

## ***Park District Completes Purchase of Former Chippewa Lake Amusement Park June 15, 2020***

In a milestone on a journey that began more than 40 years ago, Medina County Park District has purchased the site of the former Chippewa Lake Amusement Park, which will become a future public park on the shores of Ohio's largest inland glacial lake.

"We are thrilled that this special place, which is such an important part of the cultural history of Northeast Ohio and treasured in the memories of so many people, will be open for the public to enjoy once again," said Medina County Park District Director Nathan D. Eppink.

Chippewa Lake Properties Inc. sold the just under 95-acre site to the park district on June 15 for \$2.1 million, which was less than its appraised value. The purchase agreement includes all mineral rights and lake privileges associated with the property. The park district purchased the adjacent 340-acre Chippewa Lake with a Clean Ohio Grant in 2007.

Eppink said public access to the site is at least two years away. The park district will use that time to invite community input on a master plan and seek grant funding to support development of the park. Reforestation, along with restoration of wetlands, will begin as soon as possible to help improve the water quality of the lake, which has been plagued by toxic algal blooms.

"It's good for our village," said Joanne Dodaro, who has served as mayor of Chippewa Lake since 2003. "I like knowing that the amusement park property is owned by the park district and that it will help protect the lake."

The park district will preserve the remnants of the Ferris wheel and other historical relics that remain on the property, which provide an opportunity for interpretive panels and programs that celebrate the site's iconic past. As a destination for entertainment, family vacations, and company picnics from 1878 to 1978, Chippewa Lake Park once boasted multiple rides, games, a hotel, and a ballroom that hosted famous bandleaders like Benny Goodman, Glenn Miller, and Lawrence Welk.

"We're really excited to tell the story of the amusement park," said Eppink. "We want to make it a fun place to be, like it once was."

The property was identified in the early 1970s as one of the most important potential public recreation sites in Medina County. Its owners and the park district first talked about a possible sale shortly after the amusement park closed -- a discussion that had multiple stops and starts over the ensuing decades. Former park district Director Thomas K. James had his first conversation about the former amusement park almost immediately after his arrival in 1993, and talks continued for the next 25 years until his retirement in 2018.

"It's been on the radar for a long time," he said.

With extensive wetlands lining the less-developed west side of the lake, the former amusement park emerged as the best site for a possible public park after Chippewa Lake was acquired by the park district in 2007.

"Having a park on the east side of the lake with good access to the water for public recreation makes the most sense," James added.

Medina County Park District Board of Commissioners Chairman Andrew J. de Luna expressed gratitude to the many community partners, as well as to past and present park district staff, whose work and perseverance made this long-anticipated day a reality.

"Their efforts will help ensure that Ohio's largest glacial lake remains a place for outdoor recreation and nature education for generations to come," de Luna said.