



Hancock Park District

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

Date: Tuesday, March 11, 2025
Location: Brugeman Lodge at Riverbend Recreation Area
9250 Township Road 208, Findlay, Ohio 45840
Time: 3:30 p.m.

Roll Call

Special Presentation: The 7th Graders of Liberty-Benton Middle School will be formally recognized as the 2024 Charlie Meadows Award winner.

Approval of Minutes

1. Approval of Board Meeting Minutes dated February 11, 2025

Financial Status

1. Review of the Financial Statement dated February 28, 2025, presented by Hancock Park District Business Manager Vicky Stozich

Old Business

New Business

1. Request to approve an increase in the amount of money that can be reimbursed for meals when traveling and training
2. Request to approve the addition of Christmas Eve to the holiday schedule
3. Request to approve an employee discount for the use of Brugeman Lodge and the Activity Barn
4. Request to approve a change in eligibility regarding the use of a personal day
5. Request to approve the Cooper Pond Master Plan
6. Request to approve Resolution 2025-03 Regarding Additional Appropriation within the Auditor's Certification and Park Commissioners to appropriate in the General Fund in the Amount of \$457,504.37 for the Oxbow Bend Activity Area Improvement Project
7. Request to approve Resolution 2025-04 Request for Funds from the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) and Designation of Projects for the Ohio Park District Roadwork Fund FY 2026-2027 through the Ohio Parks & Recreation Association (OPRA)

Discussion

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

Public Input

Adjournment

Next Meeting: Tuesday, April 8, 2025 at 3:30 p.m.; Brugeman Lodge at Riverbend Recreation Area
Hancock Park District • 1424 East Main Cross Street, Findlay, Ohio 45840
419-425-7275 • www.hancockparks.com

HANCOCK PARK DISTRICT BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS

Staff Report/Agenda Supplement

March 11, 2025

In 2012, the Hancock Park District's Employee Guide underwent a comprehensive review followed by numerous revisions and updates. The Management Team at the time met monthly for one year to review each section and discuss changes. The first draft of the revised Personnel Manual was sent to all Hancock Park District employees for their review with an invitation to provide comments. A legal opinion was received from Spengler Nathanson Attorneys at Law in Toledo, Ohio on January 19, 2012. On April 10, 2012, the Hancock Park District Board of Park Commissioners approved the Personnel Manual (formerly known as the Employee Guide). Since then, minor revisions were made but for the most part policies have remained unchanged.

In January and February of 2025, the Personnel Manual underwent another review fueled in part by nine issues that were presented to the director for his review and consideration. In turn, nine issues were sent to the Management Team for input. Along with the director, the Management Team includes the administrative operations manager, business manager, naturalist/program manager, and park operations manager.

After the director reviewed the information from the Management Team, five issues were addressed at the administrative level, including the Administrative Leave Policy that provides paid administrative leave and allows for the accrual of benefits while on leave. In consultation with the Hancock County Prosecutor's Office, it was clear that the Hancock Park District's Administrative Leave Policy is sound and should not be changed. Four policy issues remain for the Board's review and consideration:

Policy Issue #1: Increasing the amount of money that can be reimbursed for meals when traveling and training.

The Hancock Park District's budget provides money each year for membership and training. Hancock Park District vehicles can be used for traveling and training instead of personal vehicles. The 2025 budget includes \$5,765.00 for training. The current policy in the Personnel Manual (plus the recommended change in bold print) says:

Employees traveling on HPD business (e.g., training) with prior approval will have their meals paid for (i.e., reimbursed) at a rate of ~~\$35~~ **\$94.00** per diem plus 15% gratuity (itemized restaurant/food receipts must be attached to the expense report). The price for meals is limited to ~~\$10~~ **\$22.00** for breakfast, ~~\$10~~ **\$27.00** for lunch, and ~~\$15~~ **\$45.00** for dinner. Note: Alcohol is not a reimbursable expense. If purchased, it should be paid for separately so that it does not show up on the receipt containing reimbursable expenses.

Note:

1. The \$35.00 per diem that is currently in the Personnel Manual has been in place since September 9, 2008 (adopted on March 8, 2005, revised on September 9, 2008, per Resolution 2008-10).
2. Menu prices from Cinco Ninos Modern Mexican Kitchen & Tequileria at Kalahari Convention Center, Sandusky, Ohio and Cheddars Restaurant, Findlay, Ohio were used to determine a revised per diem amount.
3. A majority of Management Team members recommend an increase, although not necessarily the amount being proposed.

Recommendation: Increase the per diem rate from \$35.00 to \$94.00, including \$22.00 for breakfast, \$27.00 for lunch, and \$45.00 for dinner.

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Policy Issue #2: Adding Christmas Eve, either a half day or a full day, to the holiday schedule.

The current policy in the Personnel Manual (plus the recommended change in bold print) says:

The following 12 paid holidays are for permanent full-time employees:

New Year's Day – January 1
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day – 3rd Monday in January
President's Day – 3rd Monday in February
Memorial Day – Last Monday in May
Juneteenth – June 19
Independence Day – July 4
Labor Day – 1st Monday in September
Columbus Day – 2nd Monday in October
Veteran's Day – November 11
Thanksgiving Day – 4th Thursday in November
Day after Thanksgiving – 4th Friday in November
Christmas Eve – December 24
Christmas – December 25

If any holiday falls on Saturday, the Friday immediately preceding the holiday will be observed as the holiday. If any holiday should fall on Sunday, the Monday immediately following the holiday will be observed as the holiday. **Exception: Christmas Eve. If Christmas Eve falls on Saturday or Sunday, then there is no paid holiday for Christmas Eve.**

Note:

1. Per a telephone call to the Board of County Commissioners Office on January 14, 2025, the Hancock County Commissioners had planned on closing county offices at noon on Christmas Eve in 2024 and then changed that to all day after learning that the judges and courthouse closed their offices for the day. Keeping county offices open all day on Christmas Eve had been routine until 2024. The Hancock County Commissioners put out a holiday schedule for the coming year in September. Holidays vary from one year to the next.
2. Per a telephone call to the City of Findlay Recreation Department on January 27, 2025, the City of Findlay closes its offices on Christmas Eve. It is a paid holiday every year.
3. Since 2010, the Hancock Park District Board of Park Commissioners added two paid holidays: the day after Thanksgiving and Juneteenth.
4. There appears to be no opposition to this change even though some Management Team members may feel more strongly about it than others.

Recommendation: Add Christmas Eve, a full day, to the Hancock Park District's holiday schedule beginning in 2025.

Policy Issue #3: Giving employees a discounted rate for the use of Brugeman Lodge and the Activity Barn.

The current policy in the Personnel Manual (plus the recommended change in bold print) says:

In addition to salaries, overtime (**i.e., compensatory time**), **unlimited sick leave**, **12** paid holidays, **one paid personal day**, paid vacation, workers' compensation, insurance (health, dental, and life), medical reimbursement, **paid training**, and pension plan benefits for eligible employees, the HPD offers the following special benefits:

- A. Full-time, permanent part-time, and seasonal employees receive the following special benefits:
 - 1. Clothing (i.e., HPD apparel and work wear) based on job descriptions.
 - 2. One free shelter rental per year, and free use of campsites, watercraft, and skis and snowshoes. Immediate family members or friends who accompany the employee also receive gratis use. Note: Seasonal employees are only eligible for free rentals during their employment period.

Hunting and Trapping

HPD employees who are interested in participating in the Hancock Park District's annual Hunting with Permission Game Management Program are expected to follow the same rules and procedures as members of the public. Participation in the hunting lottery is required.

Note:

- 1. On April 10, 2012, the Board of Park Commissioners approved the Personnel Manual. During the meeting, *"Board discussion led to the elimination of HPD employees' free use of Brugeman Lodge and Activity Barn because the facilities are used to generate revenue."* The Board included Gary Hirschfeld, Gwen Kuenzli, and Scott Younger. The other consideration related to the Board's action was the potential decrease in the availability of both rental facilities for the public if all full-time employees chose to rent the facilities during the year. Turning customers away because employees have rented the facilities free of charge was a concern. It would be difficult to justify given the purpose of those rental facilities.
- 2. Some Management Team members support a 50% employee discount. Providing Hancock Park District employees with another "perk" was mentioned as a reason for the discount.
- 3. The weekday rate for Brugeman Lodge is \$400.00. The weekend rate for Brugeman Lodge (including Fridays and holidays) is \$800.00. The weekday rate for the Activity Barn is \$200.00. The weekend rate (including Fridays and holidays) is \$400.00.

Recommendation: There is staff support and opposition regarding this issue. Is the Board interested in changing the policy for special benefits by giving HPD employees a discounted rate for the rental of Brugeman Lodge and the Activity Barn? If the answer is yes, then what should the discount rate be?

Policy Issue #4: Changing the eligibility regarding a paid personal day

The current policy in the Personnel Manual says:

- B. Full-time and permanent part-time employees receive the following special benefit:
 - 1. One paid personal day per year not to exceed eight hours of regular time scheduled in advance and approved by the employee's supervisor. New employees must complete their probationary period before they are entitled to receive a paid personal day. The personal day is not payable at the time of separation from HPD employment.

Note:

- 1. New employees accrue 4.6 hours of sick leave during a two-week pay period. Sick leave can be used as it accrues.
- 2. New employees accrue 3.104 hours of vacation leave during a two-week pay period. Vacation leave cannot be taken until after one year.
- 3. New employees are eligible for a personal day (8 hours) after six months of employment.
- 4. What began with a discussion about an employee donating sick leave to a co-worker who may need it led to a discussion about possible solutions. The issue was based on two new employees who were concerned that they may not have enough sick leave to support foreseeable absences.
- 5. Considerations included the development of a sick leave donation policy (there was not much support even though both Hancock County and the City of Findlay have such a policy), using vacation as it accrues rather than waiting one year (that idea was dismissed), and providing additional personal days (which was viewed as a likely solution). While the idea of additional personal days was supported by a majority of Management Team members, an executive decision was made to not pursue it because the issue is about new employees not having enough sick leave and other paid time off in their first few weeks and months of employment. The issue is not about giving all employees more time off. Moreover, to recommend an additional paid holiday on Christmas Eve and then to recommend more personal days for all employees seemed inappropriate, and in fact, irresponsible.
- 6. The only viable option is to change the eligibility regarding the use of a personal day. Instead of a new employee waiting six months, the personal day could be available for use beginning on the first day of employment. A personal day (8 hours) plus 4.6 hours of paid sick leave every two weeks might be a solution. If nothing else, it would be an improvement, and that is something.

Recommendation: Change the policy regarding the personal day by making it available on the first day of employment, rather than waiting six months.

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Request to approve the Cooper Pond Master Plan: During an Executive Session on February 14, 2023, the consensus by the Hancock Park District Board of Park Commissioners was that Cooper Pond would be an appropriate addition to and expansion of Oakwoods Nature Preserve. On December 12, 2023, the Board approved meeting minutes dated November 14, 2023 that included the following preliminary plans for the maintenance, use, and management of Cooper Pond:

1. Provide pedestrian access only and maintenance vehicle access only
2. Provide a portable restroom facility
3. Promote picnicking, hiking, fishing, and wildlife observation
4. Provide another hiking destination
5. Retain the fence to discourage vehicle access and overnight use and assembly
6. Use the former loop driveway as a hiking trail around the pond
7. Remove structures
8. Naturalize the area and blend it with Oakwoods Nature Preserve

Project goals in the Cooper Pond Master Plan include the following:

1. Expand Oakwoods Nature Preserve to include Cooper Pond
2. Enhance and preserve the scenic beauty of Cooper Pond
3. Keep site development to a minimum
4. Provide access for wildlife and pedestrians, and provide outdoor recreation opportunities
5. Create a new and exciting hiking destination at Oakwoods Nature Preserve

The Cooper Pond Master Plan focuses on the following four sections:

1. Wildlife Friendly Fences, Boundary Markers, and Barriers to Vehicle Access
2. Signs, Park Regulations, and Law Enforcement
3. Vehicle Parking, Trails, and Pedestrian Access
4. Maintenance, Demolition, and Park Improvements (see Cooper Pond Master Plan)

Request to approve Resolution 2025-03 Regarding Additional Appropriation within the Auditor's Certification and Park Commissioners to Appropriate in the General Fund in the Amount of \$457,504.37 for the Oxbow Bend Activity Area Improvement Project: On March 5, 2025, the Hancock

Parks Foundation Board of Trustees approved a Hancock Park District funding request in the amount of \$207,504.37 for the Oxbow Bend Activity Area Improvement Project. By approving Resolution 2025-03, money from the Hancock Parks Foundation (\$207,504.37) and money from the One Time Strategic Community Investment Grant Program through the Ohio Office of Budget and Management (\$250,000.00) will be appropriated to a special project fund for the Oxbow Bend Activity Area Improvement Project (see Resolution 2025-03).

Request to approve Resolution 2025-04 Request for Funds from the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) and Designation of Projects for the Ohio Park District Roadwork Fund FY 2026-2027 through the Ohio Parks & Recreation Association (OPRA): This is a routine matter every two years. Each biennium, the Hancock Park District is required to pass and submit a resolution that states its understanding of government regulations pertaining to the Metropark Program and its request to participate. In essence, the signed resolution serves as the Hancock Park District Board of Park Commissioner's request for the next two-year allocation of funds from the Ohio Department of Transportation's Metropark Program, which is typically \$84,000.00. The fully executed resolution and list of designated projects for the next two years is due by May 1, 2025 (see Resolution 2025-04 and Designation of Projects).

HANCOCK PARK DISTRICT BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS

Meeting Minutes for March 11, 2025

The March 11, 2025 meeting of the Hancock Park District Board of Park Commissioners was held at Brugeman Lodge in Riverbend Recreation Area.

Park Commissioners Present: Ed Ingold, Scott Younger, Rick Kidwell

Staff Present: Gary Pruitt, Vicky Stozich, Scott Egbert, Michelle Rumschlag

Guests: Adam Rumschlag, Coral Brickner, Kelly Perrone, Christina Hensley, Christy Cramner

The meeting was called to order by Ed Ingold at 3:30 p.m.

Special Presentation: Seventh grade teachers from Liberty-Benton Middle School were presented with the 2024 Charlie Meadows Award

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Rick Kidwell with a second by Scott Younger to approve Meeting Minutes dated February 11, 2025. Motion carried by a unanimous vote.

FINANCIAL STATUS

Income and expense reports year to date February 28, 2025 were reviewed by the Board.

OLD BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

Request to approve an increase in the amount of money that can be reimbursed for meals when traveling and training: A motion was made by Scott Younger with a second by Rick Kidwell to approve the increase from \$35.00 per diem to \$94.00 per diem and an annual increase based on the Consumer Price Index. Motion carried by a unanimous vote.

Request to approve the addition of Christmas Eve to the holiday schedule: A motion was made by Scott Younger with a second by Rick Kidwell to add Christmas Eve to the holiday schedule. Motion carried by a unanimous vote.

Request to approve an employee discount for the use of Brugeman Lodge and the Activity Barn: No motion was made to approve an employee discount for the use of Brugeman Lodge and the Activity Barn.

Request to approve a change in eligibility regarding the use of a personal day: A motion was made by Scott Younger with a second by Rick Kidwell to approve a change in eligibility regarding the use of a personal day by letting employees use their personal day beginning on the first day of employment. Motion carried by a unanimous vote.

Request to approve the Cooper Pond Master Plan: A motion was made by Scott Younger with a second by Rick Kidwell to approve the Cooper Pond Master Plan. Motion carried by a unanimous vote.

Request to approve Resolution 2025-03 Regarding Additional Appropriation within the Auditor's Certification and Park Commissioners to Appropriate in the General Fund in the Amount of \$457,504.37 for the Oxbow Bend Activity Area Improvement Project: A motion was made by Scott Younger with a second by Rick Kidwell to approve Resolution 2025-03. Motion carried by a unanimous vote.

Request to approve Resolution 2025-04 Request for Funds from the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) and Designation of Projects for the Ohio Park District Roadwork Fund FY 2026-2027 through the Ohio Parks & Recreation Association (OPRA): A motion was made by Scott Younger with a second by Rick Kidwell to approve Resolution 2025-04. Motion carried by a unanimous vote.

DISCUSSION

Hancock Park District Report:

The Arcadia Soccer Club wants to construct a paved walkway from the parking lot to the soccer fields in Aeraland Recreation Area. Findlay Mayor Christina Muryn is considering the Hancock Park District's interest in cancelling the Riverwalk Agreement. She asked for and received a copy of the Hancock Park District's 2025 budget. An agreement is in the works regarding city property managed and maintained by the Hancock District showing what each governmental entity is responsible for. Playground equipment will be purchased soon to avoid the anticipated cost increase "due to the tumultuous state of affairs with tariffs and general inflation predictions" as reported by Landscape Structures, Inc.

Marion Township is responsible for tile repair along Township Road 208. Prescribed burns at Riverbend Recreation Area and Lehman Conservation Area went well. Prescribed burns at Oakwoods Nature Preserve (not the Wetland Restoration Area) and on the south side of Litzenberg Memorial Woods are scheduled for next week, weather permitting.

Registration for 19 Summer Camps opened on March 1; registrations have gone well so far. One camp is full while others have already reached the necessary minimum registration. Maple Sugaring Public Day was well attended with over 120 participants. Program Department staff will be attending the National Association of Interpretation Conference next week. Hancock Park District Naturalist Michelle Rumschlag is serving as co-chair for this year's conference. Public programs for June, July, and August are being planned.

PUBLIC INPUT

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:26 p.m.

Meeting Minutes approved:

Edward D. Ingold, Chairperson

Gary E. Pruitt, Director/Secretary

Date

Date