



Hancock Park District

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

Date: Tuesday, November 12, 2024
Location: Brugeman Lodge at Riverbend Recreation Area
Time: 3:30 p.m.

Roll Call

Approval of Minutes

1. Approval of Board Meeting Minutes dated October 8, 2024

Financial Status

1. Review of the Financial Statement dated October 31, 2024, presented by Hancock Park District Business Manager Vicky Stozich

Old Business

New Business

1. Update from the Mayor – Mayor Christina Muryn
2. Discussion on kayak rental stations – Mayor Christina Muryn
3. Request to approve the 2024 Property & Casualty Insurance Renewal
4. Request to approve the 2024 Community Park Improvement Program grants in the amount of \$197,276.06 and Resolution 2024-11 regarding additional appropriation within the Auditor's Certification and Park Commissioners to appropriate in the General Fund in the amount of \$97,276.06
5. Hancock Park District's Proposed 2025 Budget
6. Request to approve the Position Classification and Compensation Schedule for 2025
7. Request to approve the new Oxbow Bend Activity Area playground as part of the Oxbow Bend Activity Area Improvement Project

Discussion

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

Public Input

Adjournment

Next Meeting: Tuesday, December 10 at 3:30 p.m. in Brugeman Lodge at Riverbend Recreation Area

HANCOCK PARK DISTRICT BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
Staff Report/Agenda Supplement
November 12, 2024

Update from the Mayor and Discussion on kayak rental stations: Mayor Christina Muryn will be at the meeting to provide an update and to initiate a discussion on kayak rental stations.

Request to approve the 2024 Property & Casualty Insurance Renewal: Ryan Pessell from Hitchings Insurance Agency will be at the meeting to talk about the Ohio Plan Package Proposal and answer questions (see Letter and Ohio Plan Package Proposal).

Request to approve the 2024 Community Park Improvement Program grants in the amount of \$197,276.06 and Resolution 2024-11 regarding additional appropriation within the Auditor's Certification and Park Commissioners to appropriate in the General Fund in the amount of \$97,276.06: A total of 25 projects were submitted for grant funding from nine villages, City of Fostoria, and City of Findlay in the amount of \$456,709.38, including 11 (1st Priority) projects in the amount \$197,276.06 (the Village of Mt. Cory and the Village of Bluffton did not submit a grant application, and three villages and one city were given a 30-day extension to October 18 to submit their grant applications). Because the Board has a policy decision to make, the following statistics, information, and funding options below are presented to the Board for its consideration:

1. From 1977 through 1990 (14 years), the average total expenditure was \$38,487.13. The range was \$29,998.56 - \$55,166.50.
2. From 1991 through 2023 (33 years), the average total expenditure was \$116,351.89. The range was \$81,216.45 - \$219,863.00. The actual expenditure exceeded \$100,000.00 during 18 of the 33 years. In fact, the actual expenditure exceeded \$100,000.00 for 10 consecutive years (1995-2004), ranging from \$109,367.35 to \$219,863.00.
3. From 2010 through 2023 (14 years), the Hancock Park District's budget for grants ranged from \$96,000.00 to \$100,000.00. During that time, actual expenditures remained within the budget except three times: 2013 (\$100,014.95), 2022 (\$113,847.61), and 2023 (\$200,305.97). The ability to remain within the budget may have been due to two factors:
 - A. The monetary value of requests was lower, or there was a range of requests in terms of scope and cost that allowed for flexibility. A concerted effort was made to work within the budget.
 - B. When a range of requests was absent, and project cost was high, multiyear grants were given, typically two-year grants and three-year grants.
4. The purpose of Community Park Improvement Program grants is to help villages and cities in Hancock County make park improvements and enhance outdoor recreation opportunities.

Recommendation - Funding Option #1: Appropriate an additional \$97,276.06 to help fund all 1st Priority projects. This would fund meaningful park improvement projects for all applicants and help further the improvement of village and city parks in Hancock County, while avoiding multiyear grants or partial grants (see 2024 Grant Requests: Option #1, Resolution 2024-11 regarding additional appropriation within the Auditor's Certification and Park Commissioners to appropriate in the General Fund, and Letter and Photograph).

Alternative - Funding Option #2: Stay within the budget of \$100,000.00. This would require a partial grant for Village of McComb, City of Findlay, Village of Vanlue, and City of Fostoria, and the 3rd Priority project for Village of Rawson. The 1st Priority projects from Village of McComb, Village of Vanlue, and City of Fostoria alone total \$96,290.00, which is 96% of the Hancock Park District's budget (see 2024 Grant Requests: Option #2).

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Hancock Park District's Proposed 2025 Budget: In June, department heads and managers were given a memorandum from the director with information about the 2025 budget development process (i.e., guidelines and timeline). The following guidelines are an excerpt from that memorandum:

2025 Budget Development Guidelines

1. Start early with research, planning, and staff discussions (if applicable). Submit your budget request on time:
 - The budget development work session should occur within the designated budget development timeline, which is typically 14 weeks. That is when the work gets done, although budgeting is a year around process.
 - As a department head and supervisor (if applicable), you are responsible for working with your staff on budget development. This includes process and timeline, meetings, and open discussion about the status of their requests before submitting the department budget to the business manager.
 - The business manager and I are responsible for providing information and assistance during the 14-week budget development timeline. After that, the business manager is responsible for compiling budget requests, working with me, and submitting the draft document to me for my review.
2. Submit an itemized budget for all applicable accounts and subaccounts, not including full-time, permanent part-time, and seasonal/temporary staff salary, fringes, and allowances (the business manager will prepare that information):
 - Organize the information and include a corresponding account number for each item or group of items and use the proper accounts.
 - Using and submitting the budget worksheet provided by the business manager is a good organizational tool, since it is a template that is already available with accounts shown.
 - Provide written background and justification for requested items. You should be able to explain why you are requesting an item and how you arrived at the budget number, especially with new items, large expenditures, and when monetary increases exist compared to the previous budget.
3. Use a zero-based budgeting approach when developing budget requests. Analyze each budget line item beginning with zero and then build it up to the requested dollar amount. Compared to the previous budget, the dollar amount could be less, the same, or more. Zero-based budgeting relies on the following three principles:

- Each budget line item is analyzed to determine need and cost.
 - Each expense starts from a “zero base” and requires a fresh decision.
 - Each expense is justified.
4. Scrutinize your area of operation (if necessary) by looking at spending history, examining spending patterns and trends for various accounts, identifying needs, and setting priorities:
- The business manager can provide Custom Transaction Detail Reports showing what has been purchased and how much has been spent within a single account.
 - The monthly Income and Expense Breakdown that is provided with the Board agenda can help you learn about spending history, identify spending patterns and trends, and develop a zero-based budget.

The 2025 budget is straightforward. Most line items change very little from one year to the next. However, there are a few highlights worthy of mention, including employee change of status, pay raises, vehicles, park improvements, and certain cost increases. Approval of the budget will occur at the December meeting, with or without changes from the Board, following a 30-day public review period (see 2025 Budget). Regarding pay raises, information about the 2024 Salary Study and background and justification for pay raises are explained in a position statement on page 3: Staff Report/Agenda Supplement, November 12, 2024, continued – page 3

Position Statement

In the leisure services arena, especially in the parks and recreation profession, it takes people (i.e., employees) to serve people. And the more committed and qualified those employees are, the better the service will be – in theory. As an employer, the Hancock Park District values its employees, and one way to let them know that is with compensation for the work they do.

Several years ago, it became apparent that base pay rates and actual pay rates were too low. The need for confirmation led to the 2016 Salary Study so that deficiencies could be known, benchmarks could be set, and the cost to fix the problem could be estimated. Salary increases occurred in two phases. The first phase was on September 12, 2017 in the amount of \$45,900.00. The second phase was on June 8, 2021 in the amount of \$100,148.47. The total allocation was \$146,048.47. Unfortunately, it took five years after the 2016 Salary Study to fund meaningful pay raises.

Pay raises from the 2016 Salary Study were important, and they were a big step, and they were appropriate. In fact, there was a time, not long ago, when vacant positions were advertised and only one application was received. That situation has improved in recent years. The 2016 Salary Study and subsequent pay raises were, in part, the reason for that improvement. However, even though progress was made, many pay rates were still too low, especially for park managers, the natural resource manager, the full-time program specialist, and various permanent part-time positions.

The 2024 Salary Study used three primary sources of information to compare Hancock Park District pay rates with those of comparable positions in Ohio and throughout the country: 1) OPRA Compensation 2021 Survey Report (with cost-of-living adjustments), 2) 2023 NRPA Park and Recreation Salary Survey (with a cost-of-living adjustment), and 3) National Recreation and Park Association Career Center (i.e., the posting of vacant positions throughout the country).

Throughout the process of evaluating data, making comparisons, and developing a recommendation, it was important to be reasonable and fair with equity and equality in mind and for decisions to be supported by the data and other factors, analyze positions and then adjust positions and their assigned

grades as needed, narrow the pay gap between position classifications (i.e., grades), ensure that there are no full-time positions with a salary below \$40,000.00, and build on salary increases from the 2016 Salary Study by increasing base pay rates and actual pay rates for all employees. The cost to do that is \$96,993.54 (not including fringe benefits). This includes \$23,079.54 for traditional merit pay raises (capped at 3%) and \$73,914.00 for additional pay raises per the 2024 Salary Study.

The process of conducting a salary study and job analysis was aimed at achieving pay rates (actual pay rates and base pay rates) that are competitive and yet reasonable, commensurate with responsibilities and essential duties, and appropriate and sufficient to help the Hancock Park District retain employees longer thereby mitigating turnover and attract applications from qualified candidates when position vacancies occur. That is the hope, and that is the justification, and that is why pay rates matter.

Request to approve the Position Classification and Compensation Schedule for 2025: The 2024 Salary Study and the discussion during Executive Session on September 10, 2024 focused on actual pay rates (i.e., pay raises) and base pay rates (i.e., minimum pay rates). Budget approval on December 10, 2024 will address pay raises for 2025.

Since the issue of actual pay rates and base pay rates are linked with one affecting the other (i.e., base pay rates and actual pay rates were both subject to the 2024 Salary Study and Job Analysis), a separate action by the Board to approve the proposed Position Classification and Compensation Schedule is requested, thus approving base pay rate increases for 2025 (see Position Classification and Compensation Schedule for 2025).

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Request to approve the new Oxbow Bend Activity Area playground as part of the Oxbow Bend Activity Area Improvement Project: The current playground in the Oxbow Bend Activity Area is 27 years old. It was purchased in 1997 for \$10,000.00. Landscape Structures was the manufacturer. The apparatus included a Playshaper as the core unit supplemented by two freestanding items: Wiggle Worm and Spring See Saw. The intended audience appears to be children ages 2 to 5, although the sign at the playground does not make that clear; only that adult supervision is required for children under 5 years of age (new signs will say that adult supervision is recommended, not required). There is a detached play area with two swings designed for toddlers. The playground surface is engineered wood fiber.



Oxbow Bend Activity Area Playground at Riverbend Recreation Area
Landscape Structures ▪ 1997

The playground industry has changed dramatically in the last 30 years. While the traditional post and deck playground design remains, there is now the opportunity for design flexibility and customization, more functional play spaces, challenging cables, elevated climbers, and social hangout spots. There are interchangeable bays and extensions, or links between play systems to infuse new play opportunities. In

other words, there are opportunities to play differently during each visit. And there are alternatives to engineered wood fiber, such as playground grass, poured-in-place rubber, and rubber tile that offer shock absorption, low maintenance, long wear, and excellent accessibility. There is even play apparatus for children ages 6-23 months. When contemplating new playgrounds for the Hancock Park System, there is an intriguing notion to consider: change the space, change the experience. And of course, inclusive design is one way to do that.

Current playgrounds throughout the Hancock Park System may technically be accessible to some degree per the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), but in practical terms, they offer limited play value for children with developmental disabilities or who otherwise depend on a mobility device. The safety surface material (engineered wood fiber) is not stable enough to prevent it from changing and it may not be firm enough to support easy and convenient movement by wheelchairs and other mobility devices. Accessing play equipment is one thing, engaging with it and playing with it is something else entirely. Inclusive design uses ramps to play elements (ideally located in a central hub frequented by all children), ground level play opportunities, sensory elements (touch, sight, sound, and movement), communicative elements to promote socialization, and seating areas for children to sit quietly before jumping into play and when needing a break from the action.

The current Oxbow Bend Activity Area playground location, walkway configuration, and access to the trailhead limit playground expansion options and create an undesirable separation between the play structure and the swings. All playground components should be contained within the same space. These deficiencies have been addressed with the proposed replacement, upgrade, and modernization of the Oxbow Bend Activity Area playground.

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The preliminary design shows the elimination of the asphalt walkway that currently separates the playground from the swings and allows for expansion and maximum use of the space. The proposed playground is designed for children ages 2 to 12, plus two swings designed for toddlers. The manufacturer is Landscape Structures.

A warm, nature theme (e.g., green, tan, brown) with many climbing options and the opportunity to use the area below the decks for sitting, gathering/socializing, and moving through as part of the play experience is envisioned for the play area. The idea of multiple decks and multiple climbing options with a bridge and climber to connect the decks to the slide is the main idea with as many panels, musical instruments, and other freestanding play apparatus as the space will reasonably allow – all aimed at providing play value for children, including children with autism and children using wheelchairs and other mobility devices. Playground grass is the preferred safety surface.

Since the proposed playground focuses on accessibility and promotes play that leads children to walk and run and roll and sit and crawl and lay on the ground, playground grass would support that kind of play. Playground grass (and poured-in-place rubber) can be found at the Miracle League of Findlay Playground.



Playground Grass and Poured-in-Place Rubber
Miracle League of Findlay Playground

The Oxbow Bend Activity Area playground is estimated to cost approximately \$347,138.71, including \$237,678.20 for the playground apparatus and \$109,460.51 for playground safety surface material (see Landscape Structures Proposal and Renderings, including Forever Lawn of Ohio Proposal for playground grass). Note: The Hancock Parks Foundation Board of Trustees has discussed a \$200,000.00 grant for the new playground.

HANCOCK PARK DISTRICT BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
Meeting Minutes for November 12, 2024

The November 12, 2024 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
Guests: Ryan Pessell, Christina Muryn

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Rick Kidwell with a second by Scott Younger to approve Meeting Minutes dated October 8, 2024. Motion carried by a unanimous vote.

FINANCIAL STATUS

Income and expense reports year to date October 31, 2024 were reviewed by the Board.

OLD BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

Update from the Mayor – Mayor Christina Muryn: Mayor Christina Muryn updated the Board on plans for tree planting and the downtown park, including the Riverwalk.

Discussion on kayak rental stations – Mayor Christina Muryn: Mayor Christina Muryn informed the Board that the City of Findlay is considering the installation of a kayak rental station at the Findlay reservoir and along the Blanchard River as part of the downtown park. Mayor Muryn asked if the Hancock Park District is interested in a kayak rental station at Zonta Landing.

Request to approve the 2024 Property & Casualty Insurance Renewal: Ryan Pessell from Hitchings Insurance Agency, Inc. presented changes to the Hancock Park District’s Property & Casualty Insurance. The 2024-2025 renewal premium was \$41,259.00, a 6.48% increase. A motion was made by Scott Younger with a second by Ed Ingold to approve the renewal premium. Motion carried by a unanimous vote.

Request to approve the 2024 Community Park Improvement Program grants in the amount of \$197,276.06 and Resolution 2024-11 regarding additional appropriation within the Auditor’s certification and Park Commissioners to appropriate in the general fund in the amount of \$97,276.06: A motion was made by Ed Ingold with a second by Rick Kidwell to approve Community Park Improvement Program grants in the amount of \$197,276.06 and Resolution 2024-11. Motion carried by a unanimous vote.

Hancock Park District’s Proposed 2025 Budget: A motion was made by Rick Kidwell with a second by Scott Younger to approve the 2025 Budget as presented. Motion carried by a unanimous vote.

Request to approve the Position Classification and Compensation Schedule for 2025: A motion was made by Scott Younger with a second by Rick Kidwell to approve the Position Classification and Compensation Schedule for 2025. Motion carried by a unanimous vote.

Request to approve the new Oxbow Bend Activity Area playground as part of the Oxbow Bend Activity Area Improvement Project: A motion was made by Scott Younger with a second by Rick Kidwell to approve the Oxbow Bend Activity Area playground with the understanding that the playground safety surface is yet to be determined. Motion carried by a unanimous vote.

DISCUSSION

Hancock Park District Report:

The wetlands at Bright Conservation Area, which were funded by H2Ohio, have a low spot near the pipe that needs to be filled. It will be filled at no cost to the Hancock Park District. All concrete has been removed from Lehman Conservation Area. Winter equipment preparation is underway.

PUBLIC INPUT

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:40 p.m.

Meeting Minutes approved:

Edward D. Ingold, Chairperson

Gary E. Pruitt, Director/Secretary

Date

Date