

**MASSILLON RECREATION BOARD
WORK SESSION MEETING MINUTES
January 14, 2026 – 5:30 pm**

The Massillon Recreation Board met in a Work Session on January 14, 2026 at 5:30 p.m.

Board Members:

Present: T.R. Rivera, Ted Schartiger, Mark Hickey, Caylor Colly

Others Present: Mayor Jamie Slutz, Alex Pitts, Ted Herncane

Staff Members:

Present: Steve Pedro, Tiana Spencer, Carrie Lowry, Joe Pape

Topics of Discussion

1. Reservoir Park Phase II plans and funding options

Steve Pedro: If you look at the second page after the agenda, this is broken down with our carryover for the golf course and parks and rec, the 1234 fund and also the capital improvement fund. Right now, our total with the capital improvement is \$3,358,352.38. The reservoir pond project, right now, the preliminary estimate is \$1,800,000. We think that is a pretty good number. We have some proposed funding sources. Parks & Rec, total of \$500,000 for the two accounts, Golf Course \$300,000. We have a donation that may or may not happen of \$100,000 from a local resident. We are still waiting to see if we get anything from the Federal Budget, the \$250,000. Originally, that was the full price a year ago and before the shutdown and all that occurred, things changed with the federal budget. With that being said, if we were to get all of that, we would have \$1,150,000. Depending on the total funding available, we could finance up to the remaining amount needed to complete the project. The final design cost which is the first thing we need to do with EDG is \$163,000. We want to move forward with that for next week's meeting. We'd like to appropriate, I put \$200,000, sometimes things cost a little more, but we can do \$163,000 if we want to stand firm with that from that 1433 account at the meeting next week, if the board approves this. And then once it is received, we can bid the project out and between now and then, I think we can start looking at getting pre-approved for the remainder. I put up to \$1,000,000 depending on how much the contributions end up being. With that being said, the floor is open. The last page is the one I gave you from First

Commonwealth Bank. Again, as it states on the back, this is not a commitment to borrow. This is just an estimate on the \$1,800,000 if we were to do that. I think those numbers will obviously change for the monthly cost. It will end up be a yearly cost.

Mr. Hickey: I'm sorry. You lost me there. You have to pay it yearly?

Steve Pedro: Whatever the payment is. If it's a monthly or yearly, depending. I talked to the auditor's office today and if it's a bond, if we could go that way, and she wasn't sure, there would be like two payments a year like we do now. If it's a loan, we would probably make a monthly payment, more than likely. Unless there are other arrangements whether it is quarterly or monthly, twice a year, then those arrangements would be made. With the one that we have, there is no penalty for early payoff if we get to a point. As you all know in 2031, all of the debt that we have currently is paid off. The last payment will be December 2031 for the golf course and the rec center.

Mr. Rivera: If we go with a five-year loan, that would paid off in 2031 also

Steve Pedro: Yes, we could have everything paid, if we were able to do that, depending on the costs. That's not out of the question either.

Mr. Hickey: Are you looking to borrow \$1,000,000 from First Commonwealth and then put \$800,000.00 from the carryover?

Steve Pedro: Yes, not necessarily First Commonwealth. That's just one example we have.

Mr. Hickey: Okay

Steve Pedro: Whoever that may be. At this point, unless we get that \$100,000.00 donation, and then if we are lucky to get anything from the federal budget,

Mr. Rivera: If we get rolling with this. If we approve this, if we go after a loan, this and that, can we still acquire federal money for this project?

Alex Pitts: Yes

Mr. Rivera: Okay

Alex Pitts: A lot of times if you do, I know this works with the state, if you do have a loan involved, you actually have (inaudible) towards getting additional (inaudible), so penalty helps your cause

Mr. Rivera: Okay

Mr. Hickey: Alex, let me ask you. Would it be better to borrow less or borrow more, if you got a federal fund/grant?

Alex Pitts: I can't remember what that limit is. I just know that a lot of times that I apply for grants that there is a (inaudible) that asks if there is a loan involved. If you have a loan involved, you get

extra points and if you don't, you don't. Usually we just don't so we never get those extra points, unfortunately, but in this case, you would.

Mr. Hickey: The reason I asked that. If we would borrow less, and you would get a grant for, let's say \$900,000 and we've already put more than \$900,000 on it, that would be money that we lost. In the other instance, if we didn't borrow less and we got a grant, we could always take money out of the cash carryover to make up the difference. Let's say it's \$1,800,000. We borrow \$1,000,000 and \$800,000. Let's say we get a grant for \$900,000, we could go to the cash carryover and take the other \$100,000 and be done with the whole thing, based on that scenario. That's why I asked that question. I don't know if it is better to borrow more or less. That's what I'm asking. If you get the grant.

Alex Pitts: I completely understand. I guess it all depends on whether or not you get the grant or not

Mr. Hickey: Right

Alex Pitts: You never know, until you know, honestly. It's kind of hard to

Mr. Hickey: Well, how hard is it to get these grants? Let's try that

Alex Pitts: Previously, we applied for it and we were originally going to get \$1,200,000. In this case, we applied for it again, hoping to get the \$250,000. I say that because neither of the requests that we sent in were for the full amount that we wanted anyway. I think the first go around when we were going to get the \$1,200,000 I think we applied for \$1,500,000 or \$1,800,000. I can't remember. That was before we had a preliminary plan and everything in place. We had an idea of what we wanted to do but it wasn't as detailed as we have it now. The second time I believe we applied for \$2,100,000, correct me if I'm wrong but I believe it was \$2,100,000 or \$2,250,000 because they took \$2,000,000 off of what we asked for. They said they were going to give us \$250,000 instead of \$2,250,000. The original project was \$2,800,000. We never (inaudible) and that's how we got to \$1,800,000.

Ted Herncane: I think we need to separate grants from this federal budget discussion. Alex secured grants from the state of Ohio for phase I.

Alex Pitts: Yes

Ted Herncane: The \$250,000, I don't know if I would consider it a grant as we all know what grants are. This is community project funded which are specific legislative appropriations in the federal budget that each member of congress submits 10 or 12-15. We were very fortunate that Congresswoman Sykes submitted these requests. I don't know that I would call them a grant. I would call them...remember earmarks, that's what this is. It just has a different name. When congress did away with earmarks, it brought a lot of money back to Massillon in Ralph Regula's day. They did away with that and then came up with a community project funding which is basically the same thing where communities or entities submit requests through their congressional representative and it goes through the, almost like making sausage process to the federal budget. Now the federal budget is operating on a continuing resolution through the end of this month. You all read about that back in the fall when congress didn't pass the budget. Our request is sitting in the fiscal year 2026 federal budget which is yet to be passed. When continuing

resolution is over and congress does get back to passing the budget, that's where that amount sits. We don't really know when they are going to do that. We are comfortable knowing that that is the dollar amount in there but it obviously has to go through committee process, the appropriations committee, congress, and then signed by the president at some point because congress can't operate on a continuous resolution for the rest of their lives. The federal government tells them when they are going to have to pass the budget and this dollar amount will be in there or it won't. It's going to depend. I don't think we should consider it a grant in the terms of what we are all used to, applying for grants. That's why there is a difference in the dollar amounts. The first we asked for "x", they put it in for "x" plus. The next time we asked for really high and they came back really low. It's different than a grant where you get on the ODNR website or something like that where you see a fixed dollar amount. I just spoke with someone from Congresswoman Sykes' office today. That \$250,000 is still in the budget request. We are just all kind of waiting for congress to act on it.

Mr. Colly: For the grant. You said it does better if we do have a loan. Is there a minimum on the loan?

Alex Pitts: I would have to double check

Mr. Colly: And then when would we know when that grant or if would have an additional grant on top of that?

Alex Pitts: Again, I don't know. Maybe we can look into additional grants moving forward. Every grant opportunity is different. We could try H2Ohio again. We could try...there are multiple grants out there for this kind of thing. The problem is that...like I said every grant is different. I don't know what that loan would be for. What you would get for that vs. a grant.

Steve Pedro: I did look into H2Ohio previously for this and right now they are not funding anything like this. FEMA is having a lot of issue, looking for flood litigation and they're not doing that right now. I don't know if they're not giving grants or they're being very specific. I was told by ODNR that they were the ones that told us to take the dam down so that is going to be very difficult to move forward with a pond for anything from them, not totally out of the question but they are aware of what we are looking in doing.

Mr. Colly: I asked that question because depending on the amount, we are waiting on a grant, we get a larger loan, you guys know that we are going to have a higher interest rate and by that time, we are waiting on a certain amount time, it might eat up the total amount that we would have saved with the grant just in interest. I'm always leaning towards getting the smallest amount that we need so that we don't incur interest

Steve Pedro: We have the time. We don't want to push this out but once we agree with EDG about the final design, that could take 4-8 weeks. We are hoping no more than that. Once we have that, we can put this out to bid. Like I said, in the meantime, I think we search for loans regardless of the amount. I think \$1,000,000 at the most it looks like right now. It could be \$850,000 if we were to get the \$250,000 and then the \$100,000 donation

Mr. Hickey: Is the plan to apply for these earmarks every year, every six months? Is there some type of plan for that?

Ted Herncane: We are going to get a new congressional representative next year because of the way they are re-districting. Our goal is to, whoever that person is, every year go in and submitting community projects just like every other community would. We anticipate to having an asset of some kind every year moving forward until we get what we need.

Mr. Rivera: To keep us moving, what we actually need here is \$163,000 to finish the design

Steve Pedro: Yes

Mr. Rivera: And to start applying for permits

Steve Pedro: Yes, they'll do that. EDG, yes

Mr. Rivera: The permits could be something that takes six months to a year to get

Alex Pitts: Hopefully it wouldn't take as long just because luckily, they already looked at this area due to phase I taking place now. We have a permit set in place for that.

Mr. Rivera: Right

Alex Pitts: Granted this is phase II and it is outside the scope of phase I but because they've already looked at it and the area a little bit, maybe it might streamline the process a little bit. The sooner we can start on design, obviously the better because we might still be able to start with construction still this year.

Mr. Colly: We are voting on that next week?

Steve Pedro: That's what I'm asking, to put that on the agenda for next week

Mr. Colly: Let's do that

Steve Pedro: The money, that's included in the \$1,800,000

Mr. Colly: Okay. That part seems to be a no brainer there

Mr. Hickey: Correct me if I'm wrong here but it sounds like these earmarks have dried up a little bit. Is that correct?

Ted Herncane: Yes, I think that is fair

Mr. Hickey: Is it?

Ted Herncane: It's a political thing, right?

Mr. Hickey: Hmm hmm

Ted Herncane: That is the unsettling part on our end. The city of Canal Fulton got a couple million dollars for a new water tower at the right time. If they would have waited six more months to submit that application, they may not have gotten it. We thought we had a really good shot last

year of getting the \$1,200,000 and then politics happen. I think your comment is probably fair. I think they are being a little more

Mr. Hickey: I'm just trying to brace which way to go on the loan amount

Steve Pedro: Are we okay? Can I put that on the agenda for next week to get the final design started?

Mr. Hickey: Yes

Steve Pedro: Okay. That will be next week and then council two weeks. Once we get that back, we can go into contract with EDG because, can you explain that Alex how we don't have to put that out to bid

Alex Pitts: Yes. We already did the whole RFQ process (Request for Qualifications) for the state of Ohio. When you have a special consultant scenario such as this, you have to do the RFQ process where you advertise and allow fair statements of qualifications to be sent in and then you evaluate them as a team and rank them and then you pick your consultants based off of the rankings. We have already done that. We did that for the entire project, for phase I, II, and III the whole scope of the Reservoir Pre-Finalization Project, I think is what we called it. You don't need to go out to bid or anything. There is no bidding process in this type of thing going into contract with consultants like this, you don't have to go through that process which is what we've already done. We did that last year. That is how we have a preliminary design and everything like that. Now this part we would just be going into contract with them to do the rest of the design for phase II. They've already done phase I.

Mr. Hickey: Phase I will begin when?

Steve Pedro: They haven't started mobilizing yet but they staked it out on the north end up there, the streambank. This week or next week but maybe not tomorrow, not with the weather but, once they get mobilized, I think they are going to get moving just to get there because the weather doesn't really matter. I guess the colder it is, the harder the ground is, they may be better off at some point. It's getting their equipment out there and getting it ready.

Mr. Colly: When will we know when the donations are going to go through?

Ted Herncane: There's a donor in town who has expressed the desire to make that donation. The mayor and I would like to meet with her here in the next couple weeks to show her the plans and lay it out and really sort that out. We feel comfortable saying once we show her the plans, I think she will sign up for it

Steve Pedro: Yes. She approached us

Mr. Rivera: So, she wants to be a part of this

Ted Herncane: She wants to donate money and honestly to help

Mr. Rivera: Right, to help the community

Ted Herncane: Right

Steve Pedro: She lives close. She wants to see the pond. I saw her here. I didn't mention that. She's always talking about it. I'll have that on the agenda for next week.

Joe Pape: When EDG does this design, do they talk to anybody? There some things in phase I that I think I missed.

Steve Pedro: Yes, we'll meet with all of them

Joe Pape: It was simple things in phase I that got missed and didn't get put in the thing

Alex Pitts: Yes. They speak with us throughout the whole design process, pretty much. If there are any concerns or questions, we will make sure they get resolved.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the work session meeting adjourned at 5:50 pm. The next scheduled regular meeting will be on Wednesday, January 21, 2026 at 5:00 pm at the Massillon Recreation Center, Community Room A.

Transcribed By: *Carol Leonard, Office Manager*