

BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
December 18, 2025

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, Commissioner Phyllis McCallum, and Commissioner John Neyer. President North called the meeting to order at 9:03am.

Acknowledgement of Public Comments

President North acknowledged public comments received via email regarding Burnet Woods accessibility, conservation, and snow removal.

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS

Approval of the November 20 Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Castellini motioned to approve the November 20, 2025, meeting minutes. Vice President Lee seconded. The motion passed by a unanimous voice vote.

INFORMATION / UPDATES

Cincinnati Zoo Update

Mark Fisher, Vice President of Facilities, Planning, and Sustainability for the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden, and Zoo Director, David Jenike, shared a presentation on recent growth and capital projects at the Cincinnati Zoo, which is located on Parks-owned land. The Commissioners and Zoo staff discussed progress in the training and care of animals, and investments the Zoo has made and continues to make in the Avondale neighborhood.

Women Veterans Memorial

Kathryn Dierckes of the National Society of Colonial Dames of America presented a proposal to design and erect a memorial to women who have served in our country's armed forces. The memorial would be placed in Eden Park, near a small existing marker, with a goal of unveiling the new memorial on Veterans Day 2026. The Commissioners and Ms. Dierckes discussed concerns about time constraints and continued maintenance after installation, and agreed updates would be provided along the way.

Urban Forestry Assessment Update

Garrett Dienno, Supervisor of Urban Forestry, shared an overview of Parks' Urban Forestry program, including core functions, current staffing, and the primary funding mechanism – the annual Urban Forestry Assessment. Staff provided a detailed explanation of the front footage assessment methodology and a breakdown of the steps in the assessment process, and presented a proposed budget and work plan for 2027.

ACTION ITEM

Urban Forestry Assessment Approval

Staff respectfully requested the Board recommend to City Council a 2027 Urban Forestry front footage assessment of \$0.31 per foot – the current rate - to maintain service levels through FY28. Commissioner Castellini motioned to approve the recommendation. Commissioner Neyer seconded. The motion passed by a unanimous voice vote.

INFORMATION / UPDATES

Planning & Design Update

Director Barron shared updates on projects including Smale Lot 23, the Mt. Airy Bike Skills Course and surrounding area, the Ault Park playground, Parks' Sinton campus and biochar facility, Everybody's Treehouse in Mt. Airy, the Sawyer Point playground, Glenway Park, the Sherman Recreation Area bioswale project, stormwater projects in Mt. Airy and Eden Park, and the Alms Park pergola.

Finance / IT Update

Herta Fairbanks, Division Manager of Finance and IT, outlined recent efforts to analyze the monthly finance reports to flag areas where improvements can be made or more detailed notes could be provided. These include updates to the Target Percentages, Revenue, and Available Spend Calculation reports.

HR Update

Director Barron gave an overview of full-time staffing and HR initiatives including updates to the Parks policy manual, work to partner with Marketing to improve recruiting efforts, Parks Academy, and work to assess and strengthen Parks' culture.

Capital Budget & 3-Year Plan Presentation

Director Barron briefly outlined the City's Budget process and provided a summary of Parks' FY27 capital budget request totaling \$7,149,000. The total includes \$3,599,000 for Parks Infrastructure Rehabilitation projects, and \$3,550,000 for four additional projects – McEvoy Park Renovation, Mt. Airy Adventure Playground, Warder Nursery Renovation, and Smale Concrete and Granite Rehabilitation.

ACTION ITEM

FY27 Capital Budget Request

Staff respectfully requested the Board approve the proposed FY27 Parks Capital Budget Request as outlined. Commissioner Neyer motioned to approve the budget request. Commissioner Castellini seconded. The motion passed by a unanimous voice vote.

DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

Director Barron presented the following updates:

- Parks 3-Year Project Plan has been updated through Q4 2028
- Krohn's spring show, Moonlight Menagerie, runs January 17 – April 19
- Parks Operations team worked hard to clear early December snowfall
- Parks has two teams participating in Adopt A Class at Mt. Airy and Cheviot schools
- The Ault Park Playground officially opened Friday, December 12
- Events in Parks throughout December and early January

Director wished the Commissioners and team a safe and happy holiday season and thanked everyone for their time, efforts, guidance, and support throughout the year.

OPEN COMMISSIONER DISCUSSION & COMMENTS

Commissioner McCallum thanked volunteers and the Foundation for their partnership on the CPAC program, and shared that she will be a member of the art selection committee for the Women Veterans Memorial.

ADJOURNMENT

President North adjourned the meeting at 11:06am.

The next regular meeting date is Thursday, January 15, at 9:00am.

ATTEST:

VICE PRESIDENT

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke at the end, positioned over a horizontal line.

DIRECTOR

A handwritten signature in dark ink, featuring a large, stylized 'D' followed by several loops and a long horizontal stroke at the end, positioned over a horizontal line.

[External Email] Public Comment 12/25

From Stich Bear <stichbear@gmail.com>

Date Tue 11/25/2025 9:45 PM

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

Cc CityManagerEmail <citymanager@cincinnati-oh.gov>

External Email Communication

Cincinnati Park Commissioners,

I am once again writing to ask that you prioritize accessibility in our public spaces.

You recently added another hardscape development in Burnet Woods that fails to meet accessibility needs for our community.

As it stands, the design in the new dog park allows dogs to travel up the hillside. Move the fence down a few feet to the concrete retaining wall to prevent dogs from traveling out of reach of owners with mobility challenges.

The poor site choice makes it impossible for those with various disabilities to keep their pets safe here.

Also, remove the concrete curbs circling the trees to allow access.

I've said it many times before and I'll say it again, it was unethical to raise funds for an advertised "universally accessible" dog park and then not deliver.

It's unacceptable.

Sincerely,

Shari Frost

Burnet Woods volunteer

"He can't get inside the building
because of his wheelchair."

No. He can't get inside because
the building is not accessible.

The building has a barrier that
does not let him in. The
wheelchair is not the problem;
the building's lack of access is
the problem.

Words matter.



[External Email] Public Comment 12/25

From Stich Bear <stichbear@gmail.com>
Date Sat 11/29/2025 10:01 AM
To Parks, Cincy <cincy.parks@cincinnati-oh.gov>

External Email Communication

Dear Commissioners and Director,
When I look at the pictures of what your decision took away from the community who loves Burnet Woods, I continue to grieve.
I am certainly not alone.
Going forward, please remember that conservation and stewardship are of the utmost importance as our planet continues to warm.
Please protect and expand the remaining habitat in Burnet Woods for future generations.
What we have there is rare and valuable.
Sincerely,
Shari Frost
Burnet Woods Volunteer

Include photos of the Burnet Woods Valley entrance that is now a fenced, off-leash, dog area.







[External Email] Public Comment 12/25

From Stich Bear <stichbear@gmail.com>

Date Fri 12/5/2025 7:22 AM

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

External Email Communication

Dear Cincinnati Parks Staff,

One million "thank you's" for the most excellent and rapid snow removal in Burnet Woods after the early December snow fall!

Burnet Woods is a well traveled Park and the extra effort is very much appreciated and noticed!

Sincerely,

Shari Frost

Burnet Woods Volunteer