

(Continued from previous page)

Capital Improvements

Fifty-seven percent (57%) of the funding will be used for capital improvements. The park district will add additional parks and trails throughout Wayne County. Potential partners have been identified to work alongside. These partners include, but are not limited to:

Western Reserve Land Conservancy, Kister Mill—

This historic water-powered mill property located in southern Wayne County will be donated to the park district. The park district will continue to



improve the property, make it fully operational, and provide public access to the site. Programs will be developed and conducted to share the story of

this historic site. The Conservancy recognizes that, with funding, the park district would be able to operate the site for tours and educational programs.

Rails to Trails of Wayne County —

Existing trails including portions of the Heartland Trail and the County Line Trail will be donated to the park district. The park district will care for the trails and will add amenities such as restrooms, interpretive panels, and small picnic sites for trail users.

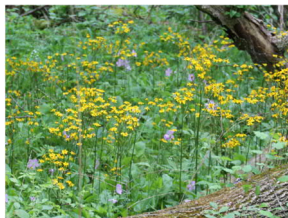
The Trust for Public Land —

The park district will work with the Trust in planning for the further development of trails and park sites in Wayne County. The Trust assists with identifying potential grants to match local funding.

These partnerships are in keeping with the *Wayne Onward* plan goals.

Construction of New Parks

The park district owns approximately 83 acres of wooded land in northern Wayne County. Western Reserve Land Conservancy owns an additional 43 acres of adjoining land. The



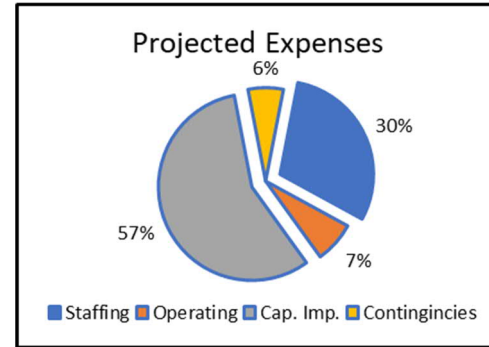
Conservancy will donate its land to the park

district and a new park will be designed and constructed.

Rails to Trails of Wayne County owns approximately 100 acres of land in northeast Wayne County. With funding available, this land will be donated to the park district and a new park will be designed and constructed.

A privately owned park in Dalton could be donated to the park district after passage of a levy. The eastern Wayne County park will be operated and improved in the coming years.

Two regional trails traverse Wayne County. The Ohio to Erie Trail and the Great American Trail pass through the county using existing trails and roads. The park district will collaborate with partners and *willing landowners* to add off-road trails in key areas of the county. (Wayne County currently has the most on-road use of the Ohio to Erie Trail in the state.)



Land Acquisition

Land acquisition can be a “hot button” issue. The park district seeks opportunities to preserve lands with important natural resources such as wetlands, woodlands, and stream corridors. In addition to the local funding provided by the proposed park levy, the park district will seek grant opportunities to assist with land acquisition opportunities.

The park district does not seek to acquire farmlands. Agriculture is an important part of Wayne County’s heritage. The park district will work only with willing donors and sellers to preserve natural-resource rich lands. While the district has the power of eminent domain, *it pledges to not use that power to acquire land. In fact, most grant programs that assist with land acquisition will not fund projects that involve the use of eminent domain.*

The Cost

This strategic plan has been based on the passage of an operating levy of 1/2 (0.5) mill for ten years. The additional cost to property owners is small, but the levy would generate the funds needed to have an immediate positive impact on Wayne County’s quality of life. For each \$100,000 in value, the levy would cost the property owner \$18 per year or \$1.42 per month.

According to Rocket Mortgage, the median value of home sales as of January 2024 in Wayne County is \$219,000. The cost of the levy would be \$37.37 per year, \$3.11 per month, or eleven cents per day.

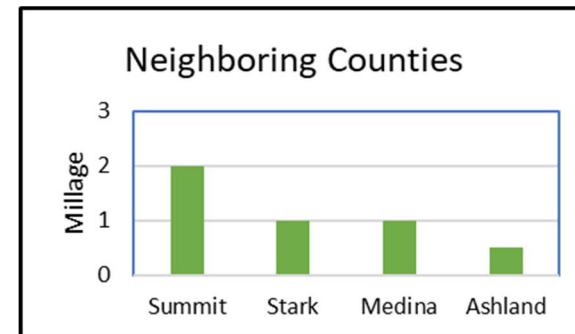
While there are grant programs available to assist the park district with capital improvements, most programs require a local match to receive funding. The park district will be able to multiply local tax dollars with grant funding. Further, landowners have approached the park district with potential donations or bargain sale of properties to create new park sites. Lacking a source of funds, the park district has not been able to accept these generous offers.

The Board of Park Commissioners pledges to spend the funds with a focus on the maximum benefit to the community. As a political subdivision of the state of Ohio, the park district will be audited by the State of Ohio to ensure proper handling of tax dollars.

Neighboring Counties

How do we compare?

The counties bordering Wayne County shown below have active park districts supported by a tax levy. The chart below shows the level of support for these park districts.



06/05/2024

A Path Forward



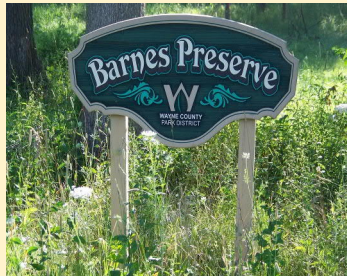
A Message from Your Board of Park Commissioners

On July 17, 1991, Wayne County Commissioners passed a resolution seeking a hearing before Wayne County Probate Court on the matter of creating a park district under Section 1545.02 of the Ohio Revised Code to include all of Wayne County.

At the hearing for the creation of the park district, exhibits supporting the creation of the park district were entered into the court record. All of the evidence presented to the court supported the creation of the district. At the conclusion of the hearing, Judge Bailey issued a court order creating the Wayne County Park District on August 20, 1991.

Since no funding was available to support the operation of the district, there were no projects undertaken in the early years of the park district's existence.

In 1999, Wayne County Commissioners leased seventy-six acres of unused land from the County Home to the park district. Challenged by a lack of funds, the land



remained unused until 2007 when the park commissioners set about creating a park on the land utilizing volunteers, grants, and donations. After nine years of challenging work, the park district was able to open Barnes Preserve to the public, twenty-five years after the creation of the park district. Today, this park provides Wayne County residents with the opportunity to explore nature through its accessible trail

which passes through a variety of native habitats. A picnic shelter provides opportunities for gatherings and meetings.



To continue progress and open more parks in Wayne County, a dedicated source of funding is needed for the park district. Such funding will enable the park district to accept additional donations of land, work with other agencies in the county, and obtain grant funding to improve parks and trails. It will permit the park district to operate areas with historic significance.

This strategic plan outlines the investment needed to permit the park district to become a fully operational organization. The plan charts the course of the park district based on the passage of a small 1/2 mill (0.5) ten-year property tax levy to fund the district. The information that follows describe how that funding will be utilized. If you have questions on any of the information provided, please do not hesitate to contact the Board of Park Commissioners via email at info@waynecountyparkdistrict.org. Your questions are welcomed.

Denny Jordan, Carole Van Pelt, Joe Reed, Dave Armstrong, and Phil Grimm

Why Now?

In 2019, Wayne County Commissioners, Wayne County Planning Department and Wayne Onward Steering Committee presented ideas, plans, and recommendations for the future of Wayne County. This document, *Wayne Onward*, incorporated input from diverse sources including the public, county and local government staff, and Steering Committee members. The result was a set of recommendations for the future that will allow the county to continue to manage growth and change while retaining what makes it unique and special.

From 1976 to the 2019, Wayne County population increased 23.2% while the population of Ohio increased just 8.8% (according to the U.S. Census Bureau). Economic development and

Mission

Wayne County Park District seeks to create a system of parks and trails that preserves the rural character and natural resources of the county and protects unique historical places for the benefit of both current and future residents.

expansion in the county and adjoining areas points toward further residential growth in the coming years.

The 2019 Comprehensive Plan Update recognizes that new conditions and trends, as well as current planning issues, require new strategies to maximize benefits for the community.

The plan includes goals that focus on the need for an active park district in the county. (*Priority Actions)

E.1.2* Support dedicated funding for the Wayne County Park District, which may include public funding and require a coordinated strategy between relevant organizations.

B.3.3 Ensure sufficient funding to protect



existing natural resources (including levy campaign), which may require a coordinated strategy between relevant organizations.

Funding Will Support . . .

Startup Costs

Since the park district does not currently have any staffing, there are costs associated with the organization becoming fully operational. These include, but are not limited to:

Staffing – Just thirty percent (30%) of the funds will be used for staffing costs. A director, an administrative assistant, maintenance staff, natural resource staff, and programming staff will be added. Staff will be added gradually. At the end of the ten-year period, it is projected that the staff will grow to nine full-time and four part-time positions. The addition of new parks and trail management activities will drive the staffing needs.

Operating Space – With the beginning of operations, the park district will require space to house its operations. Office space and maintenance operations space (workshop, tool storage, equipment storage, etc.) will need to be established.

Equipment – The park district's only current park is maintained by volunteers using their own equipment. Vehicles, maintenance equipment, and office equipment will be needed as the district begins its operations.

Operating Costs

As the park district begins its operation and opens new parks and trails, seven percent (7%) will be used for operational costs in the strategic plan including, but not limited to:

Supplies – Expendable supplies for office operations, maintenance operations, and programs.

Materials – Items used for the construction of improvements.

Equipment – Ongoing equipment requirements like hand tools, replacement mowers, computers and power tools.

Contracted services – Expenses such as electric service, phone service, equipment repairs, planning consultants to assist park staff with park improvements, legal services, etc.

Other costs – There are costs associated with operations not covered under the categories above such as insurance, taxes, etc.

Nature Education

A portion of the staffing costs will relate to the addition of programming staff to conduct nature and historic education programs. With the addition of Kister Mill, staff will be needed to develop curriculum that will be used to interpret this historic site for the public as well as school students from the community.

Nature education programs will be developed for all ages. Other programs centered around outdoor activities to encourage healthy living in nature will be offered.



Spending time in nature can improve your mental health, cognition, mood and well-being.

American Psychological Association