

**BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS**  
**November 21, 2024**

**CALL TO ORDER**

A meeting of the Cincinnati Board of Park Commissioners was held on this day at 950 Eden Park Drive. Commissioners present: President Molly North, Vice President Kick Lee, and Commissioner John Neyer. Commissioners Susan F. Castellini and Commissioner Phyllis McCallum were not present. President North called the meeting to order at 9:00 A.M.

**Acknowledgement of Public Comments**

President North acknowledged four in-person public comments about the Burnet Woods Dog Park, the Mt. Airy Bike Skills Course, and skateparks in Cincinnati. President North asked Director Jason Barron to provide an update on the Bike Skills Course. Staff indicated that the contract is moving through the City's purchasing process, with the hope that construction will begin in late spring or early summer 2025. President North also shared that Parks Staff is evaluating next steps related to rebuilding after the I-471 bridge fire, and thanked skatepark supporters for their advocacy. President North acknowledged public comments received via email regarding Parks' deer hunting program, the Burnet Woods dog park, and the 1000 Hands Playground at Sawyer Point.

**ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS**

**Approval of the October 15 Meeting Minutes**

Vice President Lee motioned to approve the meeting minutes. Commissioner Neyer seconded. The motion passed by a unanimous voice vote.

**INFORMATION/ UPDATES**

**Pickleball at Sawyer Point**

Oliver Debikey, President of Pickleball at Sawyer Point, presented a comprehensive overview of the programming, leadership structure, current activation, and potential growth of Pickleball at Sawyer Point. The Commissioners thanked Mr. Debikey for consistently gathering valuable data on the use of the courts, and congratulated him on the success of the organization.

**ACTION ITEMS**

**Bicentennial Commons Gateway Repairs**

Division Manager Joel Gross outlined needed repairs to the Bicentennial Commons Gateway at Sawyer Point, including caulking of the parapet caps and masonry tuckpointing, sealing, and cleaning. Staff recommended award of this project to Prus Construction in the amount of \$70,550, with an additional \$9,450 allowance for contingency. This work will be paid out of already received funds from the Board of Visitors. Commissioner Neyer motioned to award the work to Prus and approve the contingency to be held in reserve. Vice President Lee seconded. The motion by a unanimous voice vote.

**INFORMATION/ UPDATES**

**Planning & Design Update**

Division Manager Gross provided a status update on several projects, including the Ludlow DNR HQ service garage, Art Museum Drive landslide repair and stormwater management, International Friendship Park and Smale Lot 23 improvements, sanitary sewer challenges at

Burnet Woods, and ongoing repairs to the Smale geothermal system. Staff also provided an overview of progress on the Mt. Airy Bike Skills Course, work to determine which portions of repairs to Everybody's Treehouse can be done internally, and updates on site selection for Parks' Biochar project. Staff shared updates on community engagement efforts during the planning stages of Glenway Park and Inwood Park. Director Barron and Staff shared details on the schematic plans for Glenway Park and efforts to secure grant dollars to fund the project. Commissioners and Staff discussed the pros and cons of different lighting solutions for the park, and shared excitement for the developing project.

### **HR Update**

Human Resources Manager Derrick Gentry provided an overview of current staffing, vacancies, and active hiring, and highlighted recent promotions and new hires. Staff updated the Commissioners on progress with Parks Academy and the Safety Program, and thanked the Parks Foundation for their help providing incentives and opportunities to thank and celebrate employees. President North shared her appreciation for the Staff and Foundation's support of the people behind the work at Parks.

### **ACTION ITEMS**

#### **Foundation Grant Application / Acceptance**

Director Barron requested approval of a \$3,500 grant from the Stephenson Sisters via the Foundation, to support the inclusion of students from low-income families in our 2025 Explore Nature! programs. Commissioner Neyer motioned to approve grant application and acceptance. Vice President Lee seconded. The motion passed by a unanimous voice vote.

#### **Acceptance of QTR3 2024 In-Kind Contributions**

Director Barron requested approval to retain in-kind contributions received in QTR3 of 2024, in the amount of \$55,398.73. Commissioner Neyer motioned to approve acceptance. Vice President Lee seconded. The motion passed by a unanimous voice vote.

### **DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS**

Director Barron presented the following updates:

- Krohn Conservatory's holiday show, *Solstice Glow*, is open now and runs through January 5. Krohn's annual tree lighting ceremony takes place on December 5 at 6:00pm.
- Thank you to Parks Staff who helped with the emergency response to the November 1 I-471 bridge fire, particularly our Riverfront and Communications teams.
- Congratulations to Parks for winning the overall medal count at the City Manager's first Inflatables Olympics, where teams from different City departments competed against each other for bragging rights and a pizza party.
- Parks' annual All Staff celebration at Maple Ridge Lodge included lunch provided by the Foundation, games, and camaraderie.
- Volunteer opportunities and upcoming events in Cincinnati Parks throughout November and December

### **OPEN COMMISSIONER DISCUSSION & COMMENTS**

Commissioner Neyer confirmed the date and time for the tree lighting ceremony at Krohn Conservatory. President North wished everyone a joyous and restful Thanksgiving holiday.


**ADJOURNMENT**

Vice President Lee motioned to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Neyer seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 10:11am.

The next regular meeting date is Thursday, January 16, 2025, at 9:00am.

ATTEST:

PRESIDENT

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Rick Lee  
Vice President

DIRECTOR

  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**[External Email] Public Comment: October 15, 2024**

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**From** Bob Hyland <bobnhyland@gmail.com>  
**Date** Mon 10/14/2024 5:04 PM  
**To** Parks, Cincy <cincy.parks@cincinnati-oh.gov>

**External Email Communication**

Dear Commissioners,

Everyone—from city hall to the local media and from the communities of people around Burnet Woods to national environmental advocacy networks and experts—knows this dog park project in Burnet Woods is about powerful people in Cincinnati trying to make an example.

Everyone knows this because it so obviously fails on every other basic test of appropriate fit. It fails on accessibility. It fails on community engagement. It fails on ecological quality. It fails on fiscal prudence. It fails on ethical procurement practices. It fails on transparency and the public interest. It fails on best practices in conservation. It fails on best practices for siting of a dog park. It failed on most of the metrics your own professional staff established to help you make the right site selection. It fails to acknowledge what the community at large has asked you to prioritize for Cincinnati Parks at the system level, which is equity. It fails in decency and respect toward the historical character of an area. It fails to inspire.

So, swing your powerful bats if that's what gets you up in the morning. But, just know, people aren't most often remembered for what they get right. They're remembered for what they get wrong, and the dog park in Burnet Woods is and has been wrong in substance and process from the start because it's nothing more than a petty chip on a privileged shoulder. And EVERYONE knows it.

Godspeed,  
Bob  
Bob Hyland

P.S. please excuse any typos as this was crafted with thumbs on a phone.

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**RE: [External Email] RE: Public Comment to be included in 10/17/2024 Park Board meeting and please distribute to Director/Park Board members**

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**From** Millie Schafer <mschafer1@zoomtown.com>  
**Date** Fri 11/1/2024 4:01 PM  
**To** Parks, Cincy <Cincy.Parks@cincinnati-oh.gov>

That is NOT true. Please add that to your record too!

Millie P. Schafer, PhD  
Executive Director & Coordinator  
Cincinnati Urban Deer Advocates (CUDA)  
Cincinnati, Ohio  
513-351-9957

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**From:** Parks, Cincy [mailto:Cincy.Parks@cincinnati-oh.gov]  
**Sent:** Friday, November 1, 2024 3:01 PM  
**To:** Millie Schafer  
**Subject:** Re: [External Email] RE: Public Comment to be included in 10/17/2024 Park Board meeting and please distribute to Director/Park Board members

Hello Millie

Thank you so much for bringing this issue to our attention at Cincinnati Parks. Our Conservation Land Management team finished their investigation and found that the deer mentioned was harvested within the hunting zone, but blood and corn were dropped in the process of transporting and loading the deer. Our staff met with the hunters and reiterated the importance of proper practices for removing deer from approved zones. We apologize for this incident and thank you for reporting it.

Your public comment will be shared with the Board of Park Commissioners before the November 21 Park Board Meeting and entered into the public record.

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**From:** Millie Schafer <mschafer1@zoomtown.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 15, 2024 9:07 PM  
**To:** Parks, Cincy <cincy.parks@cincinnati-oh.gov>  
**Subject:** [External Email] RE: Public Comment to be included in 10/17/2024 Park Board meeting and please distribute to Director/Park Board members

**External Email Communication**

I pulled into Drake Park this afternoon for a relaxing walk in the park. There was no park hunting sign at the entrance or anywhere else. It is now unclear if there is hunting in Drake Park. I pulled into the 1st parking lot on the left - **a strict No Hunting area**. I was shocked at what I found.

#3852 A pile of shelled corn (commonly used by hunters to bait deer to draw them to an area) was dumped in this parking lot close to the road.

#3854 A picture clearly showing a big red area, which was blood. The blood had not yet completely turned brown so this was a relatively fresh kill..

#3858 This picture clearly shows the animal was eating the shelled corn when it was shot. (this is what we sometimes find when a hunter is shooting a deer while eating at a corn pile).

**Frankly, I was angry. I came to relax and connect to nature.** Instead I find an illegal kill in a parking lot! We have complained about illegal killing in this area before.

#2585 In Oct 2020, someone dumped a pile of apples just across from this 1st parking lot- no doubt to draw deer. I immediatly got a bucket and cleaned it all up.

#2562 In Oct 2020, directly across from this 1st parking lot, was a terrible stench in that wooded area, just behind the picnic tables.. A badly decayed young buck was found. These pictures were directly sent to the supervisor of this deer kill program (Crystal) and a request for action. Nothing was done and no one could use the picnic area there due to the stench.

In short, illegal hunting is going on in this area of Drake Park during bow hunting season. Despite reporting this, Cincinnati Parks has done nothing about this. It occurs during the early part of the season. This is your responsibility.

- 1) Check to see if a hunter reported killing a deer today or yesterday evening - and then ask where he killed it.
- 2) A park employee needs to know how to use game cameras and can easily set them up in this general area to catch the killer. If no one currently is trained to do this, I'm sure your paid UC person, Mr. Matter, can help you with this, or at least train a park employee for you.
- 3) **Why isn't this park being checked for such violations?** If this shelled corn is still there, it should be removed.

Lastly, there is no clear park signs anywhere clearly showing park users where bow hunting is occurring - the season started the last weekend in September.

Millie P. Schafer, PhD  
Executive Director & Coordinator  
Cincinnati Urban Deer Advocates (CUDA)  
Cincinnati, Ohio  
513-351-9957



**[External Email] Public comments 101524**

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**From** Martha Walker <walkermart76@yahoo.com>

**Date** Wed 10/16/2024 8:05 AM

**To** Parks, Cincy <cincy.parks@cincinnati-oh.gov>

[You don't often get email from walkermart76@yahoo.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification> ]

External Email Communication

Please do NOT approve the dog park in Burnet Woods. It will destroy trees and other parts of nature. The needs of wild urban animals (squ , insects, birds) should be prioritized over domesticated animals.

Martha Walker

Pleasant Ridge

Cincinnati resident since 1987

**[External Email] PUBLIC COMMENT NOV 2024**

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**From** Stich Bear <stichbear@gmail.com>

**Date** Tue 11/12/2024 6:36 AM

**To** Parks, Cincy <cincy.parks@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Aftab, Mayor <mayor.aftab@cincinnati-oh.gov>; CityManagerEmail <citymanager@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Kearney, Jan-Michele <jan-michele.kearney@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Parks, Victoria <victoria.parks@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Albi, Anna <anna.albi@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Cramerding, Jeff <jeff.cramerding@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Nolan, Evan <evan.nolan@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Jeffreys, Mark <mark.jeffreys@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Johnson, Scotty <scotty.johnson@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Owens, Meeka <meeka.owens@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Walsh, Seth <seth.walsh@cincinnati-oh.gov>; ilove.burnet@preserveburnetwoods.org <ilove.burnet@preserveburnetwoods.org>

**External Email Communication**

To all,

I have spent the past two years trying to amplify the voices of stakeholders and neighbors who are opposed to the change of land use in Burnet Woods, at Brookline and Jefferson, in Corryville.

The overwhelming majority of voices are opposed to a development project, but they have been ignored.

The lack of respect given to the community involved has been one of the most disheartening experiences I've ever witnessed.

It is my hope that a change in qualifications for Park Board Commissioners might prevent these abuses from happening again.

As a mother with a child who has a disability, I cannot adequately express with words how angry I feel that a project that was advertised as being "universally accessible" for citizens like her, failed to deliver, simply because of the stubbornness of our Board to admit that the site is a poor fit for the project.

Public trust is non-existent.

Park Board Reform NOW!

Shari Frost

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**[External Email] Public Comment: November 2024**

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**From** Alisander Schmid <alisanderschmid@gmail.com>

**Date** Tue 11/12/2024 2:41 PM

**To** Parks, Cincy <cincy.parks@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Aftab, Mayor <mayor.aftab@cincinnati-oh.gov>; CityManagerEmail <citymanager@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Kearney, Jan-Michele <jan-michele.kearney@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Parks, Victoria <victoria.parks@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Albi, Anna <anna.albi@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Cramerding, Jeff <jeff.cramerding@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Nolan, Evan <evan.nolan@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Jeffreys, Mark <mark.jeffreys@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Johnson, Scotty <scotty.johnson@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Owens, Meeka <meeka.owens@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Walsh, Seth <seth.walsh@cincinnati-oh.gov>; ilove.burnet@preserveburnetwoods.org <ilove.burnet@preserveburnetwoods.org>

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**External Email Communication**

To whom it may concern,

My name is Alisander Schmid and I grew up in Clifton, Cincinnati. For my entire life I have used Burnet Woods as a place to relax, unwind, enjoy nature, and use as a place of recreation. It is one of the few places in the city where nature is mostly untouched. It serves as a critical place for the migration of many bird species, as well as a home to countless other native species of plants and animals.

The approved dog park is incredibly irresponsible for many reasons. It ignores very clear evidence to suggest that it would have short and long lasting negative environmental impacts on the area which would damage this beautiful and fragile ecosystem. These damages would be caused not only by the construction of the park, but by the maintenance and use of the park, including runoff and other negative effects of the artificial surfaces and materials used as well as the waste produced by the dogs that use it.

The approval of the dog part also ignores the very clear opposition that has been voiced by actual members of the community who have grown up around the park and to whom it serves as a very important place.

I urge you to reconsider the proposal and to listen to the voices of the people within the community and the constituency who are clearly opposed to this.

This is not something that people want. Just walk your dog through the woods like a normal person.

Sincerely,

Alisander Schmid

Co-Owner of Totally Lit Events  
513-787-5715  
AlisanderSchmid@gmail.com

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**[External Email] Public Comment 2024**

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**From** Barnett, David (barnetdw) <barnetdw@ucmail.uc.edu>

**Date** Wed 11/13/2024 7:25 AM

**To** Parks, Cincy <cincy.parks@cincinnati-oh.gov>

**External Email Communication**

You have ignored my previous emails and I wonder about how many others you have ignored that are in opposition to destroying part of Burnet Woods with a dog park. Just one thing, please consider a land ethic and the needs of our planet before you bulldoze for a dog park. Burnet Woods stands as a gem, not replacing wilderness, but as a significant effort for its preservation. Examples, all but 1 state suffered recent moderate or worse droughts linked to horrendous wild fires (8 million acres burned to date and increasing); we need more Burnet Woods not more dog parks. If you have some responsibility for decisions, understand the purpose of Burnet Woods and the future of Cincinnati, please consider your leadership role towards a land ethic looking at current and future conservation practices. David Barnett

<https://www.drought.gov/current-conditions#:~:text=As%20of%20November%205%2C%202024,to%20the%20U.S.%20Drought%20Monitor>

<https://www.nifc.gov/fire-information/statistics>

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**[External Email] Public Comment: November 2024**

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**From** Anita Buck <aajbuck@gmail.com>

**Date** Tue 11/19/2024 4:23 PM

**To** Parks, Cincy <cincy.parks@cincinnati-oh.gov>

**Cc** Aftab, Mayor <mayor.aftab@cincinnati-oh.gov>; CityManagerEmail <citymanager@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Kearney, Jan-Michele <jan-michele.kearney@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Parks, Victoria <victoria.parks@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Albi, Anna <anna.albi@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Cramerding, Jeff <jeff.cramerding@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Nolan, Evan <evan.nolan@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Jeffreys, Mark <mark.jeffreys@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Johnson, Scotty <scotty.johnson@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Owens, Meeka <meeka.owens@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Walsh, Seth <seth.walsh@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Preserve Burnet Woods <ilove.burnet@preserveburnetwoods.org>

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#### External Email Communication

Dear Commissioners,

Let me just revisit a few of the ways the proposed Burnet Woods Dog Park fails the community.

- The site was decided upon without community engagement specific to this site.
- The particular site was evidently promised to a private group, even though it meets fewer of the Parks' own criteria for siting a dog park. This is why this dog park will cost close to half a million dollars -- roughly three times what a Parks playground does. A properly sited dog park does not cost anywhere near the dollars per square foot this one does.
- Despite the dog park being fundraised for as "universally accessible," ADA requirements were not taken into account in planning or design, because the first rule is to design from the parking in. Thus, **the dog park will not have any handicap accessible parking**. By this criterion it will in fact be the LEAST accessible dog park in the Cincinnati Parks.
- The dog park is being pushed through over the strong opposition of the majority of the community: the Corryville Community Council, CUFNA, the neighbors, two park volunteer groups, student groups, environmental groups. But you know that.
- The dog park is sited within 200 feet of residences. It will also be the first city dog park to abut residences, but the neighbors' objections have been ignored. It will cause additional parking issues in a neighborhood in which parking is already a headache.
- Cincinnati Parks dog parks consistently are poorly maintained and pose a problem to public health and safety. But sure, add another one.
- The dog park does not meet safety criteria for dogs. There are no separate areas for large and small dogs. There is only one gate for entrance and exit, so there will be continual danger of a bottleneck resulting in aggression. It's not even a double gate, so unleashed dogs inside the enclosure will be able to bolt out whenever another user opens the gate. The fence is only four feet high, easily jumped by large or athletic dogs.
- Dog parks are usually sited in places where non-users can avoid passing near them but this is right along the sidewalk, just inside the entrance most people on foot use to enter the park. Everyone who walks by will be able to smell it. Incidents of aggression will be witnessed by passersby. This facility will be a constant source of community discord. A half-million-dollar source of community discord and example of poor planning on the part of the Parks.

Sincerely,  
Anita Buck

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Anita Buck

writer and editor  
8 Tanglewood Lane  
Cincinnati, OH 45224  
513 257-6986 cell  
[aajbuck@gmail.com](mailto:aajbuck@gmail.com)

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**[External Email] Public Comment: (11/21/24)**

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**From** Evan Walker <cincinnati skateparkproject@gmail.com>

**Date** Wed 11/20/2024 4:59 PM

**To** Parks, Cincy <cincy.parks@cincinnati-oh.gov>

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**External Email Communication**

Board of Park Commissioners,

The unfortunate fire that destroyed the playground under I-471 has revived interest in Sawyer Point Park as an ideal location for a skatepark. This is an idea that's been discussed before, including with Cincinnati Parks staff, and it's one that could work well and benefit from the major interest in skateboarding following the 2024 Paris Olympics and most recently, our official skatepark at BLINK.

Skateparks can work well under highways, where the cover provides some shelter from heat and rain. Concrete skateparks are low maintenance, without risk of damage by fire or flood. Des Moines, Iowa has the largest skatepark in the country, situated prominently on their riverfront, [hosting major televised competitions](#). Many cities, including Boston, MA, Miami, FL, and [Birmingham, AL have opened beautiful skateparks under highways](#).

A modern concrete skatepark would be a big attraction to Sawyer Point Park, complementing recent investment in pickleball courts, skating rink, and shared use trails.

Please see the more than [1,000 signatures and comments collected here](#). Also read the article on [WVXU](#) and [City Beat here](#).

Thank you,

Evan Walker