

## GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Tuesday, November 14, 2023

### MEETING MINUTES

**CALL TO ORDER:** 6:31 PM

**ROLL CALL:** Mike Lyons, Holly Price, Dave Wehner

Also in attendance: Board Chair Anita Gantner, Park Director John Piepsny, and about 5 other attendees

### **WORK SESSION:**

#### **MOU between Friends of Richfield Heritage Preserve and Richfield Joint Recreation District**

Mr. Lyons asked the committee if they should start over on the MOU or revise the existing document. Mr. Wehner cited the "50/50 rule": if more than 50% of a document will be revised, then the document should be started over.

Mr. Lyons said that some research has been done on other MOUs. A discussion of these followed, including goals and objectives.

Ms. Price commented that the original condition in which there was no park director is heavily reflected in the original document. She stated that the board needs to better understand the working parts of the park and what needs to be done so RJRD knows where to ask for help.

Mr. Wehner mentioned that the strategic plan is now in place.

Ms. Price asked what the timeframe of the agreement is.

Mr. Lyons asked if the committee could frame the relationship as encompassing goals for a long-term agreement. He agreed with creating an agreement that lists park goals. Mr. Lyons also stated that the current agreement does not provide a way to resolve issues, and it has not been used to resolve issues in the past.

Ms. Price asked where the aspiration portion fits. The document outlines history and background information. However, the park also has the volunteer guidebook and the Friends letters of intent.

Mr. Wehner stated that the RJRD gives direction within the park and asked why the document needs to restate that the supporting group is for the benefit of the park. RJRD empowers the park director to give direction.

Mr. Lyons reminded the committee that the Friends group has assets and resources. One aspect of the MOU that has to be covered is direction and control. Another aspect is the resources that the park district gains from the relationship. Commitment to aid the purpose of the park is part of the agreement. RJRD must have commitment to the Friends group so

they feel comfortable committing resources. RJRD and Friends need to come to an agreement on this. There should be mutual benefit from the relationship.

Mr. Lyons stated that the next step is to begin writing a simplified agreement. The committee may use the National Park version as a starting point.

Ms. Price asked if an initial conversation with the Friends is important before creating the draft. Mr. Lyons responded that the committee needs to begin the document without adding substance yet.

Mr. Piepsny said that RJRD currently has five agreements: Friends of RHP, Oviatt House Inc., Summit County Ohio Horseman's Council, Buckeye Trail, and Baldwin Wallace University.

Mr. Lyons asked the Friends members present for comments. Friends members present included Rob Richardson (treasurer), Gary LaGuardia (advisory board member), Corey Ringle (president), and Bill Smith (advisory board member, not Friends member).

Ms. Ringle said that a little bit of discussion has been had among the Friends. As a group they like the Letter of Interest [used before the current Letter of Intent] because it gets an initial approval before investing a lot of resources into a project.

Mr. Smith commented that the Letter of Interest helped identify a project and frame the scope of that project.

Ms. Ringle offered three examples. 1) The mill project started with a letter of interest in the mill, which allowed the Friends to obtain a grant for design documents, which cost around \$30,000. This allowed completion of the work. 2) The invasive plant removal and native plant restoration began with a letter of interest, followed by a work plan drafted in cooperation with the Park Operations Committee. 3) At Amity House, the Friends had a letter of interest for stabilization but not for the restoration. For that project they worked directly with John Piepsny. Mr. Richardson mentioned that this was due to the time constraint of this project.

Ms. Ringle said that Friends would like a review of what worked well and what didn't on the Amity project.

Ms. Gantner reminded the board that Amity House was an RJRD project; the Mill restoration was a Friends initiative.

Mr. Lyons reiterated that he is in favor of starting fresh on the agreement. Ms. Ringle said that she was surprised to hear a resident ask why so much time was spent on this agreement. She feels that the current MOU has worked pretty well for quite a while.

Mr. Lyons responded that this provides the opportunity to have conversations. The effort could simplify the agreement and make it easier to read. The issue needs further discussion. Mr. Lyons requested that the Friends of RHP should think about what sort of commitments would make their group comfortable and what assets the Friends can commit to the park. He said that the committee can consider the Friends' input when creating the new document.



Ms. Ringle said that she will ask the Friends board to define the Friends' goals. She mentioned that the Champion program could be polished a bit. Ms. Ringle said that their most successful years have been when they were collaborating with the RJRD board, and it helps to know what to expect.

Mr. Lyons asked Friends to make a checklist of things to consider in the agreement. The terms will be subject to what RJRD can accept. He said that the Governance Committee will begin working on a draft. They will need to synthesize the various documents into something agreeable to the board.

#### **Comments from the floor**

Gary LaGuardia stated that he keeps hearing the term "control" and reminded the committee that they should remember that they are working with volunteers. He said that there has been a negative attitude toward some groups of volunteers and that RJRD needs to incentivize volunteers to continue to work. Mr. Lyons observed that some volunteers have a negative attitude toward the board as well.

Nancy Sandlin stated that she has received calls saying that the volunteers should be treated better and said that there is always room for improvement. She said that the board and volunteers need to create a positive approach and work together.

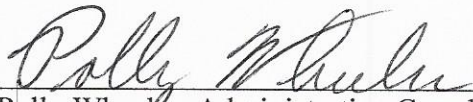
#### **REGULAR MEETING**

##### **Approval of Minutes**

The August 23 minutes will be revised and approved at the next meeting.

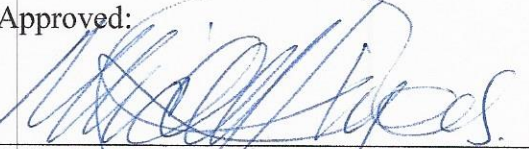
**ADJOURNMENT:** Mr. Wehner moved to adjourn and Ms. Price seconded. Voice vote was unanimous. Meeting was adjourned at 7:18 p.m.

Submitted By:



Polly Wheeler, Administrative Coordinator

Approved:



Mike Lyons, Governance Committee chair



Governance Committee member

