

# **SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS ANDERSON TOWNSHIP PARK DISTRICT**

**October 24, 2013**

Dale Bartholomew, Vice President, called the special meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners of the Anderson Township Park District ("ATPD") to order at 7:02 pm at the Beech Acres Park RecPlex, 6915 Beechmont Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45230. Present were Board Members: Nadine Gelter, Josh Gerth, and Tom Turchiano.

Also present were: Ken Kushner, Executive Director; Emily Armstrong, Assistant Director/Board Clerk; and Brian Jordan, Financial Officer.

**GUESTS:** Residents: Angela Connolly, Robert W. Dorsey, Richard Szanti; Vanessa delos Reyes, Michelle Easton, Josh Eastlake, Eleanor Kennedy, Dan Knight, Mary Kathryn Feltman, and David Rudolph.

## **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**AGENDA:** Mr. Gerth moved the Board approve the Agenda. Mrs. Gelter seconded the motion. Voting: Yes: Mr. Bartholomew, Mrs. Gelter, Mr. Gerth, and Mr. Turchiano (4); No: None. The motion carried unanimously.

## **BUSINESS:**

Mr. Kushner welcomed the attendees to the focus group. He thanked them for signing up to be on the ATPD's Future Park Improvements planning committee.

Evolution of the Anderson Parks: Mr. Kushner explained that while the ATPD is a separate government entity from Anderson Township Government, the Township Trustees are responsible for appointing the ATPD's Board Members and for approving the ATPD's levies and sale of bonds. When the economy is bad, the first thing to be cut in most cities and municipalities are the parks. Since the ATPD has its own tax funding, the money for the parks stays with the parks as long as the community continues to approve the ATPD Operating levies.

Since the recent down turn in the economy in 2008, park use has increased significantly.

Mr. Kushner said he would be doing most of the talking in the first focus group, and that additional focus group meetings will take place in 2014.

Mr. Kushner presented the ATPD's Voting Records History, listing all ATPD ballot issues beginning in 1975 and concluding in 2008. He highlighted that a group of community citizens initiated the parks effort in 1970 by petitioning the Anderson Township Trustees to form a township park district. The ATPD was created by referendum in 1975 by the vote of Anderson residents.

The ATPD got its start thanks to the Forest Hills School District, which rented what is now Nagel Middle School to the ATPD for one dollar a year, which the Park District managed as Nagel Park for 20 years. The ATPD evolved in large part because of the local soccer organizations which needed athletic fields, specifically Jim Waldron with Girls Southeast Soccer Association. He recognized Mr. Bob Dorsey who was in attendance at the meeting as a former Anderson Township Trustee who also had a lot to do with the development of the ATPD. Kellogg Park, Clear Creek

Park, and Riverside Park came about because of the support of the Anderson Township Trustees. Anderson Township is also fortunate to have the Hamilton County Park District's (HCPD) parks and facilities in the community, and that the HCPD has been very generous and a true partner to the ATPD over the years.

Important funding mile stones for the ATPD include the passage of its first Operating Levy in 1980 which generated .62 mills, followed by the 1992 Operating Levy, which generated 1.9 mills. The 1992 levy signifies the point at which the ATPD began to build significant momentum. The ATPD is out of business without community support and revenue of its Operating Levies.

Mr. Kushner said all of the park properties were acquired in pieces over the years and developed in phases. The properties were acquired through various means including: donations, gifts, purchase with ATPD Operating Levy funds, failure of homeowners associations to pay taxes; and/or the sale of bonds.

The ATPD was founded as an active parks and recreation agency. In order to meet the recreational demands of the community, the ATPD has bonded out throughout its history to grow the parks and facilities:

- In 1997, the ATPD bonded out to purchase the land for Beech Acres Park (26 acres). This bond was paid off in 2012.
- In 1998, the ATPD bonded out to purchase a portion of W. M. Johnson Hills Park and to construct a state mandated turn lane on SR 32 for Clear Creek Park. This bond was paid off in 2013.
- In 2002, the ATPD bonded out to develop Beech Acres Park. This bond was paid off in 2009.
- In 2010, the ATPD bonded out to meet the communities demand for year-round athletic field use, resulting in the Riverside Park All Weather Fields. This bond will be paid off in 2018, meanwhile, it is providing an extensive amount of recreational opportunity that would otherwise not have existed.
- In 2011, the ATPD bonded out to purchase land adjacent to Clear Creek Park, in order to solve a major water problem caused by the former owner. This bond will be paid off in 2015, providing future recreational potential, as well as allowing the ATPD to remedy the water problem that threatened the existing assets at Clear Creek Park.

In each of these cases, bonding out has enabled generations of residents to enjoy the parks for recreational purposes. Mr. Kushner further stated these examples provide perspective on time and what it takes to provide a park or facility.

Mr. Kushner referenced the 2018 Plan and stated he would present the plan later in the meeting. He said the purpose of the 2018 Plan is to track the Operations of the ATPD and the associated financial liabilities. The ATPD Board of Park Commissioners is comprised of resident volunteers who make decisions on behalf of the community to provide clean, neat, and safe parks, while ensuring financial solvency.

Mr. Kushner stated the community's demands for recreation has evolved since the ATPD was created in 1975. People expect to be active far later into life than ever before; people expect to be active year-round; sports are no longer limited to specific seasons and are now expected year-round; people want more sports options for children and adults, including lacrosse, Pickleball, volleyball, and disc golf.

Current Parks and Facilities: Mr. Kushner gave a brief overview of the Anderson Parks including the operating levy cycle during which they were acquired and/or developed, the location, size, and current facilities existing at each property: Kellogg Park; Juilfs Park; Clear Creek Park; Riverside Park; Beech Acres Park; William McNeilan Johnson Hills Park; Lavery Park; Veterans Park; State and Nagel; and ROCE, the ATPD Operations Center. He further explained the Beech Acres Park RecPlex is leased from the Beech Acres Parenting Center, and that it contains the only indoor recreational space in the ATPD.

Mr. Kushner said none of the ATPD parks are finished as there is always more to be added or features to be replaced over time. Each park has special considerations for development, including: proximity to neighbors, access to public utilities, and flood plain designation. The public is very hard on facilities and equipment which is why everything the ATPD installs is chosen in the best interest of the long term. Maintenance of what is built is critical at this stage of the ATPD's history as the last 20 years have been spent building the parks. He said the ATPD currently maintains over 12 miles of asphalt.

Mr. Richard Szanti asked if the ATPD owned the driving range next to Clear Creek Park and if there was a private business operating out of the facility.

Mr. Kushner said the driving range is the property purchased in 2011 to solve the water issue on Clear Creek Park, caused by the former owner, and that the ATPD has a contract with the private business owner who pays rent to operate her business.

2013 Public Input Survey Results: Mr. Kushner stated public surveys have been an important resource that has helped define the ATPD's direction for the parks. Years ago, the ATPD determined additional parks needed to be developed in order to take some of the volume of use from Juilfs Park. However, once Beech Acres Park was opened to the public complete with the playground in 2009, use at Juilfs Park did not decline. Park use simply increased at both Juilfs Park and Beech Acres Park. He attributed increased park use in general to the Anderson Trails network of sidewalks that enable neighborhoods to access nearby parks.

Mr. Kushner presented the 2013 Public Input Survey Results. He stated the survey was featured in the ATPD's 2013 Summer Park Guide that was mailed to 17,000 homes in the Anderson Township area, and promoted online and at ATPD programs and events. He said 260 people completed the survey and he highlighted the following items: 67% of the respondents are women; respondents represented the six FHSD elementary school areas relatively evenly; 48% of respondents visit Anderson Parks at least "Weekly", and an additional 17% visit Anderson Parks "Daily"; Beech Acres Park and Juilfs Park are the most highly visited Anderson Parks; while respondent's recreational interests vary greatly, the top five reasons people visit Anderson Parks are, in order: exercise/walking/jogging/running; trails; playgrounds; events and programs; and play sports/watch sports; 70% of respondents indicated their overall opinion of the ATPD as "Excellent", and 95% listed their opinion as "Good" or "Excellent"; 14% indicated the ATPD is "Important" and 84% indicated the ATPD is "Very Important" to the Anderson Township community.

He said features most highly requested for the Anderson Parks include: flushable restrooms, especially for mothers with children; shade structures; and trails. As expected, respondent's requests are all over the spectrum because people's recreational interests are all over the spectrum. The ATPD Board takes all of the residents' interests into consideration when making decisions for the

entire community. Mr. Kushner encouraged the focus group attendees to read through the survey results, including the comments section.

Future Park Improvements: Mr. Kushner presented the 2018 Plan, which outlines the ATPD's income and expenses throughout the current 2009-2018 levy cycle. He said the staff uses the 2018 Plan as a tool to plan for the operations and projects of the ATPD based on the ATPD's financial means. As funding has decreased due to the discontinuation of taxes such as Tangible Personal Property Tax (TPP) and various local government funds, the ATPD revised the 2018 Plan. The ATPD has received approximately \$3,000,000 less than initial estimates from the passage of the 2008 Operating Levy. The Hamilton County Auditor re-evaluates property values every three years. In 2012, the ATPD's property tax revenue received was 5% less than anticipated, thus requiring staff to revise the 2018 Plan. The ATPD cannot run its finances in the negative, and must adjust its functions in order to financially run in the positive. The ATPD requires a carryover each year, in order to continue business in the first quarter of the year.

Mr. Bartholomew left at this point in the meeting.

Mr. Kushner stated the ATPD strives to be a transparent governmental organization and that its budget and all minutes of the Board of Park Commissioners are posted on the ATPD's website, [www.AndersonParks.com](http://www.AndersonParks.com).

Mr. Kushner stated additional focus group meetings will be planned, for which the attendees will help the ATPD determine the direction for future park improvements, including how to pay for them.

Funding Options: Mr. Kushner presented a December 5, 2012 article from the Cincinnati Enquirer titled, "Parkonomics' Pay Off". He said among many positive attributes the article attributes to community parks, the article highlights a 2011 University of Cincinnati study of how a 12-mile stretch of the Little Miami Scenic Trail affected residential property values. The study concluded that for the average home, people were willing to pay a \$9,000 premium to be within 1,000 feet of the trail. Mr. Kushner stated clean, neat, and safe parks increase property values. Homes near Anderson Parks are sought after by buyers.

Mr. Kushner said the primary funding source for the ATPD is its tax levy. Other sources include grants for projects. In 2013, the ATPD submitted applications for approximately \$300,000 in grants. Most grants require a financial match to back the grants. Sponsorships, program and event registration fees, and user fees for exclusive use of facilities are other ways the ATPD generates revenue. Mr. Kushner stated the ATPD can plug away at small projects through its 1.9 mill Operating Levy, but that if the community wants more in the parks, other means of generating funding to pay for projects must be explored. He presented a piece that listed estimated revenue that could be generated by a Capital Levy for park improvements which would expire. Mr. Kushner stated a Capital Levy is one option for putting more in the parks sooner, rather than later, to keep Anderson an attractive place to live. He asked them who and why someone would choose to buy their home in Anderson Township.

Mr. Kushner assigned the group homework for the next focus group meeting: drive throughout Anderson Township's 36 square miles of neighborhoods; visit the parks and public facilities throughout the Township; look at other communities to see what they have to offer, especially West

Clermont, where so many former Anderson Township residents now reside; look at other communities' tax rates; and write down ideas for how we can move Anderson Township forward through the ATPD.

Mr. Kushner encouraged the group to contact him at any time with questions, concerns, or observations regarding anything park related.

**PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE BOARD:**

Ms. Michelle Easton asked what position or involvement the ATPD has in the community to help make crosswalks safer.

Mr. Kushner encouraged Ms. Easton to contact Mr. Tom Caruso with Anderson Township Government to find out the progress being made to make crosswalks safer.

Mrs. Gelter said one of the challenges regarding crosswalks specifically at Endovalley and the Juilfs Park entrance is that Clough Pike is a county road, and therefore, Anderson Township unfortunately has no authority to make changes.

Mr. Gerth agreed the crosswalk is an issue. He lives in the vicinity of Juilfs Park and said while the flashing lights are an improvement, drivers simply do not stop to allow pedestrians to cross. He said this is a good example where government can work together to try to get things done for the community.

Mrs. Eleanor Kennedy asked for distance markers on the paved trails.

Mr. Kushner said trail distance markers are currently in the works.

Mr. Robert Dorsey asked about the status of W. M. Johnson Hills Park.

Mr. Josh Eastlake asked about the development time line for W. M. Johnson Hills Park.

Mr. Kushner said W. M. Johnson Hills Park is on Bridle Road, and is accessible by car via a gravel road and parking lot. The park has been open to the public since 2007, and while it is rustic, the property is gorgeous and contains hiking trails ranging from rolling open fields to strenuous wooded terrain. Currently, plans are at a standstill while the ATPD works with the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency ("OEPA") to determine the feasibility of the construction of a fishing lake. The first phase of the Master Plan includes the possible fishing lake, installation of an entrance road, parking lot, and updating public utilities, including sewer, in order to construct flushable restrooms. The house is accessible by appointment only. It has been moth-balled because it is heated with oil, which on the lowest setting costs about \$1,800 to \$3,200 a month to heat. The Master Plan in its entirety would cost approximately \$20,000,000. Even with a Capital Levy, the ATPD would not have that much money to devote to just this facility. As with all of the parks, the ATPD will develop W. M. Johnson Hills Park over time.

Ms. Mary Kathryn Feltman asked about surveillance cameras in the parks.

Mr. Kushner stated five locations currently have surveillance cameras, mostly as it relates to keeping an eye on pop machines. They are only as good as the thief wants them to be and they are expensive, can be time consuming, and are often ineffective.

Various, brief conversations took place including: the housing development planned in the near future at Ayers, Asbury, and Eight Mile Roads; Belterra Park Racetrack, formerly River Downs Racetrack; ANCOR area lakes, owned by Martin Marietta; the Little Miami River cannot be accessed through the ATPD parks because of its designation as a National and State Wild and Scenic River; Eastern Corridor project impacts to the ATPD's Native American artifacts; safety in the parks, specifically, if you call the police when you are at Juilfs Park, the police respond in seconds.

Mr. Kushner thanked everyone for attending the meeting. The next meeting will take place in 2014 and will likely be at the Juilfs Park office, about which all attendees will be contacted.

At 8:13 pm, there being no further business to be brought before this Board, Mr. Gerth moved to adjourn the meeting. Mrs. Gelter seconded the motion. Voting: Yes: Mrs. Gelter, Mr. Gerth, and Mr. Turchiano (3); No: None. The motion carried unanimously. (Mr. Bartholomew had to leave during the Future Park Improvements part of the meeting.)

*I hereby certify that the foregoing are the minutes of the October 24, 2013 special meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners, which minutes reflect the essence of the meeting and are not verbatim.*

Submitted by,

Emily Armstrong  
Board Clerk

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Dale Bartholomew

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Nadine Gelter

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Josh Gerth

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Tom Turchiano