

BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
March 19, 2026

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, Commissioner Susan Castellini, and Commissioner John Neyer. Commissioner Phyllis McCallum was not present. President North called the meeting to order at 9:01am.

Acknowledgement of Public Comments

President North acknowledged one in-person public comment regarding volunteer led conservation projects at French Park. President North also acknowledged public comments received via email regarding Burnet Woods maintenance requests and accessibility.

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS

Approval of the February 19 Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Castellini motioned to approve the February 19, 2026, meeting minutes. Vice President Lee seconded. The motion passed by a unanimous voice vote.

ACTION ITEMS

Proposed Fee Increases: Krohn Conservatory

Parks Deputy Director, Jenny Mobley, presented an analysis of the current fee structure at Krohn Conservatory, including an overview of historical fee increases, market research, and revenue projections. Deputy Director Mobley presented the Board with two options for pricing structures that would increase individual ticket and membership fees, and asked the Board to consider adopting one of the proposed fee structures prior to the start of the 2026 Butterfly Show. The Commissioners and Staff discussed the two options and agreed to move the vote forward in the March meeting. Commissioner Neyer motioned to approve the more conservative fee increase option. Vice President Lee seconded. The motion passed by a unanimous voice vote.

Owl's Nest Design and Construction Administration Services

Division Manager of Planning & Design, Travis Miller, summarized recent discussions with KZF Design, Inc., about developing their 2024 Owl's Nest Park Concept Design into Design Development, Construction Documents, Bidding & Permitting Documents, Public Bidding support, and Construction Administration Services. Parks Director, Jason Barron, shared a brief review of the Owl's Nest Concept Design.

Commissioner Neyer motioned to approve \$393,780, with an additional \$25,000 to be held in contingency, to proceed with entering into a contract with KZF for the next phase of design development. Commissioner Castellini seconded. The motion passed by a unanimous voice vote.

Sawyer Point Walkway and Concrete Curb Repair

Division Manager Miller updated the Board on repairs needed in the riverfront parks, including deterioration of aggregate walkway in the Kroger Promenade and maintenance of a nearby parking lot inlet and concrete curb. Adleta Construction quoted \$119,940 to

address all three concerns. Commissioner Castellini motioned to award the work to Adleta in the amount of \$119,940, with an additional \$5,000 to be held in contingency. Vice President Lee seconded. The motion passed by a unanimous voice vote.

INFORMATION / UPDATES

Planning & Design Update

Division Manager Miller provided updates on capital projects including Everybody's Treehouse at Mt. Airy Forest, Smale Lot 23, Parks' Sinton campus and biochar facility, and Glenway Park.

ACTION ITEMS

FY27 Parks City Funds Operating Budget

Director Barron summarized Parks proposed FY27 Operating Budget, developed by Parks Staff in collaboration with the City's Office of Budget and Evaluation. The Commissioners and Staff discussed Budget Exception Requests and Budget Reduction Exercises. The Commissioners thanked Staff for the clear presentation of sources and uses of funds. Commissioner Neyer motioned to approve the proposed FY27 Parks City Funds Operating Budget as presented. Vice President Lee seconded. The motion passed by a unanimous voice vote.

INFORMATION / UPDATES

Finance / IT Update

Division Manager of Finance & IT, Herta Fairbanks, shared an overview of the February financial reports, including where Parks stands on revenues and expenditures in the current fiscal year, as well as a summary of the Finance and IT teams' current process improvement initiatives. The Commissioners and Staff discussed the deployment of a BirdWeather station at Bettman Nature Center, its capabilities, and the potential to expand its use throughout Parks.

HR Update

Director Barron shared an update on open requisitions, job postings, and full-time vacant positions, as well as seasonal hiring recruitment and marketing efforts.

ACTION ITEMS

Amendment to Memorandum of Understanding

Director Barron shared a proposed amendment to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City of Cincinnati, The Cincinnati Parks Foundation, and the Cincinnati Board of Park Commissioners, entered into in 2018 to formally memorialize the working relationship between the three entities. The proposed amendment would allow the Foundation to donate certain services and travel expenses to the Park Board and City. Commissioner Neyer motioned to approve the amendment to the MOU as outlined. Vice President Lee seconded. The motion passed by a unanimous voice vote.

Grants of Easement

Director Barron shared two requests for easements on Park owned properties:

- 1) A request from Duke Energy Ohio, Inc. (Duke) for an easement to allow the installation and maintenance of underground utilities between Martin Drive and Columbia Parkway.

Commissioner Castellini motioned to approve the grant of easement to Duke.
Commissioner Neyer seconded. The motion passed by a unanimous voice vote.

- 2) A request from Duke for an easement to allow Duke access to utility equipment located at 2125 Elstun Road (Hamilton County Parcel No. 0010-0005-0001).

Vice President Lee motioned to approve the grant of easement to Duke.
Commissioner Castellini seconded. The motion passed by a unanimous voice vote

Grants Application / Acceptance

Director Barron presented two grant opportunities to the Board:

- 1) A grant from the Parks Foundation in an amount up to \$24,620, to be used for engineering, fabricating, and installing a steel butterfly sculpture outside of Krohn Conservatory.
- 2) A grant funded through Ohio's H2Ohio Rivers program and administered by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) in an amount up to \$905,458, to be used to improve the stream function and ecological benefit of California Woods.

Staff respectfully requested the Board approve the application for and acceptance of funds from the Cincinnati Parks Foundation and ODNR in a total amount up to \$930,078.
Commissioner Castellini motioned to approve application for and acceptance of the grants.
Commissioner Neyer seconded. The motion passed by a unanimous voice vote.

DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

Director Barron presented the following updates:

- Parks staff worked with CPD and the City Manager's office to clear out an encampment, then clean and paint the Valley Shelter at Burnet Woods
- Crews are working to clear invasive plant species from a 22-acre section of forested area along Trail D in French Park
- Staff worked with Friends of French Park and Ohio Valley Forestry Fellowship volunteers to plant 300 black willow live stakes along a creek in French Park
- Parks held its quarterly CPAC Meeting with the Parks Foundation
- Events throughout Parks in late March and early April
- Details of the upcoming memorial service for Steven L. Schuckman

ADJOURNMENT

President North adjourned the meeting at 10:34am.

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

ATTEST:

PRESIDENT



DIRECTOR



[External Email] Public Comment March 2026

From Stich Bear <stichbear@gmail.com>

Date Fri 3/13/2026 1:18 AM

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

Cc CityManagerEmail <citymanager@cincinnati-oh.gov>

External Email Communication

On this day, 12 March 1990, dozens of disabled people descended on the US Capitol and carried out a protest which became known as the Capitol Crawl. Participants were protesting against the stalling of a proposed law, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which would prohibit discrimination against disabled people.

Around 1000 other protesters watched and cheered while dozens of members of ADAPT, a group campaigning for public transit access for disabled people, abandoned their wheelchairs and mobility aids and began crawling up the steps of the building housing Congress.

It was a powerful illustration of the difficulties faced by many disabled people faced with a hostile environment which had been constructed without their needs in mind.

Michael Winter, one of the participants later reflected: "Some people may have thought it was undignified for people in wheelchairs to crawl in that manner, but I felt that it was necessary to show the country what kinds of things people with disabilities have to face on a day-to-day basis. We had to be willing to fight for what we believed in."

In the wake of the protest, Congress passed the bill and it was signed into law in July 1990.

Dear Cincinnati Park Board of Commissioners and Parks Director,

I am asking that you please prioritize accessibility in our manmade structures in our public parks ahead of unnecessary pet projects.

All Cincinnati Parks visitors should have access to our amazing spaces.

Can the public please be included in the conversation about this topic?

Sincerely,

Shari Frost

Burnet Woods Volunteer



[External Email] Public Comment 3/26 Accessibility Burnet Woods Bandstand

From Stich Bear <stichbear@gmail.com>

Date Tue 3/17/2026 8:31 AM

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

 3 attachments (11 MB)

IMG_5016.jpeg; IMG_5015.jpeg; IMG_5014.jpeg;

External Email Communication

For our Parks Director

Dear Jason Barron,

Thank you again for taking the time to walk through Burnet Woods with me to discuss accessibility some time ago.

As we are getting ready to do the necessary repairs to the Bandstand I am again asking for a nice handrail on the stairs that would match the aesthetic design of our historic Bandstand.

I would also like to get the community conversation started as to how we make a ramp access up to the performance area.

I'm enclosing some photos that I captured at a building in Northern Ky, Southshore Condominiums, because it shows that a ramp access idea that can include some nice landscaping and blend into the architecture of the structure.

With the tree down beside the bandstand it seems like the opportune time to create a plan before replacement.

Let's get the conversation with the community started.

Sincerely,

Shari Frost

Burnet Woods Volunteer





[External Email] Public Comment: 3/19/26

From Bob Hyland <bobnhyland@gmail.com>
Date Wed 3/18/2026 11:45 AM
To Parks, Cincy <cincy.parks@cincinnati-oh.gov>

External Email Communication

Dear Park Board Commissioners,

Happy Spring.

I'm writing today to kindly ask that you take steps toward making the Bandstand in Burnet Woods accessible. Stakeholders to Burnet Woods have been asking for accessibility improvements to the Bandstand for longer than most of you have served on the Park Board.

The steps to the bandstand don't even have a handrail; it says a lot about the Park Board's (lack of) commitment to accessibility that an amenity that's been in park since 1911 doesn't have a handrail for the steps required to use the amenity. Moreover, it's negligent for you to have spent what in the end was close to \$1,000,000 on a dog park, one that few use and the broader community has determined is a terrible, unqualified use of urban greenspace, while other existing amenities in the park crumble and remain inaccessible to many.

Still unrepaired are the pond coping, the stone steps, the soffit of the Bandstand, combined sewer and stormwater infrastructure disrepair, sink holes, regular litter maintenance, potholes, lake water quality issues that lead to fish kills

fishkill.png
and on and on.

We were told you could walk and chew gum at the same time. So far, you have failed to do so. Please do better and, where you don't know how to do better, just ask for help. Most people want to help each other for the common good. All you need to do is ask.

Cheers,
Bob

[External Email] Public Comment 3/19 - Burnet Woods Steps/Public Safety Issue

From Cynthia Duval <cynthia_lough@hotmail.com>

Date Wed 3/18/2026 10:13 AM

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

External Email Communication

I would like to wish this Park Board a Happy Anniversary!

As we enter into another budget cycle wherein Dir Barron will be asking Council for more money for shiny new projects, I think it's important to note that 3 years later - an entire 3-year plan cycle! - none of the stone steps in Burnet Woods are fixed.

At a Council meeting on March 6, 2023, Dir Barron stated specifically (within a 1,000 word excuse) that the steps in Burnet Woods would be fixed BEFORE the half-million dollar dog park opened. (I can provide the video.) The dog park, which opened to a resounding donor sentiment of "I want my money back.", opened 6 months ago. As we pass the THIRD ANNIVERSARY of Dir Barron's statement, the steps remain unfixed, as do several other critical infrastructure items, and a trail remains closed since 2022 for unmitigated sinkhole/sewer issues. And now the fermented dog park juice floods and runs over the sidewalk every time it rains - coating the accessibility curb cut. Isn't that amazing?! 🙄

Before you say 'we didn't know about the steps', the concerns regarding the steps were communicated to the Park Board in writing and through in-person public comment PRIOR to the 2023 City Council meeting. You know, you just don't care.

Can this Board please direct Parks to clean up, make accessible, and fix what we have as the highest priority before continuing to add expensive features that won't be maintained so that the developers on our Park Board can use parks marketing for raising rents?

While the Director makes 1,000 word excuses for not completing his obligations to Council, it can really be summed up in two: Poor Leadership.

Cynthia Duval

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From: Cynthia Duval <cynthia@preserveburnetwoods.org>

Sent: Tuesday, March 17, 2026 9:25:09 AM

To: Cynthia Duval <cynthia_lough@hotmail.com>

Subject: Fwd: [External Email] Public Comment 12/15 - Burnet Woods Steps/Public Safety Issue

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Jeffreys, Mark** <mark.jeffreys@cincinnati-oh.gov>

Date: Sat, Dec 24, 2022 at 6:26 AM

Subject: RE: [External Email] Public Comment 12/15 - Burnet Woods Steps/Public Safety Issue

To: Cynthia Duval <cynthia@preserveburnetwoods.org>

FYI – I have asked Jason Barron for the status of this replacement.

Mark

From: Cynthia Duval <cynthia@preserveburnetwoods.org>

Sent: Thursday, December 15, 2022 8:17 AM

To: Parks, Cincy <Cincy.Parks@cincinnati-oh.gov>; #COUNCIL <COUNCIL@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Barron, Jason <jason.barron@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Mobley, Jenny <Jenny.Mobley@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Aftab, Mayor <mayor.aftab@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Lisa Haglund <lisahaglund61@gmail.com>; Newberry, Patricia <PNewberry@cincinnati-gannett.com>; Gross, Joel <joel.gross@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Courtney, Crystal <Crystal.Courtney@cincinnati-oh.gov>

Subject: [External Email] Public Comment 12/15 - Burnet Woods Steps/Public Safety Issue

Some people who received this message don't often get email from cynthia@preserveburnetwoods.org. [Learn why this is important](#)

External Email Communication

Good morning -

I am writing today as a voice for the Burnet Woods Park Advisory Committee, aka BPAC.

The BPAC would like to request an emergency capital allocation for the replacement of the stone steps in Burnet Woods which connect the Bandstand to the Valley Shelter area below Trailside Nature Center. These steps are a major thoroughfare for the park and connect not only the park built infrastructure but 3 of the major park trails. The steps cannot be shut down without shutting down most of the nature trail access in the park.

For unknown reasons, assessment of the several sets of stone steps throughout Burnet Woods is not listed on the December 2nd infrastructure report despite all being in a state of desperate need. Not only are there loose or missing stones, but wear has left uneven steps and in places, a run which is not deep enough for a standard adult foot to fully step down. In one space, there is a loose edge stone stepping down onto a short run, stepping down to another loose end stone. Condition of the steps has continued to deteriorate over recent years as to move the safety of the stairs from being a part of neglected maintenance to a state of willful neglect on the part of the Park Board with their exclusion from another budget year or priority list. Had the BPAC been asked about 2023 safety priorities from the infrastructure report, the condition of the steps would have been included in the priority list, but the community was not engaged in the priority discussion for Burnet Woods again.

We would like to see these steps replaced with the quality of '100 year stone' that was used on another trail stairway 2 years ago, and would like to see a railing included as this set of steps is longer and more steep than other stairs in the park.

Photos and videos are included as further documentation in the public record of this safety concern. Additional photos and videos available on request.

~ Cynthia Duval

Member, Burnet Woods Park Advisory Committee















Outlook

[External Email] Public Comment 3/19 -Shout out on Litter!

From Cynthia Duval <cynthia_lough@hotmail.com>

Date Wed 3/18/2026 10:46 AM

To Parks, Cincy <cincy.parks@cincinnati-oh.gov>; #COUNCIL <citycouncil@cincinnati-oh.gov>

External Email Communication

I would like to share with the Park Board a shout out to UC Students for Burnet Woods! This dedicated group of students spent 2 days in early March, under their own initiative, picking up litter in Burnet Woods, and as you can see from their photos, they picked up a lot of litter!





I think there is a valid question to be asked in WHY there was so much litter in Burnet Woods?
As someone who has put decades of volunteer years into doing this exact thing in this specific

park, I can say that this was way more than one or two weeks of litter. This is months of neglect that these students are trying to remediate. Aren't we lucky that they care?

Where is Parks staff on this task for Burnet Woods? Yes, there was snow and rain, but not every day since November. Litter management is one of the most basic of tasks in caretaking our parks. Why is Parks failing at prioritizing it?

Cynthia Duval

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