



City of Gahanna

Meeting Minutes

Parks & Recreation Board

200 South Hamilton Road
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

*Jan Ross, Chair
Eric Miller, Vice Chair
Ken Shepherd, Secretary
Holly Haines
Chrissy Kaminski
Harvey McCleskey
Donna Simmons*

Harmoni Grable, Clerk

Wednesday, December 10, 2025

7:00 PM

Gahanna City Hall, Council Chambers

A. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

The Parks and Recreation Board meeting, scheduled for December 10, 2025, was called to order at 7:00 PM. The agenda was published on December 5, 2025.

B. ROLL CALL

Staff in Attendance: Zac Guthrie, Parks Manager; Harmoni Grable, Clerk.

Present: 7 - Chrissy Kaminski, Eric Miller, Donna Simmons, Jan Ross, Ken Shepherd, Harvey McCleskey and Holly Haines

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Miller, seconded by Shepherd, that the Communication be Approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Kaminski, Miller, Simmons, Ross, Shepherd, McCleskey and Haines

MM 11.12 PR Board

Attachments: [11.12 PR Board MM](#)
[11.12 PR Board MM Final](#)

D. ADDITIONS OR CORRECTIONS TO THE AGENDA

E. HEARING OF VISITORS

G. CORRESPONDENCE AND ACTIONS

F. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**H. NEW BUSINESS**

Gahanna Parks & Recreation - Friendship Park - Parks Board Presentation

Attachments: [Gahanna Parks & Recreation - Friendship Park - Parks Board Presentation.pptx](#)

Mr. Guthrie presented on the planning process for the new Friendship Park playground. He explained that the project began as part of the City's Capital Improvement Plan, with anticipated funding for 2026. Planning work started in the summer, beginning with a public survey followed by an RFP to secure qualified consultants.

Mr. Guthrie explained that multiple proposals were received in September, and a contract was awarded to Civil Solutions in partnership with DWA Recreation, representing the national playground supplier GameTime. Engagement with the consultant team began in October. Project goals include enhancing inclusivity and accessibility, recognizing that Friendship Park is one of the city's most frequently visited playgrounds and is used heavily by local school districts, the County Board of Developmental Disabilities, preschools, daycares, and summer camp programs. The intent is to elevate accessible play experiences and ensure the playground provides meaningful play opportunities for children of all abilities.

Mr. Guthrie explained that the stakeholder engagement was extensive and included input from Jessica Bennett, who is with Jeremiah's Corner, special-needs advocates, educators from the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities, the local school district, and feedback from a public survey with over 450 responses. Using this input, the project team developed three design concepts, presented publicly for the first time during the meeting.

Further community engagement is planned to gather additional feedback before the final design is complete. The goal is to proceed to construction in late winter or early spring, with completion targeted by Memorial Day. Additional grant funding is being sought to enhance the project beyond what is covered in the city's budget. Concepts presented at the meeting focused on playground equipment only, with broader site improvements still under consideration.

Mr. Guthrie noted that the concepts presented focus strictly on the

playground equipment itself. Elements such as benches, tables, and additional shade structures are not yet shown and will be incorporated later during the design phase. He emphasized that the three concepts shared are high-level representations of layout and equipment only. He also explained that the color schemes included in the concepts are placeholders. All three designs use the same temporary palette to avoid color preference influencing feedback. Final colors will be determined through continued community engagement, as they play an important role in how the playground feels and functions.

Mr. Guthrie added that thoughtful color use can enhance accessibility and creativity-for example, using different surface colors to distinguish play zones, slide areas, or swing bays. He encouraged the board to view the current colors as flexible and subject to change as the project evolves.

Mr. Guthrie continued his walkthrough of the three playground concepts, emphasizing how each design balances accessibility, play value, and creativity.

For **Concept 1**, he described the overall layout, noting that all designs include ADA-compliant ramping to ensure children using mobility devices can reach multiple play elements. This concept features ramp access to elevated slides, a transition platform that allows children to re-enter the structure without leaving the play area, and a mix of traditional elements such as monkey bars. Three swing bays offer interchangeable swing types, and the design includes inclusive pieces such as a ground-level spinner backed by research from occupational and physical therapists. He explained that play panels integrated throughout the structure would offer varied interactive features, including switch-activated components for children who use adaptive devices.

In **Concept 2**, Mr. Guthrie highlighted that this version introduces a taller main structure, reaching approximately 12 feet, with a wide double-ramp configuration that supports comfortable two-way traffic. This concept includes four swing bays and a dedicated play area for ages 2-5. A popular feature is a slide with a side transfer platform for easier access and safer queuing. Under the main deck, a “cozy nook” provides a quieter space for children who may benefit from a calmer environment or simply want to observe. Shade is incorporated throughout. Additional elements include ground-level musical components, an accessible climber with multiple ways to interact, a spinner, and a small play mound-an element that, as Mr. Guthrie noted, younger children often find just as exciting as slides.

In **Concept 3**, Mr. Guthrie explained that this design blends strong elements from the first two concepts. Swing bays are shifted to the south side to take advantage of shade from mature trees, allowing the budget to be redirected toward shade features elsewhere. This concept retains larger ramps, includes familiar slides from earlier concepts, and incorporates the unique roller slide-a feature he expressed particular enthusiasm for, as it does not currently exist elsewhere in the system. He also described integrated scavenger-hunt elements featuring woodland creatures, communication panels placed at multiple levels, including ground level, and plans to distribute smaller symbols and Braille cues throughout the playground instead of relying on a single communication board. He noted this approach would give families more seamless ways to navigate and engage.

Concept 3 also includes the 2-5 play section with mounds and musical elements spaced farther apart for better accessibility.

Mr. Guthrie closed by outlining the next steps: continued community engagement over the next several weeks, refinement of model concepts in January, progression into design shortly thereafter, and anticipated clarity on grant funding and construction timelines by February.

Mr. Miller asked if any of the options had climbing walls and ziplines available. Mr. Guthrie replied that the team has received community feedback requesting more climbing elements within the playground designs. He explained that they are actively exploring ways to expand climbing features, and this was a key topic in their internal discussions the previous day.

At the current funding level, the playground concepts shown represent what can be fully supported by the existing budget. However, Mr. Guthrie noted that additional grant funding-expected to be announced in early February-could allow the team to enhance the project further. Their strategy is to move forward with a base design they know they can afford, while preparing optional add-ons that may be incorporated if extra funds become available. Mr. Guthrie stated that zip lines are unlikely to be part of the final design, although the team did consider it early in the process. A zip line requires a substantial amount of space-more than the site comfortably allows. He also noted that, in an accessible playground, surfacing is a major factor. The type of surface required to maintain accessibility significantly increases cost, often accounting for one-third to half of the total project expenses. This makes large-footprint features like a zip line even more challenging to accommodate within current budget

and space limitations.

Mr. Miller asked if the surface would be made out of chipped rubber or a solid surface. Mr. Guthrie said it will be a poured-in-place surface.

Mr. Miller was happy to see an abundance of shade, for both kids and adults, and asked if the playground would be similar in size to the playground there now. Mr. Guthrie replied that the footprint is slightly larger. Mr. Miller then asked if, within the 2-5 year old play area, an adult could fit down the slide as well. Mr. Guthrie added that the team has heard feedback about large, complex climbing structures-those with extensive nets and ropes-and how they can be difficult for some caregivers or children to navigate. He noted that one advantage of the ramped designs being proposed is that they allow parents, grandparents, or caregivers to reach elevated areas alongside their children, ensuring better access for everyone.

Mr. Shepherd asked about the age range the playground concepts were designed for. Mr. Guthrie clarified that the designated ages 2-5 play areas shown in Concepts 2 and 3 are clearly defined, while the age range for the larger main structures has not yet been finalized. Final age labeling depends on national safety standards and the specific equipment selected during the design phase. He anticipates the larger play structures will likely be classified as ages 2-12 once complete.

He added that the playground will include required signage indicating the appropriate age ranges for each section, ensuring families clearly understand which equipment is intended for which age group. Mrs. Simmons asked if all three concepts were similar in price. Mr. Guthrie noted that Concept 3 is currently the most fully priced and vetted of the three designs. Because it integrates major elements from Concepts 1 and 2, the project team was able to obtain a more detailed cost estimate for it. While the other two concepts are not yet priced to the same level of detail, he emphasized that they are not expected to cost more than Concept 3.

As the concepts continue to evolve, more precise pricing will be developed. Mr. Guthrie made clear that the team will only advance a design that fits within the established project budget. Mrs. Simmons asked how much was requested for the budget? Mr. Guthrie replied that \$750,000 is the total budget requested. Mr. Miller asked if benches were part of the design plan. Mr. Guthrie added that amenities such as benches, seating, and fencing will be included as part of the full site design, even though they are not shown in the current concept renderings. He emphasized that fencing, in particular, is an important

feature for a playground of this nature. These elements will be incorporated as the team moves into the final design phase. Mrs. Ross asked whether the estimated cost for Concept 3 fits within the current city budget on its own, or if that estimate assumes the receipt of additional grant funding. Mr. Guthrie clarified that the project is still in the concept phase, so precise costs are not yet finalized. Once the team moves into the design phase, they will be able to provide exact pricing for all elements, including playground surfacing, individual equipment pieces, fencing, and benches. He emphasized that these details will be fully accounted for as the design progresses.

Mrs. Ross asked if there were a lot of options for grant funding. Mr. Guthrie expressed optimism about additional funding opportunities. He noted that GameTime, the national playground company involved in the project, offers a grant program. The team plans to submit a grant application in January to help offset the cost of the main play structure. Mrs. Ross asked if CJB still did that as well. Mr. Guthrie clarified that the grant is not through the companies currently working on the playground, but through a separate playground company partnership. The team plans to submit a full match grant application in January once the final design is complete.

He explained that the grant would specifically help offset the cost of the main playground structure, including the 12-foot-tall centerpiece. If awarded, the grant would match the cost of this structure, allowing the team to add additional play features and value to the playground beyond the base design. Mrs. Ross asked what date the playground design must be finalized to stay on track with the current construction and project timeline. Mr. Guthrie assured the board that the project timeline is on track. He noted that the playground companies involved are fully aware of the schedule and have been highly responsive, dedicating significant effort-especially over the past 72 hours-to refine and develop the playground concepts.

He emphasized that the team has no current concerns about meeting the timeline. Mr. Guthrie added that the last thing the team would do is remove the existing playground without having the new one ready for summer use. The goal remains to have the new playground constructed and operational by spring, ensuring the park is fully functional for the summer season and summer camps.

Mr. Miller asked whether the playground project must go through a competitive bidding process. Mr. Guthrie explained that the playground

project is not put out for a traditional public bid. Instead, it is conducted through a national purchasing partnership called Omnia, in which the playground company participates. Through this program, companies must submit pricing and costs for the work, ensuring competitive and transparent pricing. He noted that this is a commonly used approach in the parks and recreation industry for playground construction and other similar projects. Mr. Miller asked if the Blue Jackets were considered for this project. Mr. Guthrie stated that they were a separate company, so not at this time.

Mrs. Haines shared that she particularly appreciated Concepts 2 and 3, highlighting their use of color cues to assist individuals with low vision and the inclusion of auditory play features, which she noted are reminiscent of the inclusive Blended Woods Park.

Mrs. Haines then asked a clarifying question regarding accessibility: in Concept 1, wheelchair users can access certain elevated areas but not the top-she inquired whether the same level of access applies in Concepts 2 and 3. Mr. Guthrie confirmed that Concepts 2 and 3 include similar accessibility features to Concept 1. While the ramps in these designs stop at a certain height due to budget constraints, there is a transition area that allows a child to crawl or use handholds to reach the top of the tower.

He explained that this tower is a new design from the playground company and, although it is not fully ADA-accessible or fully inclusive, it includes built-in features to make it more accessible and easier to navigate for children with different abilities. Mr. Miller asked what would come of the old playground equipment. Mr. Guthrie explained that it was at the end of its lifecycle and would be disposed of.

Mrs. Ferrell emphasized the complexity and expertise involved in designing a playground, noting that it is far more than simply selecting equipment from a catalog. She explained that each park presents unique challenges and user groups, requiring a thoughtful process led by certified playground safety experts to ensure both safety and usability.

Mrs. Ferrell highlighted the importance of community engagement, encouraging board members and residents to participate so that the playground reflects local needs and fosters a sense of pride and ownership. Mrs. Ferrell also noted that the current concepts were developed based on survey feedback and expert input, and additional follow-up will occur to test these concepts with the community before moving to detailed design.

Mrs. Ferrell thanked Mr. Guthrie for spearheading the process,

acknowledged the aggressive and intentional project timeline, and expressed confidence that the result will be a high-quality, well-considered playground. Finally, she invited board members and community members to provide ongoing feedback and share ideas to further enhance the project.

Mr. Miller asked if, in the year 2026, the parking lot at Friendship Park would be paved. Mrs. Ferrell explained that while the capital improvement plan (CIP) outlines long-term projects, the annual budget requests can differ based on system-wide needs. As a result, the Friendship Park parking lot is not scheduled to be paved in 2026. Mrs. Kaminski asked if the campers were surveyed for any additional needs when they are at camp all day? Mr. Guthrie confirmed that campers were included in the survey distribution and that follow-up surveys would be sent to those who provided email addresses. He added that the camp supervisor and coordinator are actively involved in developing the survey questions to ensure they gather meaningful feedback from multiple perspectives.

I. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

PR Directors Report November 2025

Attachments: [PR Directors Report November 2025](#)

Mrs. Ferrell highlighted several key points in her director's report. She noted that staff have been actively involved in snow removal over recent weeks, including clearing trails, parking lots, Creekside Plaza, and ensuring accessibility throughout the system. She recognized the team's efforts and dedication, particularly during challenging weather conditions. Mrs. Ferrell also praised the staff, led by Mr. Guthrie, for their work on the holiday lights display, emphasizing the creativity, planning, and continuous improvement that make the event impressive each year. Additionally, Mrs. Ferrell discussed the increased focus on staff development during this time of year, as it allows the team to evaluate processes and invest in professional growth. She concluded by sharing that the department would hold its annual staff retreat, featuring a leadership and culture-focused speaker, to help staff reset, recharge, and prepare for the coming year.

Mrs. Ross asked if the annual holiday lighting contest would be occurring this year because of the time commitment. Mrs. Ferrell explained that

participation was low in past years and that there was also a transition involved, prompting staff to evaluate how time and resources were being used.

Mr. McCleskey congratulated staff on receiving second place for the mountain bike trail and asked whether the trails or improvements were being compared on an equal, "apples-to-apples" basis. Mrs. Ferrell explained that the award was through the Ohio Parks and Recreation Association and that the category was limited to projects with budgets up to \$500,000. There were 12 entries in the category, which included a wide range of parks and recreation projects, and the winning project was a nature trail. Mr. Guthrie explained it was an interpretive Braille trail that was done by the Preservation Parks of Delaware County. Mrs. Ferrell noted that the awards included a variety of project types from across the state of Ohio and that the competition has become increasingly challenging. She added that the department has consistently performed well over multiple years and expressed appreciation for the continued recognition, noting they were only one or two points away from a higher placement.

J. COMMITTEE REPORTS

i. Bicycle & Trail Advisory Committee (BTAC)

ii. Gahanna Active Senior Advisory Committee (GASAC)

Mr. Miller noted a meeting to be scheduled in the first quarter of the year. The date and time will be shared by the BTAC once a date is finalized.

12.16.25 GASAC Minutes

Attachments: [12.16.25 GASAC Minutes](#)

iii. Natural Resources Advisory Committee (NRAC)

K. POLL MEMBERS FOR COMMENT

L. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 7:41 PM.