

**Subject: Condition of the Volney Rogers Area**

Aaron:

I received a letter today from Dennis LaRue of the Business Journal. He complained about the condition of the tennis courts in the Volney Rogers area of MCMP near Glenwood Avenue. My wife, Kate, a long-time volunteer at the Park, and I, after dinner, drove there to check out the area. I was appalled. The tennis courts have cracks along all of them, the white lines haven't been painted in years, and the fences haven't been painted in years. Further, my wife and I walked past the tennis courts to the basketball court where we visited with four young black men. I walked through the court and shot a few baskets with the young men. They told me that they play there regularly and that there has been no work on the court for years. I saw that the nets were very, very old and that the court has not been repainted in years. I want this situation changed right now!

**Tom Shipka**

P.S. I don't want to hear about budgetary issues. Do it NOW, dammit! I'll contribute \$1,000 toward the cost of bringing this area up to a level that the Board and the staff should be proud of.

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**Subject: Re: Condition of the Volney Rogers Area**

We all need to have a very frank conversation about the lack of professionalism that is being shown to myself as an individual that has done everything that has been necessary and asked of him by the Park Board in attempting to turn around a MetroPark system that has had 15 years of mismanagement, insufficient leadership and funding. I have done nothing to warrant the level of disrespect and insult that I have been shown from individuals who have been appointed to lead a park district of which they have never been to a respective Board Meeting until after their appointment and whom also have only attempted an elementary and remedial review of the available facts and information that have gotten us to this point. It appears that people are just now seeing what I have been attempting to convey for the past 18 months, is that the MetroParks facilities and support amenities are at a critical juncture and that an internal reorganization and subsequent reduction in overhead expenditures was the only option to free up the necessary financial resources in the last year of a levy cycle, that are needed to have an impact significant enough to demonstrate to the general public, our ability to correct the errors of our predecessors.

E-mail and text records will show that I visited this area of the park months ago on one of my weekly walks of our facilities, photographed the exact conditions and forwarded them to the appropriate department for review, scheduling and potential remediation. These items were then discussed with the individuals as a follow up. I will be glad to forward to you all the pending responses from the respective department heads. You will also note that the condition of our facilities varies across departments (Wick Rec Fields versus Volney Fields) and our work internally has focused on getting the right individuals in the right positions so that we can have a more equal level of service across the MetroParks as we move towards being able to address the many capital improvement needs. We

continue to aggressively fill the many vacant operations positions that have existed since before my hiring. I've tried in as many ways and In a professional tone that has not been reciprocated back to me that years of too many chiefs and not enough Indians will result in the challenges that you see today.

Mr Shipka, your editing and resending of your original e-mail just minutes after the original does not negate the impact of your lack of common courtesy or professionalism.  
**Aaron Young**

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**Subject: Re: Condition of the Volney Rogers Area  
Tom and everyone concerned---**

I saw your email last night around 11:30 pm before I went to bed and was **quite** upset by it. My first instinct was to fire off some comments (especially after just penning another tongue-in-cheek email to Judy Peyko about going after Sesame Street for letting go three long-time staff members) but I chose to "sleep on it". **Sleep I didn't.** With my right hand to God I swear that I tossed and turned all night. I am usually up at 5 am daily and at the office by 6 am and have been sitting at the computer since 5:15 this morning thinking about what to write.

Dr. Shipka, I have known of you for many years and have only the utmost respect for someone who taught for many years at YSU and is so well-written. This email last night was NOT one of your better literary pieces. You claim that you have been having meetings with staff and Aaron but your email shows how LITTLE you know Aaron. If there is indeed a legitimate issue, he is right on it. Your demanding nature and your tone is not very professional and frankly, sir, you need to step up and apologize. What you **SHOULD** have said was "Aaron, my wife and I saw some issues at the basketball court among other places. I would like to meet with you to see how quickly things can be done". **THEN** if Aaron did nothing for 3 months, you have a right to question the lack of productivity. Also you did not have to state that you "visited with four young black men" on the basketball court. That is not a very sensitive comment racially. What difference does the color of their skin make? When I visit was appointed to the board in January of 2010 and starting dating my wife Donna in March of the same year, the **FIRST** thing I asked for as a birthday gift (my birthday is April 17) was a basketball and I have been seen shooting hoops at Yellow Creek Park....yes, me a skinny, little white guy.

Since you were appointed you have brought up some good ideas and ones that indeed are refreshing. Being a "bully" and throwing your financial hip into this is not warranted. I am happy that you have the financial means to be able to help out but you need not boast and make it known to all that you will simply "write a check" to get things done. Several years ago when the family camp-out was held at Wick and all of a sudden there was not any sponsorship, former board member Lou Schiavoni and I stepped in and contributed \$2,500 to see that this event took place but both of us asked that the contribution be kept silent.

I trust that the backlash of emails from your not-very-professional email last night will make you more aware that you "have a lot to learn" about being on **this particular** board. You have been on other boards and probably have forgotten more things that I will ever know in my life time. As I had mentioned in our email conversations a number of weeks ago, maybe you need to sit back and take things in for awhile and cool your blazing guns instead of looking like you are trying to be the "white knight" (no pun nor disrespect intended) trying to quell the cries of a very small vocal minority out there.

With respect to you, sir, and everyone else,  
**Bob**

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**Subject: Re: Condition of the Volney Rogers Area**

**Bob:**

I offer no apology to anyone for the Park leadership's failure to remedy the deplorable condition of the Volney Rogers tennis courts and basketball court that I witnessed yesterday. Voters passed a levy to maintain and improve the Park. As a voter and a Board member, I expect results, not "we're going to get to it eventually. Be patient." We terminated 18 or more employees, then bought three new Jeeps, then marginalized the Board by giving the Executive Director complete control over all aspects of the Park. The Board meetings, which involve no serious discussion of Park issues, are highlighted by speaker after speaker attacking the Executive Director and the Board. Bob, if you're satisfied with all this, you have your head in the sand.

Aaron: In recent memory I have seen no better example of a "lack of professionalism" than firing a respected 31-year employee without prior notice and sending Park police to "escort" him from his work site.

**Tom Shipka**

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**Subject: Re: Condition of the Volney Rogers Area**

**Tom--**

The "conflict" as you call it only seemed to start recently because of your sharp tone which you realized was in error because you sent a second, more logical and calm email shortly after the first. It was obvious that your emotions got the best of you on the first one and many of us are still waiting for an apology for that first one. You came on board ablaze almost sounding like some of the extremely small vocal minority without knowledge of facts. That doesn't make you wrong for having sentiments. You claim that your applied to be on the park board because you felt the park was "in trouble". Why, I ask, did you never show up for one board meeting? I started in January of 2010 and have only missed one meeting at most and I certainly do not recall you ever attending one meeting. People over the past 6 1/2 years have attended meetings because there were issues in their minds. They showed up at the meetings and addressed the board and the director at that time. The director either exchanged contact information with that

individual or made sure one of the staff members (eg--Steve Avery) called that person within a reasonable period of time.

As a board member you are aware that we are a policy-making board. Unfortunately my schedule nor anyone else's on the board should allow a board member to patrol every part of the park and micro-manage it. That is not what a board should do. I am not saying that if one of us sees a problem during our visits to the park that we should not let Aaron know about it. Honestly I am in Yellow Creek Park more than Volney Rogers/Wick area because it is closer to my home in Lowellville and where my parents live in Struthers so I am unaware of the issues in the areas you identified. My wife and I will stop out there this weekend to see what you had described. At that time I can follow up with you because I will have the facts on my side.

Regarding your comment about my resignation, I will bite my tongue because now you are causing me to be upset and I don't want to say something similar to what you said last night without thinking and based upon emotion.

We can discuss things over dinner soon if you like and I am sure as two well-educated professional men, we will do what is best for the MetroParks.

**Bob**

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**Subject: Re: Condition of the Volney Rogers Area**

**Dr. Durick and Mr Young**

I don't wish to exacerbate the conflict but please let me observe that the reason I proposed a revised format in the Board meetings - a regular followed by a work session - is to provide for more information from the staff to the Board about impending plans and a greater opportunity for various interest groups to have a say.

I had never before heard about any of Mr. Young's plans for the Volney Rogers basketball and tennis courts or any other part of the Park, and, in the future, this must not happen. I am supposed to be Mr. Young's boss (among others) and today I learned about his alleged plans for one small segment of the Park from The Vindicator.

Dr. Durick, you said that your were on the Board seven years. Did you not see the deterioration of parts such as the Volney Rogers tennis courts and basketball court? Did you do anything to impede the deterioration? Don't tell a new Board member to sit quietly and learn; the reason I applied for a Board position is that I concluded that the Park is in trouble. I am on the Board to clean up the mess that exists. If you think things are fine, you need to resign.

**Tom Shipka, New Board Member**