justified, then a recommendation would be presented to the Board at that time. It is anticipated that a controlled hunt (targeted and brief) would be separate from the normal public hunting lottery in August. There is precedent for this. For example, the Division of Wildlife conducts controlled deer and waterfowl hunts on many areas not normally open to hunting. Other natural resource management measures may be considered to mitigate damage to the vegetation. Scott Butterworth with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources has been consulted on these matters.

As requested by the Board, information from other park districts about hunting is as follows:

From: Tim Schetter <tim.schetter@metroparkstoledo.com>

Sent: Thursday, September 16, 2021 9:32 AM

To: Gary Pruitt <GPruitt@hancockparks.com>

Subject: RE: Hunting Policy

Hi Gary – As part of our deer management program, we allow controlled archery hunts by permit only through a lottery on parklands in western Lucas County where it can be done without negatively impacting other park visitors and were not in conflict with municipal ordinances. I've attached a map of the areas where we currently allow controlled archery hunting. We allow waterfowl hunting only at Howard Marsh Metropark. This is a controlled hunt managed through the Ohio Division of Wildlife (<https://ohiodnr.gov/wps/portal/gov/odnr/buy-and-apply/hunting-fishing-boating/hunting-resources/controlled-hunting-trapping>). Allowing waterfowl hunts at this park was a condition of the funding we received from the Division for acquisition of the property. Hunt days are Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday from ½ hour before sunrise until 1:00pm during the regular waterfowl season (excluding September goose and teal hunts). Hunting is currently only allowed in the largest wetland pool (unit 1) which is closed to all other park visitors during hunting hours, while the other two wetland pools (units 3 & 4) remain open to park visitors during the hunt. We will also allow waterfowl hunting in a fourth wetland pool (unit 2) currently under construction.

The board of park commissioners has not adopted any formal policies specifically related to hunting although it is covered indirectly through the board policy on stewardship of parklands (see page 2 of the attached deer management plan). Our general wildlife management philosophy and planning framework is articulated on page 3 of the plan. The current park rules and regulations (attached) address hunting in two places (1.1 and 2.1). We are currently in the process of updating the rules and regs with a minor change proposed to 1.1 to address the hunting and trapping programs that are offered as part of wildlife management, and a minor change proposed to 2.1 that will specifically reference designated hunting zones.

Regards, Tim

TIM SCHETTER, PhD, CWB®, Chief Natural Resources Officer

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Wood County Park District:

- 20 parks
- 1,125 acres

BALDWIN WOODS

“Baldwin Woods consists of approximately 126 acres of property located at the corner of Range Line and Euler Roads. There are approximately 80 acres of wooded area and 40 acres of grassland. It is the desire of the Board of Park Commissioners and the Park District staff to keep this land natural for propagating wild areas and protecting threatened plant species. The Park District has entered into a Wetland Reserve agreement with the federal government involving approximately 50 acres of land at Baldwin Woods. An eight-acre wetland was constructed at Baldwin Woods in 2000 to enhance the wildlife population, create diversity, and provide a resting area for migrating waterfowl. Waterfowl hunting is NOT permitted on the property.”

CRICKET FROG COVE

“The area consists of approximately 160 acres located between Cygnet Road and Freyman Road bordered by Mitchell Road to the west. There are approximately 90 acres of wooded area and 70 acres of grassland and old pasture field. The Park District is presently working on a long-term improvement plan for Cricket Frog Cove. During the transition time of planning and implementation of the park plan, the Board of Park Commissioners has opened the property for hunting small game and deer.”

Sandusky County Park District:

- 13 parks
- 2,160 acres

WHITE STAR PARK

“Doug Haubert Wetland is an example of a constructed wetland. It is an excellent area for birding, especially in the spring and fall for migratory waterbirds. With a large amphibian population, it is a prime location to hear frog vocalizations during spring and early summer. Doug Haubert Wetland is the

only park district property that allows horseback riding on selected trails. The Park District also allows for hunting opportunities on this area of White Star Park.”

RINGNECK RIDGE WILDLIFE AREA

“Ringneck Ridge Wildlife Area, previously a private hunt club, is still managed as a wildlife area to promote public hunting opportunities. The diverse habitats include open fields, woodlands, wet meadows, and limestone barrens. Several food plots are scattered throughout the property. Pheasant releases occur every fall in conjunction with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. Ringneck Ridge is also the location of our Archery Range.”

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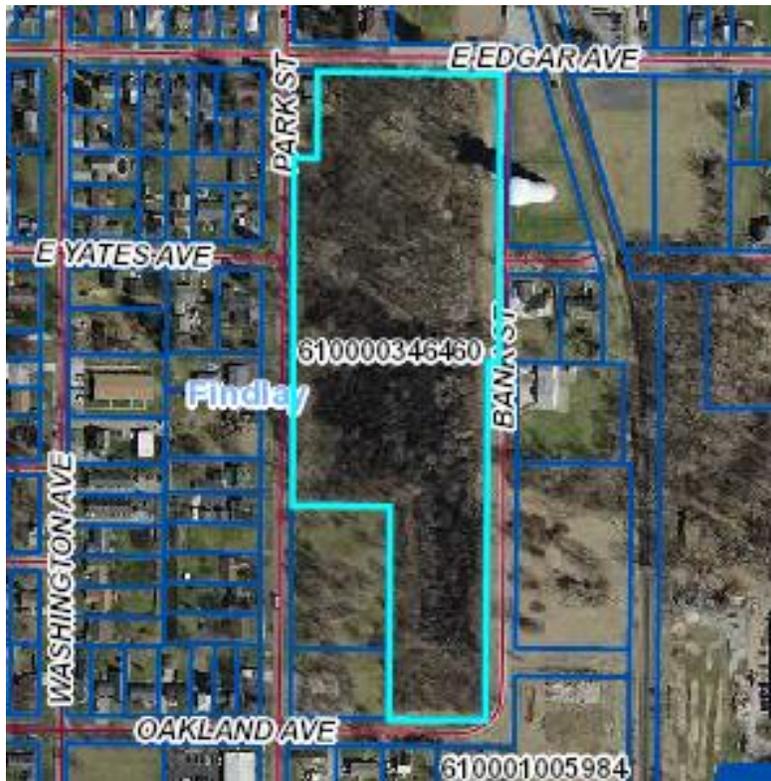


Hunting signs at Litzenberg Memorial Woods

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Update on the 2021-2022 Hunting with Permission Game Management Program: Hancock Park District Natural Resource Manager Chad Carroll will be at the meeting to provide an update on the 2021-2022 Hunting with Permission Game Management Program.

Request authorization to submit a Clean Ohio Green Space Program grant application for the acquisition of land and park development located adjacent to Blue Rock Nature Preserve: A landowner representative (real estate broker) asked if the Hancock Park District is interested in acquiring land located southwest of and adjacent to Blue Rock Nature Preserve at Park Street and Oakland Avenue.



The result of a land acquisition assessment indicates interest by Hancock Park District staff. The land would A) allow for the expansion of Blue Rock Nature Preserve, B) provide opportunities for habitat development, C) provide opportunities for the development of wetland overlooks, D) accommodate additional trails, and E) facilitate additional leader-directed and self-directed public programs and services via park development.

The Clean Ohio Green Space Conservation Program administered by the Ohio Public Works Commission provides for up to 75 percent of the estimated costs for:

- Acquisition of land for parks, forests, wetlands, natural areas that protect an endangered plant or animal population, other natural areas, and connecting corridors for natural areas.
- Related development including projects for the construction or enhancement of facilities that are necessary to make the acquisition of the open space area accessible and useable by the general public.

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An application can be made for acquisition only, acquisition and related improvements (preferred), or for improvements only on properties previously acquired through Clean Ohio. Eligible improvements that are being considered for park development include:

- Parking lot
- Trash receptacles and recycle centers
- Benches and picnic tables
- Bike racks
- Portable restroom enclosure
- Observation decks
- Hiking/biking trails
- Naturalization (in part for beautification and wildlife and in part for an outdoor classroom)
- Invasive species removal (one-time only by rule)
- Picnic shelter*
- Playground (small footprint by rule)*
- Council circle/natural amphitheater*

*Eligible improvements without Clean Ohio funds; must specify in deed restrictions

There is an interest in the construction of boardwalks through the existing wetlands in part to extend hiking opportunities and enhance the visitor experience and in part to connect Blue Rock Nature Preserve to the new property. Boardwalks would not be funded by Clean Ohio.

There is an in-depth appraisal process as part of the grant application, which would begin following Board authorization. Based on previous years, the grant application timeline includes the following:

- Announcement/Call for applications; July 2022
- Applications due; January 2023
- Grant award; March 2023

The last time a Clean Ohio Green Space Conservation Program grant was awarded to the Hancock Park District was August 2012. It led to the acquisition of Dold Lake and the expansion of Oakwoods Nature Preserve. In terms of priorities, a Clean Ohio Green Space Conservation Program grant application for Blue Rock Nature Preserve expansion would be followed by a grant application for improvements at Dold Lake and the Wetland Restoration Area at Oakwoods Nature Preserve.

Request authorization to submit an application requesting funds from the state capital improvement budget for major renovations at Litzenberg Memorial Woods:

As a preliminary step, letters were sent to Senator Rob McColley and Representative Jon Cross followed by an in-person meeting with Representative Cross asking him to consider a park improvement project in the next capital bill. The meeting went well, support was provided, and instructions regarding next steps were outlined. Subsequent to that meeting, the *FY23-24 Capital Budget Project Information Worksheet* (a 13-question form) was received via email with a message that said in part: Information on the form will be “shared with those working on the budget here at the House of Representatives.” The completed form is due by March 18. Board authorization to continue with this process is requested. Park improvement project components include the reconstruction of the entrance drive, parking lot, accessible trail in the woods, internal walkways, and site amenities. The probable cost for design and development is approximately \$1,000,000.00. The Hancock Park District would have to pay for a portion of the project.

HANCOCK PARK DISTRICT BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
Meeting Minutes for February 8, 2022

The February 8, 2022 meeting of the Hancock Park District Board of Park Commissioners was held at Riverbend Recreation Area's Brugeman Lodge.

Park Commissioners Present: Scott Younger, Ed Ingold, Gary Hirschfeld
HPD Staff Present: Gary Pruitt, Tyler Fredritz, Vicky Stozich, Michelle Rumschlag, Chad Carroll, Daniel Lamb
Guests: Sara Arthurs, Todd Richards, Heather Pargeon, Brandon Burrow and family

The meeting was called to order by Gary Hirschfeld at 3:28 p.m.

Special Presentation: Heather Pargeon was formally recognized as the 2021 Photography Contest winner.

Special Presentation: Hancock Park District volunteer, Brandon Burrow was formally recognized as the 2021 Charlie Meadows Award recipient.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Scott Younger with a second by Ed Ingold to approve Board Meeting Minutes dated January 11, 2022. Motion carried by a unanimous vote.

FINANCIAL STATUS

Income and expense reports year to date January 31, 2022 were presented to the Board by Hancock Park District Business Manager Vicky Stozich.

OLD BUSINESS

Request to hunt waterfowl in the Wetland Restoration Area at Oakwoods Nature Preserve: A motion was made by Gary Hirschfeld with a second by Scott Younger to deny a request to hunt waterfowl in the Wetland Restoration Area at Oakwoods Nature Preserve. Motion carried by a 2-1 vote. A motion was made by Gary Hirschfeld with a second by Scott Younger to designate as a matter of policy the south side of Litzenberg Memorial Woods as the only area in the Hancock Park System available for hunting by the general public. Motion carried by a 2-1 vote.

NEW BUSINESS

Update on the 2021-2022 Hunting with Permission Game Management Program: Natural Resource Manager Chad Carrol reported 106 persons were interested in a hunting permit, 40 persons were granted a hunting permit, and 18 persons actually used their hunting permits (45%). There were 36 total visits with 19 buddies. Ten different hunters harvested game: six deer (four does and two bucks), 14 squirrels, and one mallard duck.

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Request authorization to submit a Clean Ohio Green Space Program grant application for the acquisition of land and park development located adjacent to Blue Rock Nature Preserve: A motion was made by Scott Younger with a second by Ed Ingold to authorize the submittal of a Clean Ohio Green Space Program grant application for the acquisition of land and park development located adjacent to Blue Rock Nature Preserve. Motion carried by a unanimous vote.

Request authorization to submit an application requesting funds from the state capital improvement budget for major renovations at Litzenberg Memorial Woods: A motion was made by Ed Ingold with a second by Gary Hirschfeld to authorize the submittal of an application requesting funds from the state capital improvement budget for major renovations at Litzenberg Memorial Woods. Motion carried by a unanimous vote.

DISCUSSION

Hancock Park District Report:

Educational sessions at the Ohio Parks and Recreation Association Conference & Trade Show have been relevant and thought-provoking. Adjustments have been made to the snow removal operation by assigning an even share of responsibility among Park Operations Department staff; yellow strobe lights were added to vehicles. The Raccoon Run Winter Sports Center was open with 110 rentals. The Puppet Show is next week; Maple Sugarin' is scheduled for the second Saturday in March. The Pancake Breakfast will be offered as part of the event. Development of the Spring Program & Event Guide is underway.

PUBLIC INPUT

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

Meeting Minutes approved:

Gary E. Hirschfeld, Chairperson

Gary E. Pruitt, Director/Secretary

Date

Date