

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of

Meeting

GOVERNMENT FORMS & SUPPLIES 2022-2024, 5336, FORM NO. 10148

Held

*October 23*20 *25*

**Etna Township, Licking County
Etna Township Board of Trustees
Special Meeting
Thursday, October 23, 2025**

The Etna Township Board of Trustees met on Thursday, October 23, 2025, in the Etna Township Hall, 81 Liberty Street, Etna, Ohio 43018 for the purpose of conducting a special meeting. The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Gary Burkholder.

Trustees Present: Mark Evans, Gary Burkholder, Rozland McKee-Flax

Also in Attendance: Jackie Cotugno, Fiscal Officer

I. Adoption of Agenda

Moved by: Gary Burkholder to adopt the agenda as presented

Second by: Rozland McKee-Flax

Trustee Evans shared that he was not contacted to determine his availability for tonight's meeting. He questioned why the park committee was not invited to this joint meeting. Trustee Burkholder shared that the meeting was posted and the park committee was invited. Trustee McKee also confirmed this was done. Trustee Burkholder turned the meeting over to the New Community Authority (NCA) to open their meeting.

Yes: Mark Evans, Gary Burkholder, Rozland McKee-Flax

Carried 3-0

II. Opening of the New Community Authority (NCA) Board Meeting

a. Call to Order

b. Roll call: Ryan Davis, Barbara Langel, Ronald J. Sabatino, Nicole Washington, Hayley Feightner, Phillip Sabatino, John Haines

III. New Park Presentation of Concept Options with Public and Trustee Discussion (Jim Dziatkowicz with EMH&T)

Trustee Gary Burkholder introduced Jim Dziatkowicz with EMH&T who is under contract with the township to present the New Park conceptual plans and then we will have an open format for comments and questions.

Mr. Dziatkowicz expressed his appreciation for having the opportunity to present their concept options for the township. The park stretches out over 120 acres of land and in the last year or so, we've held several meetings, performed site walks, performed an analysis of the easements, infrastructure around and through the property, and conducted a community survey of which 692 responses were received. A similar format of what we are presenting today was done back in December 2024 with a 2-concept alternative. We provided some character imaging to give you an understanding of what will be happening within the township. We have provided comment sheets for those who wish to keep their comments private and post it notes for those who wish to write down and slap them on the concept boards. You will notice on the plan that we have identified some passive recreation, circulation, parking, and opportunities which are very conceptual in nature and what we will end up with in the next couple of weeks or months. The plan calls out everything we researched, analyzed, designed based on the responses we received, and incorporated it into the plan along with the costs. Cost estimates for each concept alternative are provided. The plan consists of a \$73 million aquatics component and community center in option 1, and a \$19 million for option 2. Trustee Evans shared his concern about the baseball/soccer fields being too close to the Cameron Chase subdivision, with the noise, traffic (car & pedestrian). He noted that the park should be as passive as possible with retention ponds and walking/bike trails based on the responses from the survey. He felt that with the baseball/soccer fields etc., this would restrict the park's use by others. He noted that the aquatics is the most expensive item incorporated into the park plan and maybe we should consider a

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splash pad in place of the aquatics. Is there a possibility of having the water/sewer going to the middle of the park and everything else around it.

Mr. Dziatkowicz noted that when planning the concepts the plans can be easily edited as the last step in the process of making a commitment on where the roadways, parking, paths, and water are placed in the design of the park as they are extremely critical to the success of the park. We are planning a park in a series of smaller loops that are a part of a bigger loop allowing for space to enter and leave the park. We can develop as many or few open spaces as we feel are necessary and parking, shelter, water, and restrooms are a part of that plan. The comments and responses we received from the community did provide for making any major changes to the plan presented in December 2024. Trustee Evans suggested that most of the people don't know about the park plan and further suggested that the township send out a postcard to the community residents about the plan and a meeting date for them to attend so they can see the plans for themselves. A resident responded to Trustee Evans' comment about wanting the park to be very passive, trail based, and without ball fields. She felt that by doing this it would invite trouble, and it was a necessity for the children in the community who need something to do by incorporating baseball/soccer fields. The suggested need for 120 acres of trails located in different places in the park is a waste and an invitation to the homeless, vagrants, and loiters. Trustee Evans noted that the if the expectation for the park is to be used as LEEDS and suggested that members in the community join LEEDS for a nominal fee to use the park. He further shared that he was asked about a skate park, and that people just want a place they can go with open fields. It was shared that organized play within the community is needed and readily available. Trustee Evans shared that there are other surrounding areas that provide organized play and that the township would be required to maintain all the components added to the plan. A resident further stated that the community does want these things and the township would have to maintain the park anyway.

Trustee Evans inquired about the projected revenue of the NCA on an annual basis and what type of bond would this support, if any. If the township is looking at \$19-\$73 million, is the NCA going to pay for some or all of it. It was shared that the NCA would be happy to answer Trustee Evans' question because it was addressed on another occasion. The point of this meeting is to discuss where we are today only. At the last meeting with the NCA there was an active discussion about the use of the funds for the High Point Park and the NCA board felt that the request from the township was a valid request for community improvements, and the funds were not officially earmarked for the large park. The NCA board was excited about this project. We want to be involved and bring everything together so we can see firsthand what everyone is thinking and bringing it to the table in phases. We want to make sure that the NCA board and community are on the same page. Trustee Evans again asked what the annual revenue was for the NCA and a member of the attending group shared the number of \$300-\$400 thousand. Trustee Evans noted that the plan lacked financial analysis of the park overall and what the township's budget will look like.

Trustee Burkholder noted that this was a multi-phase/year project and with the addition of the easement going through the park, construction will continue through next year. The suggestion of sending out a postcard to the community residents thus providing another opportunity for the residents to see the park concepts and provide input would help keep the project moving forward. It was commented on the great job Jim Dziatkowicz had done on the first set of park concepts. The ponds, fields, etc., can be moved around. The suggestion here was to share his experience with other parks of similar sizes and what they bring and do for the community. There are events being held at other parks of similar sizes that generate revenue such as Prairie Township who developed a park very similar to what Etna Township is considering. It was stated the 310 entrances to the park is a long road going to nowhere, whereby if you had a road entrance/exit off State Route 40 then you would eliminate a portion of a paved road and costs. It was suggested that pickleball/tennis courts and ball fields can bring in some profit with open play time and reserved (paid) time during certain hours. These activities include tournaments that can be profitable, but the

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revenue added will not pay for the park itself. Jim Dziatkowicz commented that in concepts, over 1/3 of the east side of the park is all passive recreation and the beauty of that space sets itself up for passive recreation, streams, wetlands, ponds, and trees which is the easiest part of the plan to develop. When you get to the west side of the park you pretty much disappear in space, and it sets itself up for all the other activities you see in the picture and is surrounded by trails, bike paths, and more passive recreation even in the active areas. Mr. Sabatino brought up a good point from a revenue standpoint, and the hope is that over time, we will determine what is the first and most desirable component of the park. We want people to come here and make use of the park and other services within the community. A resident shared that she was very involved with youth leagues, schools and there was a huge demand for any youth facilities on a regular basis and there could be revenue generating opportunities out there. Trustee Evans asked for the numbers showing the revenue generated from these activities and suggested that we need to connect the bike trails to Pataskala and that baseball fields only apply to a small subset of the community, and not the whole community. Maybe in the future the township can convert space into ball/soccer fields, etc. Trustee Burkholder shared that it takes years to complete this size project and that he had been involved with another community park project that served several other counties and communities.

Mr. Dziatkowicz commented on the benefit of a master plan is to have several items to submit for grants and as you evaluate the plan, check off the boxes and what's left you update the concept and resubmit for grant applications. When you look at the concept you don't have a park district with a park director, landscaping, trees, etc., as these are costs that would be considered later and it's understood that with the development of a park, expectations will come with it. Mr. Dziatkowicz suggested that as the plan develops, we will need to drill down to specific elements within the park to include the component, what it looks like, how it operates, maintained, and are their multiple uses for the component in the park.

Grove City has an open pavilion area with a flat surface, a wall, and electric equipment capabilities that are used for multiple events such as a farmers' market, craft shows, etc. With a splash pad component, you need to consider the recirculated water, no lifeguard, a higher initial cost because you must filter out the bad water. Another option is to turn the water spicket on for play and off when play is over. When you review the 2 concept options you'll see a dog park, outdoor amphitheater, and other elements that can be added. Currently in the plan you see a space for 1 pickleball court and 1 tennis court, outdoor fitness is very popular right now and multi-generational that can be added to one single area or spread throughout the park. Nature-based play is very different than it used to be, with climbing trees, swinging on an old tire, or big play equipment with less risks and hazards. This would be a great location for fireworks displays, adjacent parking in the neighborhoods, traffic recirculation, two entrances/exits for regular traffic and emergency vehicles as well.

IV. Public Comments: (limit 2 minutes per person) None.

Motion by: Gary Burkholder (7:19pm) for Etna Township Board to enter a recess to allow the NCA to complete their official meeting agenda.

Second by: Rozland McKee-Flax

Trustee Evans stated he would be leaving at this time.

Yes: Mark Evans, Gary Burkholder, Rozland McKee-Flax

Carried 3-0

Motion by: Gary Burkholder to resume the Etna Township Trustee Meeting at 7:56 p.m.

Second by: Rozland McKee-Flax

Yes: Gary Burkholder, Rozland McKee-Flax

Absent: Mark Evans

Carried 2-0

V. Announcements and Trustee Comments (limit 2 minutes per Trustee)

Next Trustee Meeting is Wednesday, November 5, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

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VI. Adjournment

Motion by: Gary Burkholder to adjourn at 7:56 p.m.

Second by: Rozland McKee-Flax


Absent: Mark Evans

Yes: Gary Burkholder, Rozland McKee-Flax

Carried 2-0

Adjourned


Gary Burkholder, President


Jackie Cotugno, Fiscal Officer

All the resolutions as presented are filed with the Fiscal Officer