

# REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS ANDERSON TOWNSHIP PARK DISTRICT

**December 9, 2014**

Dale Bartholomew, President, called the regular meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners of the Anderson Township Park District (“ATPD”) to order at 6:33 pm at Park District Headquarters, 8249 Clough Pike, Cincinnati, OH 45244. Present were Board Members: Nadine Gelter, Rob Herking, Angie Stocker, and Tom Turchiano.

Also present were: Ken Kushner, Executive Director; Emily Armstrong, Assistant Director/Board Clerk; Brian Jordan, Financial Officer; Jessica Fall, Recreation Manager; Sheila Fehn, Office Manager; and Scott Lahman, Business Specialist.

**GUESTS:** Joyce and George Beller, non-residents; Jean Wakefield, resident; Lois and Bob Key, residents; Sheila Vilvens, Enquirer Media; Bob Drake and Kathy Hulgin, residents; Casey Sumner, resident; Jon Roberto, resident; and Janet Cromer, resident.

## **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**AGENDA:** Mrs. Stocker moved the Board approve the Agenda as presented. Mrs. Gelter seconded the motion. Voting: Yes: Mrs. Gelter, Mr. Herking, Mr. Bartholomew, Mrs. Stocker, and Mr. Turchiano. (5); No: None. The motion carried unanimously.

**Public to Address the Board:** Mr. Bartholomew stated that members of the public who wish to address the Board should do so as a group, and be within a five minute time limit. If several people wish to speak on the same topic, the time limit may be adjusted at his discretion as Board President.

Mr. Drake stated he is in attendance again to express his concerns about the ATPD’s plans for W. M. Johnson Hills Park (“JHP”) and that he wants it to stay the way it is currently. The others in attendance feel the same way and have come at his request. He believes Mr. Gerth asked people to attend the last meeting to represent disc golf and hunting at JHP so he wants the Board to hear his people express their concerns for JHP, too.

Ms. Wakefield asked why the ATPD would create a third driveway for JHP when there are already two driveways.

Mr. Kushner said the ATPD worked with the County Engineer to design a safer public access to JHP. The main entrance driveway on Bridle Rd will be relocated closer to Little Dry Run in order to give drivers a better line of sight and to create a two lane driveway. The existing one-lane gravel driveway on Bridle Road will continue to be used by the private property owners. The ATPD may continue to use Mrs. Johnson’s driveway to access the park, but it will not be for regular public use. The other proposed entrance to JHP is off Crooked Stick.

Mr. Sumner asked the Board to elaborate on the ATPD’s plans to contend with invasive species.

Mr. Kushner thanked Mr. Sumner for calling him the other day and for his interest to get informed about the ATPD’s plans for JHP. Honeysuckle is an invasive species that chokes out the native vegetation and requires constant management. Much honeysuckle has already been cleared. The

ATPD has planted many trees over the years at JHP. Non-native pear trees are also an invasive species issue for JHP.

Mr. Key asked what the process was to determine that disc golf and other things should be represented at JHP. Lots of people think JHP should stay natural and do not want disc golf. Mrs. Johnson would not have wanted disc golf. He likes JHP the way it is. He asked what the neighbors think about the plan for JHP.

Mr. Bartholomew said the ATPD conducted public meetings as part of a public input process for JHP. Since the beginning of JHP, many people expressed their support of disc golf. The ATPD additionally had many meetings and conversations with neighbors of JHP.

Mr. Kushner said the ATPD had three public input cycles with the most recent session in 2009-2010. The private horse stable operation was in existence on the property until 2010. During the first public input cycles, the ATPD mostly heard from people who wanted the private horse operation to continue. Because the horse operation prevented people from accessing the park, people had difficulty seeing beyond the horses. Many neighbors participated throughout the planning cycles. He has personally walked the property with lots of neighbors over the years to work towards a solution about their concerns. People like those who attended last month's meeting who are interested in the park have also been involved since the beginning. He stated that contrary to what Mr. Drake is telling people, no one asked the people who represented hunting and disc golf at JHP to attend last month. Lots of people are interested in JHP, not just Mr. Drake. Mr. Drake is misrepresenting the ATPD's plans for JHP to alarm people.

Mr. Kushner stated Mrs. Johnson did not put any restrictions on the ATPD's plans for JHP. The deed states that it is to remain a park in perpetuity. The only requests she made was for the ATPD to recognize the head waters of the Dry Run Creek, and for Mac's name to be included in the park's name. She investigated the ATPD before she approached us. Mrs. Johnson visited every park and was well-aware the ATPD was an active recreation park district. Mac and Marian Johnson loved and enjoyed their property. They had huge parties that included celebrities and presidents. Mrs. Johnson wanted people to enjoy their property to honor Mac.

Mr. Kushner said the ATPD recognizes that JHP is a unique property the ATPD manages, but that all ATPD properties are unique. The plan from the beginning has purposefully incorporated a natural theme. The ATPD put in the trail system at JHP. While the Board is not planning to construct soccer or baseball fields any time soon, some day a future Board may need to in order to meet the needs of the community. The ATPD is not paving the trails through the woods. The paved trails would be through the grassy areas at the top of the ridgeline. Accessible, paved trails are the ATPD's most highly requested amenity.

Ms. Hulgin is concerned about their voices being heard. She does not want JHP to change and asked how they would know if it was going to change.

Mr. Bartholomew said the major improvements would be infrastructure, for which there is currently no funding.

Mrs. Stocker stated there are many misconceptions about the ATPD's plan for the park. The Board understands the appeal of the property's natural features and believes the plan accommodates this aspect.

Mr. Herking said between now and the next meeting nothing major is going to happen at JHP.

Mrs. Beller said she goes to JHP everyday with her dog. All the people she talks to there want JHP to stay the same.

Mr. Roberto said he visits JHP regularly and likes it the way it is. If the ATPD develops JHP, it cannot go back. Since there are no other places like JHP in Anderson, the ATPD should take a long, hard look before developing it.

Mrs. Key said she visits many parks regularly. Indian Hill has natural parks which she encouraged the Board to use as an example for JHP. She would like to see the JHP pond cleaned up and the addition of a few benches. Developing JHP would ruin a treasure in Anderson.

Ms. Cromer said she agrees with the others and asked where the demand is to develop JHP. She believes the need for the planned items/activities is being met at many other parks in the area.

Mrs. Gelter said there is no major development imminent at JHP this year such as the necessary infrastructure upgrades for water, electric, sewer, etc. The ATPD has to have a plan to work towards. The plan was developed with the community's input over the years. Many improvements have been made over the years including adding the existing parking area, improving the access road, removing unsafe buildings, and cleaning up the property.

Mr. Beller said he is happy to hear there is no development planned soon. He asked how the public would know if the ATPD gets the money to make the planned improvements.

Mr. Kushner introduced Sheila Vilvens as the new Forest Hills Journal reporter. He said the ATPD is grateful for, her predecessor, Ms. Wakeland's generous coverage of the progress at JHP over the years.

Mrs. Stocker said the ATPD does not plan to make JHP like Juilfs Park or Beech Acres Park. The ATPD has no intention to put in a playground at JHP like the one at Juilfs Park. An appropriate entrance is necessary for safety reasons. Bathrooms are a basic need. Disc golf flows with the land and complements the wooded and grassy terrain. Camping already takes place at designated times with a registration process. She is concerned that for some reason people think JHP is going to be something other than what we have in mind. The ATPD has made a concerted effort to gather and incorporate the community's input through surveys and public meetings. The Board makes itself accessible to the public at events including Greater Anderson Days where the plans were displayed to encourage public comment. Nothing the Board does is in a vacuum. The plans have been on the ATPD's website since 2010. The Board intends to do what makes the best sense for the majority of our 45,000 residents. The ATPD conducts business openly and strives for transparency. She said major developments at JHP would be discussed by the Board and that the public always has an opportunity for comment at meetings.

Mr. Beller said he is hearing from the Board what he needs to hear about continued community input and notification before development. He is proud of all the ATPD does and believes the parks are great.

Mr. Herking said the time is not ripe now for major development as demonstrated by the budget the Board will vote on later in the meeting. He visits JHP with his family regularly and believes immediate, minor improvements can be made now including the addition of park benches. The plans for minor improvements are continually evolving.

Mrs. Wakefield and Mrs. Key asked how to find out about the Board meetings.

Mr. Kushner stated the ATPD meetings are posted publicly as required by the Open Meetings Act. The meeting schedule is always posted on the ATPD's website. The ATPD has regular monthly meetings, usually the second Tuesday of each month, at the Juilfs Park Office, at which the public is always welcome.

Mrs. Gelter distributed copies of the ATPD's approved 2015 Board Meeting Schedule.

Mr. Drake said people believe the development is imminent because the plans are still posted and they include 12' wide paved trails and other things people don't want. A paved trail will take out trees, not just invasive honeysuckle. He is concerned the plan is not one with which the people agree and he wants the plan revisited before anything happens. He fears he will miss the notices about when the matter will be discussed by the ATPD. He wants to see a better long-term plan that meets his needs and requested the ATPD remove the plans from the website.

Mr. Bartholomew stated the Board appreciates various opinions from the public. He said the plans could be updated to reflect the current status of amenities like the lake which has changed since the plans were originally adopted.

Mrs. Stocker encouraged the public to read the minutes that are posted online and to stay apprised of the Board meetings, also posted online. She said the Board would discuss in a Board meeting when and if funding becomes available for the infrastructure projects at JHP.

Mr. Herking gave out his cell phone number so they can reach him any time to ask questions.

Mr. Key said the recent articles about JHP that include the things the ATPD plans to do is why the public believes the ATPD is moving forward in the near future with the plans.

Mr. Bartholomew said the articles to which Mr. Key is referring were not created by the ATPD, nor were they in the Forest Hills Journal, but were actually Mr. Drake's representation of the plans.

Mrs. Key said the bulldozer at JHP makes it look like something is about to happen.

Mr. Kushner encouraged members of the public to call him personally, not Mr. Drake, if they want to know about the ATPD's plans for JHP. The JHP plans and the planning process have been well-represented in the paper since 1998. JHP is an active park with a passive nature. Bulldozers are expensive to move so when the ATPD finished a project in another park, the bulldozer was relocated to the next project area. The bulldozer was moved to JHP because an old house the ATPD

bought a few years back needs to be removed. The ATPD has not accomplished very much in the way of significant improvements because of a lack of funding. However, the ATPD has made lot of little improvements to JHP every year since 2000. Everyone in attendance at the meeting is saying they don't want JHP to change, but JHP looks the way it does because the ATPD has been working hard every year to make it better. The ATPD put in the trail system, took out honeysuckle and dead trees, cleaned up after storms, added a fire ring, and took out barbed wire and structures that were unsafe for the public. The ATPD has successfully hosted camping at JHP for several years now. People expect playgrounds and picnic tables in ATPD parks.

Mr. Kushner stated the ATPD will continue to move forward with parts of the plan including the construction of a 12' wide hike/bike path like those in other ATPD parks. The ATPD constructs paved trails of this width in order for service vehicles to access and maintain the parks and so park visitors can safely pass each other on the trail. Some trees and grass will inevitably be affected in the process of trail construction, specifically through the ravine by the Crooked Stick entrance. The ATPD is not willing to undo the work accomplished to reach a solution with the neighbors' requests for trail placement.

Mr. Kushner said the only problem the ATPD has at JHP is with dog owners not keeping their dogs on a leash. The ATPD is dog-friendly as long as people keep their dogs on a leash. Mr. Kushner said Withrow is an example of a nature preserve in the area. Even though it is a nature preserve, the Hamilton County Park District had to put in an entrance so people could use it. Many people were unhappy about the construction of the driveway but it is an inevitable part of public park development.

Mr. Kushner said none of the ATPD parks are finished. In order to finish them all it would take many millions of dollars. JHP development will take many years to accomplish. It may not end up looking exactly like the plans as the plans are simply a guide. The goal in 1998 was to secure the property for the community.

Mr. Drake asked the Board to revisit the JHP plans since he doesn't want to see things change.

Mr. Bartholomew said the ATPD will review the JHP plans to considering changes to the property since the plans were originally adopted.

He thanked those in attendance for their time and for their interest in the ATPD.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

Lost and Found Procedure: Staff continues to work on the draft resolution to present to the Board at a future meeting.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Calendar of Events: Mr. Kushner presented a Calendar of Events of upcoming activities for review by the Board.

**FUNDRAISING AND GRANT ACTIVITY:**

Mr. Kushner stated there is nothing new to report.

**REQUESTS FOR APPROVAL:**

**Staff Changes:** Mrs. Armstrong said there were no staff changes to present.

**Resolution 2014-09 ~ 2015 Auditor's Tax Advance Request:**

Mrs. Stocker moved the Board approve **Resolution 2014-09, requesting an Advance Payment of Taxes** to be drawn on the undivided real estate tax fund.

Mr. Herking seconded the motion. Voting: Yes: Mrs. Gelter, Mr. Herking, Mr. Bartholomew, Mrs. Stocker, and Mr. Turchiano. (5); No: None. The motion carried unanimously.

**Resolution 2014-10 ~ 2014 Amended Certificate All Resources:**

Mr. Herking moved the **Board approve Resolution 2014-10, approving the final revenues and final summary budget appropriations** for 2014 as presented.

Mrs. Gelter seconded the motion. Voting: Yes: Mrs. Gelter, Mr. Herking, Mr. Bartholomew, Mrs. Stocker, and Mr. Turchiano. (5); No: None. The motion carried unanimously.

**2015 Fees and Charges:** Mr. Kushner presented a field fees analysis for the Board's review.

Mr. Herking said considering the proposed percentage increases, the increase is actually negligible.

Mr. Herking moved the Board approve the 2015 Fees and Charges with a 0% increase.

Mrs. Gelter seconded the motion. Voting: Yes: Mrs. Gelter, Mr. Herking, Mr. Bartholomew, Mrs. Stocker, and Mr. Turchiano. (5); No: None. The motion carried unanimously.

Mrs. Gelter noted the ATPD has not increased field fees in eight years, last raised in 2007.

**2015 Budget:**

After review and discussion of the revenue and appropriations proposal, Mrs. Stocker moved to:

1) Approve the 2015 budget receipts and appropriations, with the understanding that the carryover balance is currently a projection which is finalized when the books are closed for 2014. When the actual carry-over is determined at the close of the year, the difference shall be added or deleted from appropriations and receipts as necessary.

2) Authorize the Financial Officer to make the necessary adjustments and set up the 2015 appropriations, receipts, and purchase orders to pay invoices accordingly prior to the January meeting.

Mr. Herking seconded the motion. Voting: Yes: Mrs. Gelter, Mr. Herking, Mr. Bartholomew, Mrs. Stocker, and Mr. Turchiano. (5); No: None. The motion carried unanimously.

**Monthly Purchase Order Approval:** Mr. Herking moved the Board approve the following between-meeting Purchase Order:

*John Fox Marketing Consulting      ATPD Research Survey      \$ 15,000.00*

Mr. Turchiano seconded the motion. Voting: Yes: Mrs. Gelter, Mr. Herking, Mr. Bartholomew, Mrs. Stocker, and Mr. Turchiano. (5); No: None. The motion carried unanimously.

**FINANCIAL REPORTS AND AUTHORIZATION OF EXPENDITURES:**

Mr. Turchiano moved the Board approve the **November, 2014 Financial Reports and Authorize the Expenditures** as presented by Mr. Jordan.

Mr. Herking seconded the motion. Voting: Yes: Mrs. Gelter, Mr. Herking, Mr. Bartholomew, Mrs. Stocker, and Mr. Turchiano. (5); No: None. The motion carried unanimously.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Mrs. Gelter moved the Board table the minutes from the **November 18, 2014 Regular Meeting** for further review by the Board. Mr. Turchiano seconded the motion. Voting: Yes: Mrs. Gelter, Mr. Herking, Mr. Bartholomew, Mrs. Stocker, and Mr. Turchiano. (5); No: None. The motion carried unanimously.

**Public to Address the Board:** Mr. Drake said the Park Board does a great job and offered his services to conduct scientific research about JHP. He said the ATPD has not provided him with records he has requested.

Mrs. Armstrong stated she has not received any records requests from Mr. Drake.

Mr. Drake said he asked Mr. Kushner for things which Mr. Kushner did not supply.

Mr. Kushner said Mr. Drake is not being truthful and that Mr. Drake previously asked him how many people were involved in the 2009-2010 Public Input process for JHP which he provided to him in an email. The ATPD takes great pride in its transparency.

Mr. Drake requested records including minutes and meeting summaries from meetings held with residents about the plans for JHP.

Mr. Herking said the original surveys were intended to gather the public's feedback and that he is not opposed to Mr. Drake conducting his own research on the matter.

Mr. Roberto said people like himself who like JHP the way it is are not the kind of people who go to events like Greater Anderson Days.

Mr. Kushner stated the ATPD provided many forums to attract people's feedback, including ATPD newsletters, online, and with the public meeting process that was well publicized in the paper.

At 7:35 pm Mrs. Stocker moved the Board adjourn into Executive Session to discuss land acquisition and employee compensation. Mrs. Gelter seconded the motion. Voting: Yes: Mrs. Gelter, Mr. Herking, Mr. Bartholomew, Mrs. Stocker, and Mr. Turchiano. (5); No: None. The motion carried unanimously.

The Board took a ten minute break while the members of the public asked various Board Members and staff varying questions as the room emptied.

At 8:20 pm Mr. Herking moved the Board adjourn the Executive Session and re-open the regular meeting. Mr. Turchiano seconded the motion. Voting: Yes: Mrs. Gelter, Mr. Herking, Mr. Bartholomew, Mrs. Stocker, and Mr. Turchiano. (5); No: None. The motion carried unanimously.

Mrs. Stocker moved the Board approve \$52,022 to be used for salary increases and performance awards, based on the performance evaluations of the employees at the discretion of the Executive Director and furthermore, to approve a 2% increase for Mr. Kushner and a \$4,000 performance award. Mr. Turchiano seconded the motion. Voting: Yes: Mrs. Gelter, Mr. Herking, Mr. Bartholomew, Mrs. Stocker, and Mr. Turchiano. (5); No: None. The motion carried unanimously.

**Meeting Cancellation:** Mrs. Stocker moved the Board cancel the December 16, 2014 budget meeting since it is not needed. Mr. Turchiano seconded the motion. Voting: Yes: Mrs. Gelter, Mr. Herking, Mr. Bartholomew, Mrs. Stocker, and Mr. Turchiano. (5); No: None. The motion carried unanimously.

**Lonnie Bettie Award:** Mr. Kushner stated his appreciation for each of the Board members and the hours they volunteer on behalf of the community. The Board members give significantly more than they get back. He gave a brief list of items the Board has accomplished throughout the park system since Mr. Bartholomew became a Board member in 1996 and Mrs. Gelter in 1997, including properties acquired, projects accomplished, and systems set in motion that make park visitors' experiences positive. Some of the members and staff knew Lonnie Bettie, a former employee, and the dedication he had to the ATPD. The ATPD has a meaningful employee service award in Lonnie's name, honoring significant, positive contributions to the development of the ATPD.

Mr. Kushner awarded the Board members the 2014 Lonnie Bettie Award.

The Board members thanked Mr. Kushner for the honor.

Mrs. Stocker reminded Mr. Bartholomew to submit his request for re-appointment to the Trustees.

At 8:35 pm, there being no further business to be brought before this Board, Mrs. Stocker moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Herking seconded the motion. Voting: Yes: Mrs. Gelter, Mr. Herking, Mr. Bartholomew, Mrs. Stocker, and Mr. Turchiano. (5); No: None. The motion carried unanimously.

*I hereby certify that the foregoing are the minutes of the December 9, 2014 meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners, which minutes reflect the essence of the meeting and are not verbatim.*

*Emily Armstrong*  
*Board Clerk*

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Dale Bartholomew

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Nadine Gelter

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Rob Herking



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Angie Stocker

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Tom Turchiano