



**Russell Township
Citizens' 511 Park
Commission
Report and
Recommendations**



March 2017

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INTRODUCTION

The Russell Township Trustees, along with many of the residents, desire to establish a Park Commission that is focused solely on the needs and desires of Russell Township. In order to have a Park Commission that is exclusive to Russell Township, and not the county, it is recommended that a new Russell Township Park Commission be formed and voted upon at the next General Election, pursuant to Ohio Revised Code 511.

This proposed Park Commission would answer to the Russell Township Trustees and the residents of Russell Township. Input and guidance from both Trustees and residents would be considered by the new Park Commission when deciding policies and making decisions.

MISSION

- Conservation
 - Protection and preservation of all designated properties and natural life.
 - Preserve and expand the green space in Russell Township.
 - Implement conservation restrictions to ensure the future of our protected land.
- Educational opportunities
 - When possible, potential educational opportunities will be considered as part of the ongoing efforts to broaden the understanding and capabilities of our community.
- Historic preservation
 - When appropriate, preservation of historical landmarks and buildings will be taken into consideration.
 - Appropriate use of these facilities would be discussed with the Trustees and input taken from the residents to ensure the suitable use-cases are implemented.

BY-LAWS

ARTICLE I: STATEMENT AND PURPOSE

Russell Township Citizens' 511 Park District ("Citizens' Park District") is established in accordance with Chapter 511 of the Ohio Revised Code and shall be conducted in accordance with the provisions of that chapter. The Citizens' Park District was created to exercise the powers and duties set forth in Section 511.23 of the Ohio Revised Code to locate, establish, improve, maintain, and operate a public park or parks. In exercising those powers and duties, the goal of the Citizens' Park District is to be transparent and responsive to the citizens of Russell Township. The priorities of the Citizens' Park District are to conserve, preserve, and protect the natural resources of Russell Township while allowing for sustainable and reasonable enjoyment and appreciation of those resources.

ARTICLE II: MEMBERSHIP AND OFFICERS

The Board of Park Commissioners shall consist of three (3) Russell Township residents appointed by the Russell Township Trustees pursuant to Section 511.19 of the Ohio Revised Code, unless the Township Trustees decide pursuant to that section to convert the Board to a five-member board. The officers of this Board shall consist of a Chair and a Vice-Chair who shall be elected by the Board annually at its June meeting.

ARTICLE III: DUTIES OF OFFICERS

The Chair shall preside at all meetings of the Board and with the consent of the Board shall appoint all committees of the Board. In the absence or disability of the Chair, the Vice-Chair shall serve in place of the chair.

ARTICLE IV: REGULAR SESSIONS

The regular sessions of the Board shall be held once a month on a regular day at a regular time unless otherwise ordered by the Board. Regular session day and time are to be determined by action of the Board. All regular sessions shall be open to the public and shall allow for a period of public comment.

ARTICLE V: EXECUTIVE SESSIONS

The Board may hold an executive session only after a majority of the Board determines, by a roll call vote, to hold such a session and only during a regular, special, or emergency meeting and only for the purpose of consideration of personnel, land acquisition, litigation, security arrangements, collective bargaining, or other matters permitted or required to be kept confidential by federal law, federal rule, or state statutes.

ARTICLE VI: SPECIAL SESSIONS

Special sessions of the Board shall be held upon call of the Chair upon request by a member or members of the Board. Notices of special sessions shall be given by telephone, and also mailed or emailed or personally served on each member, at least forty-eight (48) hours before the time of such session. If any member of the Board is out of the county or otherwise unavailable for a period of at least forty-eight (48) hours before such special session, failure of such member to receive notice of a special session shall not invalidate such session or any of its proceedings.

ARTICLE VII: EMERGENCY SESSIONS

Emergency sessions of the Board may be held upon the call of the Chair upon the request of a member or members of the Board. Notices of emergency sessions shall be given by telephone or personally served on each member at least one (1) hour before the time of such session.

ARTICLE VIII: QUORUM

Two (2) members shall constitute a quorum of the Board for any session. Action of the Board may be by motion or resolution. The affirmative votes of at least two (2) members shall be necessary to adopt any motion or resolution. All votes shall be taken by call of the roll and answered by yes, no, or abstain. Votes to abstain shall not be counted.

ARTICLE IX: PUBLIC MEETINGS

The Board shall perform its business, including the adoption of resolutions and motions, at public meetings held and conducted in accordance with applicable provisions of the Ohio Revised Code and these bylaws. A period for public comment shall be provided at each such meeting.

ARTICLE X: PUBLIC RECORDS

An accurate and permanent record of the proceedings and minutes of all sessions, regular or special, shall be maintained by the Fiscal Officer or Russell Township, and shall be and constitute the only evidence of the acts of the Board at such sessions when signed at the end of the records of such session by the presiding officer. The official custodian of all records of the Board shall be the Russell Township Fiscal Office.

ARTICLE XI: AMENDING BYLAWS

These bylaws may be amended at any regular meeting of the Board by an affirmative vote of two (2) members of the Board provided that the amendment has been submitted in writing at the previous regular meeting.

ARTICLE XII: RECORDS RETENTION

As a special taxing district once voted in, the Russell Township Citizens' Park Commission will form a Records Commission comprised of the chairperson, fiscal representative, and legal representative of the governing board as pursuant to Ohio Revised Code 149.412. This commission will adopt and adhere to a records retention schedule and meet at least once every twelve (12) months upon the call of the chairperson. No record will be removed or destroyed unless following the proper disposal as per the adopted records retention schedule.

LAND ACQUISITIONS AND POSSIBLE OPPORTUNITIES

At present, the Russell Township Trustees hold 167.467 acres of land in the Township Portfolio. The majority of the acreage is zoned passive, with the exception of two parcels. Bob Hall Field is five (5) acres, zoned active park, and two (2) acres south of the Russell Township Police and Fire Stations are zoned office use.

The vision of the Trustees is to have the current acreage monitored by the Russell Township Citizens' Park Commission. There also remain within the township a number of land acquisition possibilities which offer green space opportunities for passive parks that could be added to the current portfolio and monitored by the Russell Township Citizens' Park Commission.

VETERANS MEMORIAL PARK

The idea of a Veterans Park on the property south of the police station on route 306 is intriguing due to its potential of completing Russell Center.

The contour of the terrain is captivating. Even with the close proximity to two major highways, it has the potential to be serene. The overall depth of the parcel likewise has the advantage of a good setback for the memorial itself.

After contacting the Geauga County V.A., it was learned that funding of part or most of a memorial park is a possibility. The basic scenario for the solicitation of funding requires that a rendering of the proposed memorial and a cost estimate must first be presented to the V.A. Board for their approval. Once approval is obtained from the VSC, the presentation must be made to the Geauga County Commissioners for their approval.

Funding for the proposed memorial would then come from the V.A.'s annual allocation of 1.5 million dollars, providing the Township received approval from both the VSC and the County Commissioners.

DISSAUER PROPERTY

Located on Beechwood Drive, this 17 acres of land includes a barn plus access to the Upper Chagrin Preserve property.

This property would be an ideal location for the Russell Township Citizens' 511 Park District as it would provide an ingress and egress to the Upper Chagrin Preserve as well as parking to access the property. The barn on the property is in good condition and could be used as an offsite storage for the Township or park district. Exhibit 1 shows the proximity of this property in relation to the Upper Chagrin Preserve.

MODROO FARMHOUSE

The Modroo Farmhouse is located on 18.9 acres of land on Hemlock Road. This parcel would complete the purchase of historical Modroo Farm and homestead, one of the last working farms in Russell Township. Exhibit 2 shows an aerial view of the property.

With the addition of the Modroo 18.9 acres with its homestead, barn, and outbuilding, many creative avenues could be opened for its use. Opportunities that exist for this venue span the range from educational, farming, and even a revenue source. For example, one possibility might be to lease the barn to Rescue Village to house larger animals, while perhaps the farm itself could be used by Kent State University Geauga Campus if the agricultural program were restored. Any such purchase would require an extensive and thorough consideration of the best, most beneficial and practical use for this venue. Consulting with outside sources using a team approach would need to be in place prior to the vetting of any prospective partner or partners for the parcel as a whole or any portions thereof.

SPISAK PROPERTY

Located on Fairmount Road 200 yards east of Watt Road, this 19 acres includes a house, two outbuildings, and a lakeside cabin. The property abuts land owned by the 1545 Park Commission and mirrors the Dissauer property of 17 acres. The property bridges the Upper Chagrin Preserve with the Upper Chagrin Preserve Addition. With its acquisition, the whole southernmost riparian zone of the Chagrin River from Beechwood Drive to Sperry Road would be conserved. Exhibit 3 shows an aerial view of the property.

Two additional drawing points focus this property into our scope of potential acquisitions. First, the township zoning has indicated that this property requires a lot of clean-up and has been cited as a constant frustration with its many zoning infractions. The current house and outbuildings, for example, likely need be razed. However, this should not stand as an obstacle to the purchase of this property as this outlay of money would be negligible in the overall scope of benefits to this property. Secondly, this property allows for ingress and egress to the Upper Chagrin Preserve, thereby eliminating encroachment on private land.

The property was originally owned by John Spisak of Russell Township, and, with his passing the estate in trust, is now owned by John A. Spisak, executor, who resides in California. While the senior Spisak lived, his sons considered selling the 19 acres to ensure proper healthcare for their father. The original 1545 Russell Park Commission offered \$300,000.00 on the property, but the offer was never acted upon. The present 1545 board of park commissioners likely do not have a history of this parcel; therefore, any further contact with John A. Spisak regarding this acreage should come from the ORC 511 Park Commissioners.

GALLO PROPERTY

The Gallo property is 162 acres of land situated on Music Street, east of State Route 306. The land abuts to the Geauga Park District's West Woods. This parcel has 152 acres of back county undeveloped farm land. The individual homesteads on the remainder of the acreage front the property on Music Street. However, there is ingress and egress for this property.

The Gallo property is an expensive option for the fledging ORC 511 Park Commission. The property is also listed under the Gallo Family, which may indicate that a number of titles/deeds are out for different family members.

The selling value of the property is estimated to be over \$3 million dollars. This would be a lower priority for the ORC 511 Park Commissioners in terms of affordability at this point, but it property that should be monitored for a future possible acquisition. Exhibit 4 shows an aerial view of each parcel of land for sale from the Gallo Family Trust.

CURRENT TOWNSHIP-OWNED PROPERTIES

As of now, the 511 Citizens' Park Board will focus their efforts on purchasing additional properties to add to the Trustees' current portfolio of properties. Aside from the Veterans' Memorial Park, those properties already owned by the Township will continue to be maintained as green space and provide residents with passive parks as desired by the citizens of Russell Township.

FUNDING AND FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS

OPERATING COSTS

Once voted in, the 511 Citizens' Park Board will incur operating expenses every year. The expenses, at a minimum, include:

Description	Amount
Bonds	\$1,100.00
Insurance (Public Officials Liability)	\$1,300.00
Lawyers and Consultants	\$1,500.00
UAN Fees	\$750.00
Legal Ads	\$1,000.00
Audit Fees	\$2,000.00
Contingency Fees	\$8,000.00
Office Supplies	\$250.00
Secretarial Services	\$4,200.00
Total Administration Expense:	\$20,100.00

Until the Park Board receives their own funding, it is recommended that the Park District receive funding from the Township Trustees in order to fulfill financial obligations that are incurred upon separation. Once the Park Board is established as a separate political entity, it has the ability to levy for money. If levied in 2018, these monies could become available in 2019.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To eliminate confusion within the Township, renaming the 511 Park Board to the "Russell Township Citizens' Park Board" is not only distinctive, but does serve to also distinguish between the ORC 511 and the existing ORC 1545.

Consideration should first be given to public approval of the Russell Township Citizens' Park Commission in November 2017 before a levy is placed before the citizens. This will ensure that the fledgling Russell Township Citizens' Park Commission receives the full support of the Russell community.

EXHIBITS - FUTURE ACQUISITIONS



Geauga REALink



Geauga County GIS
Frank J. Gliha, Geauga County Auditor
Joe Cattell, Geauga County Engineer PE, PS



1 Inch = 358.33 Feet | Scale: 4,300

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November 30, 2016

Exhibit 1 - Dissauer Property



Geauga REALink



Geauga County GIS
Frank J. Gliha, Geauga County Auditor
Joe Cattell, Geauga County Engineer PE, PS



1 Inch = 298.25 Feet | Scale: 3,579

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www.auditor.co.geauga.oh.us

January 30, 2017

Exhibit 2 - Modroo Farmhouse and Barn

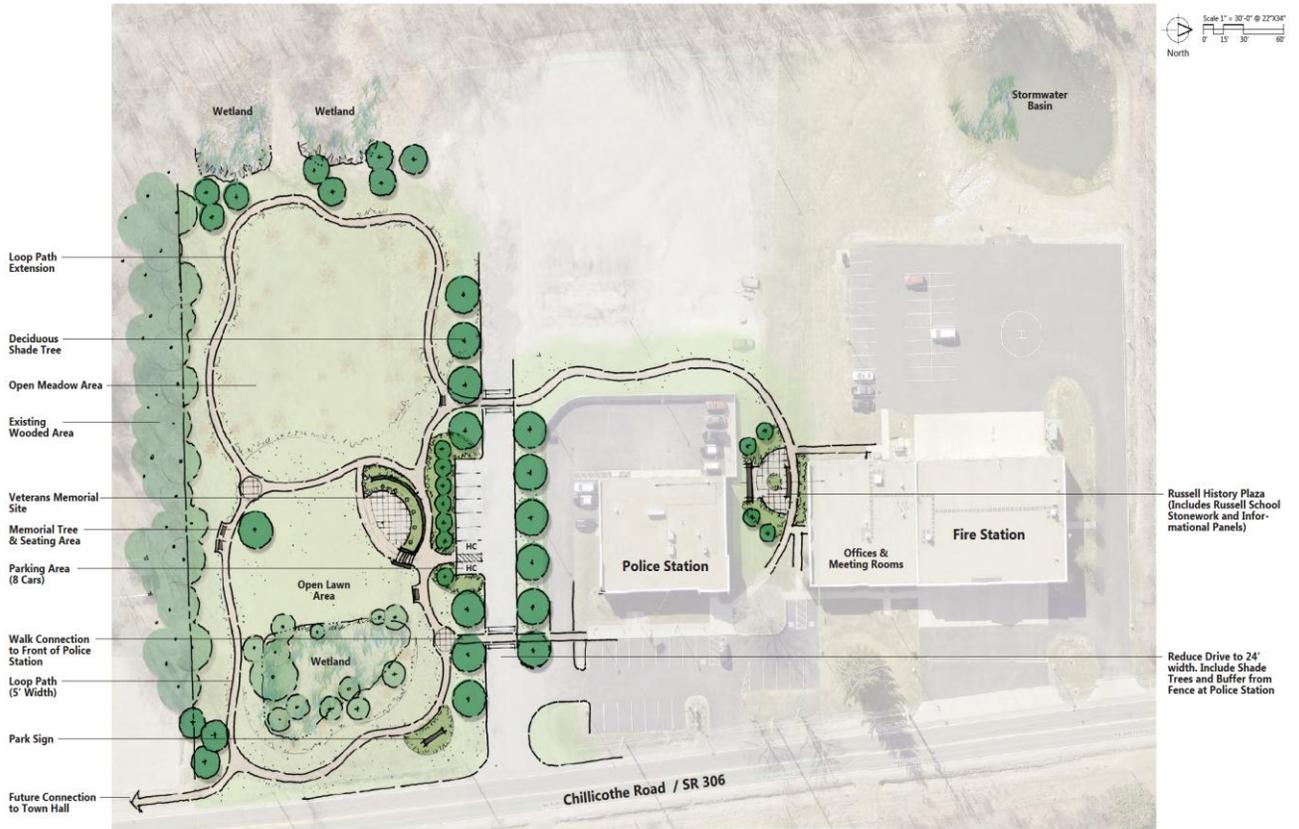


Exhibit 3 - Spisak Property



Exhibit 4 - Gallo Properties

VETERANS' MEMORIAL PARK



Overall Site Plan



Russell Veterans Memorial

Russell Township Park Board of Commissioners

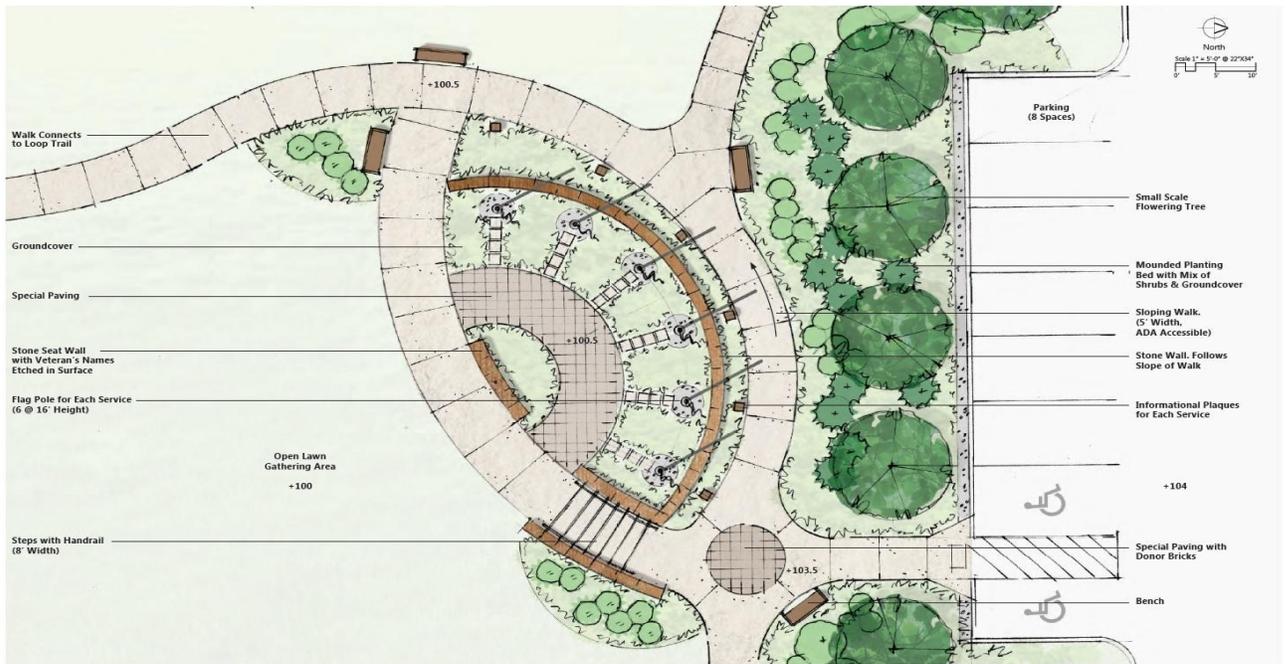
January 19, 2017



Memorial Plaza looking North
Russell Veterans Memorial
 Russell Township Park Board of Commissioners



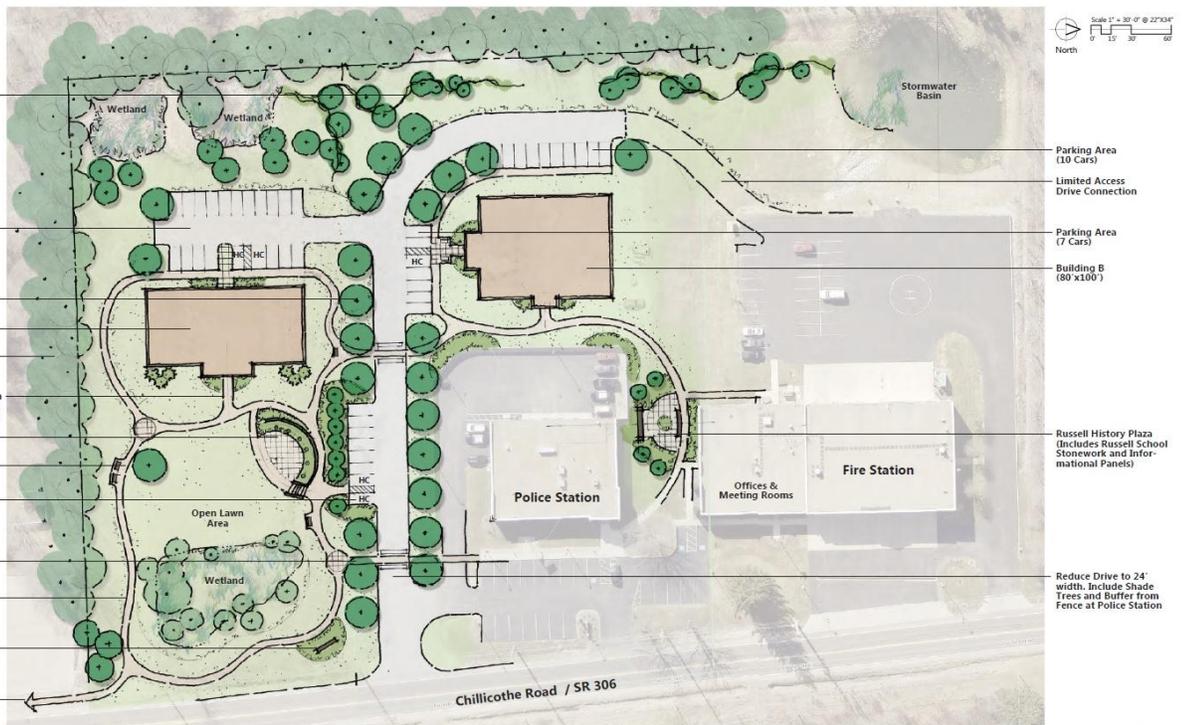
January 19, 2017



Memorial Plaza

Russell Veterans Memorial
Russell Township Park Board of Commissioners

January 19, 2017



Overall Site Plan - Possible Future Site Uses

Russell Veterans Memorial
Russell Township Park Board of Commissioners

January 19, 2017

