



**CITY OF BLOOMINGTON  
parks and recreation**

**AGENDA**

City of Bloomington Board of Park Commissioners  
Regular Meeting: Tuesday, May 27, 2014 4:00 – 5:30 p.m.

Council Chambers  
401 North Morton

**CALL TO ORDER - ROLL CALL**

**A. CONSENT CALENDAR**

- A-1. Approval of Minutes of April 22, 2014
- A-2. Approval of Claims Submitted April 23, 2014 – May 26, 2014
- A-3. Approval of Non-Reverting Budget Amendments
- A-4. Review of Business Report

**B. PUBLIC HEARINGS/APPEARANCES**

- B-1. Public Comment Period -
- B-2. Bravo Award - IU Hudson Holland STEM Outreach program (Will Rose)
- B-3. Parks Partner Award -
- B-4. Staff Introductions -

**C. OTHER BUSINESS**

- C-1. Public Hearing on Proposed Leasing of City Property (Mick Renneisen/Susan Failey)
- C-2. Review/Approval of Wildlife Services Management Agreement for Reduction of Deer at Griffy Lake (Mick Renneisen)

**D. REPORTS**

- D-1. Operation Division - No Report
- D-2. Recreation Division - No Report
- D-3. Sports Division - No Report
- D-4. Administration Division - No Report

**ADJOURNMENT**



Board of Park Commissioners  
Regular Meeting  
Minutes

Tuesday, May 27, 2014  
4:00 – 5:30 p.m.

City Hall Council Chambers  
401 N. Morton St.

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Coyne at 4:00 p.m.

**Board Present:** John Carter, Les Coyne, Joe Hoffmann, Jane St. John

**Staff Present:** Mick Renneisen, Judy Seigle, Dave Williams, Julie Ramey, Kim Ecenbarger, Marcia Veldman, Robin Hobson, Will Rose, Steve Cotter, Elizabeth Tompkins, Paula McDevitt, Leslie Brinson, Ellen Campbell

**City Legal:** Greg Small, Mike Rouker, Susan Failey

**ERAC:** Angie Shelton

- A-1. Approval of Minutes of April 22, 2014 Meeting
- A-2. Approval of Claims Submitted April 23 – May 26, 2014
- A-3. Approval of Non-Reverting Budget Amendments
- A-4. Review of Business Report

Mr. Hoffmann made a motion to approve the Consent Calendar as presented. Ms. St. John seconded the motion. Motion unanimously carried.

**B. PUBLIC HEARINGS/APPEARANCES**

**B-1. Public Comment Period**

No public comment at this time.

**B-2. Bravo Award – IU Hudson Holland STEM Outreach Program**

Mr. Rose addressed the Board and presented the May Bravo Award to Stephanie Rosa and Jordan Crowe with the IU Hudson Holland STEM Outreach Club for their volunteer work with the students at the Banneker at the View afterschool program. Ms. Rosa and Ms. Crowe worked closely with the afterschool program during their first semester, submitting lesson plans each week and developing classroom management skills. The program really took off during the second semester and the 3-6<sup>th</sup> grade students loved the program. Ms. Rosa and Ms. Crowe are both on track to graduate in May 2015 and plan to pass the program along to another group of volunteers.

Ms. Rosa addressed the Board and stated that she is applying for medical school this summer and has really enjoyed being part of the Banneker at the View afterschool program. She has enjoyed being able to share useful science programs with the elementary school students.

Ms. Crowe addressed the Board and stated that it has been an honor to work with the students and see them getting excited about science. Their transformation has been great!

**B-3. Parks Partner Award – None this month**

**B-4. Staff Introductions – None this month**

**C. OTHER BUSINESS**

## C-1. Public Hearing on Proposed Leasing of City Property

Mr. Renneisen introduced Susan Failey, Assistant City Attorney, and stated that she will be retiring soon and he wanted to acknowledge her and thank her for all of her dedication to the City and to the Parks Department. Ms. Failey's work and professionalism will definitely be missed.

Ms. Failey addressed the Board and stated that the City closed on a 6 acre tract of land during the winter that will eventually be the entrance and parking area for the Switchyard Park when it is developed. She stated that two of the buildings on the property are currently being leased to tenants as they continued their lease that they had prior to the property transfer. Staff is now interested in leasing additional properties to additional tenants. State law requires a public hearing on proposed leasing of public property and this meeting satisfies that requirement. Staff is looking to lease properties at 1607 S. Rogers (Building #1) and 1803 S. Rogers (Building #4). The property will be advertised and any potential lease agreements will be brought to the Park Board for approval.

Mr. Hoffmann made a motion to authorize the City to pursue leasing additional properties on the Switchyard Property. Ms. St. John seconded the motion. Motion unanimously carried.

## C-2. Review/Approval of Wildlife Services Management Agreement for Reduction of Deer at Griffy Lake

Mr. Renneisen addressed the Board seeking approval of the management agreement for wildlife services management with White Buffalo, Inc. for reduction of deer at Griffy Lake. Griffy Lake Nature Preserve covers a total of 1,200 acres, including the 109-acre Griffy Lake, and was formed from more than 45 different property acquisitions between 1922 and 2007. It is located on the north side of the City of Bloomington, Indiana, at 3300 N. Headley Road. The property is owned by the City of Bloomington and is managed by the Bloomington Parks and Recreation Department under separate agreements between the Board of Park Commissioners and the Utilities Services Board and the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Division of Nature Preserves.

Browse damage by deer in the Griffy Lake Nature Preserve was noted in the Griffy Lake Master Plan Update 2008; *"The large deer population is stripping vegetation in the forest understory. This has destroyed plant and animal diversity in the most heavily browsed areas. These heavily browsed areas also provide opportunities for invasive species to become established. Experiments with exclosures visually show the effects of deer browse."*

The Joint City of Bloomington-Monroe County Deer Task Force, an 11-member citizen group, was created by local government in September 2010 in response to concerns expressed by ecologists and residents about deer damage in Griffy Lake Nature Preserve. The task force summarized two years of meetings and research on the topic in their final report.

The executive summary of Common Ground: Toward Balance and Stewardship, the recommendations of the task force, stated:

*"When it comes to deer at Griffy Woods, clear evidence points to ecosystem damage by deer-native tree seedlings are not regenerating; herbaceous plant species are severely compromised and possibly going locally extinct; invasive species are taking over some areas; the forest understory is unnaturally open; and understory-reliant birds and other animals are losing habitat."*

Deer exclosure studies in Griffy Lake Nature Preserve over a period of several years clearly indicated that there is a significant difference in all types of vegetation between the areas that were protected from deer browsing, and those that were not. Research by Dr. A. L. Shelton et. al. from the Indiana University Department of Biology, "Effects of abundant white-tailed deer on vegetation, animals, mycorrhizal fungi, and soils", (Forest Ecology and Management, February 19, 2014) indicated:

*"We found strong effects of deer exclusion on all aspects of understory vegetation measured. The complete lack of native tree recruitment in control plots is particularly dramatic given that deer had been excluded from the plots for only two or three years in 13 of 15 plots. The only woody plant recruitment in the control plots was by invasive shrubs and unpalatable native shrubs."*

The same study also reported:

*"In pellet count surveys conducted in March 2011, we found an average of 200 ± 50 SE pellet piles/ha compared to 18 ± 5*

and  $17 \pm 8$  at two other nearby un hunted preserves, suggesting this site has 11–12 times more deer activity than these other comparable preserves.”

### **Authority**

Licensing of City Properties Agreement - A management agreement between the Bloomington Board of Public Works and the Bloomington Board of Parks and Recreation initially signed in 1971 gives the Bloomington Parks and Recreation Department license to enter upon, develop, operate, and maintain for recreational purposes the Griffy Lake reservoir properties.

The Master Plan for the Griffy Woods Nature Preserve, approved by the City of Bloomington Parks and Recreation Department and the State of Indiana Natural Resources Commission, specifically states:

*“... the Nature Preserve shall be managed to maintain and/or restore it to natural ecological conditions ... in the case of this Nature Preserve, the main purpose of the dedication is to preserve and restore natural forest communities and the associated rare native plants”.*

### **Long-Term Deer Management Plan**

Maintaining the deer herd in numbers that will not negatively impact the understory forest vegetation is the long-term goal. Bloomington Parks and Recreation staff will monitor the presence and height of forest understory plants, including tree seedlings, in established control plots during the time period immediately following the deer removal efforts. Data collected during the 2015-16 growing season will help determine whether or not additional deer need to be removed the following winter in order for the plant population to recover.

Mr. Cotter addressed the Board and presented the findings from the exclosure studies performed by Dr. Shelton and Dr. Clay. The studies reveal that the trees are not regenerating, as well as a reduction in the wildflowers. He also discussed the goals of the sharpshooting and the alternatives that have been researched.

### **Goal**

The goal of the sharpshooting effort is to remove enough deer from the nature preserve to reduce browse pressure on understory plant species and seedling trees to the point these species are able to recover, and to grow once again at Griffy Lake.

### **Alternatives to Sharpshooting**

Other alternatives below have been discussed and determined to be impractical at this time:

- a) No Action - Non-intervention means the deer herd will continue to grow and the ecological problems associated with deer overbrowsing in the forest understory will not be addressed.
- b) Fencing - Griffy Lake is nearly two square miles in size. Fencing the property to prevent the movement of deer onto the property is cost prohibitive and impractical. Fencing would interfere with the movement of many other species into and out of the nature preserve.
- c) Trap and relocate - Not approved by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources in free-ranging deer; cost prohibitive; low availability of release sites. This option is also very traumatic for the deer.
- d) Contraception - Not approved by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources in free-ranging deer; cost prohibitive; contraception does not reduce overabundant deer populations. Treated deer would continue browsing for the remainder of their lives.
- e) Sterilization - Not approved by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources in free-ranging deer; cost prohibitive; ineffective in non-isolated areas.
- f) Predator reintroduction - Not approved by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources; predator numbers would have to be relatively high to impact deer population.
- g) Trap and kill - Less humane method than sharpshooting because of capture stress.

- h) Hunting - Safety concerns with permitting hunting deer with firearms in the Griffy Lake Nature Preserve area, which is a public park and popular recreation area, with numerous human habitation locations at the property's perimeter. Archery hunting is considerably less efficient and effective than sharpshooting, resulting in a delay in the reduction of the deer herd to the numbers needed to allow the vegetation to recover.

Ryan Rodts with White Buffalo Corporation addressed the Board and provided them with the logistics of the deer cull.

### **Logistics**

- A. Number of deer to be culled - The proposed service provider, White Buffalo Inc., estimates plant communities may be able to begin to recover following the removal of up to 100 deer. While an exact count of deer in Griffy Lake Nature Preserve and the surrounding area is not known, the knowledge of this number is not deemed relevant due to the documented impacts that have been recorded by IU researchers. The requested number of deer to be removed is a starting point; the actual number may fall short of or exceed the initial estimate.
- B. Timing - The proposed time frame for the sharpshooting activity is from November 15, 2014 through February 28, 2015. The exact timing of the sharpshooting activities will depend on weather conditions, wind direction, and the availability of the deer's food sources. Sharpshooting will take place from the late afternoon until late evening on the days when weather, the successful establishment of baited sites, and other factors are most suitable for a successful effort.
- C. Personnel - Sharpshooting will be conducted by White Buffalo, Inc., a leading expert in population control of white-tailed deer in urban areas. Two staff members from this organization, with extensive sharpshooting training, will assist with the planning, organization, and implementation of the sharpshooting program.
- D. Methods - Sharpshooters will utilize suppressed Remington 700 bolt-action rifles and .223 cartridges. Sharpshooters will set up in elevated stands, in both tree stands and in stationary vehicles, and will shoot over baited stations using advanced tactical lighting and night vision devices to maximize success rates.
- E. Utilization Plan - All deer taken during sharpshooting efforts will be processed by K.W. Custom Deer Processing in Bloomington, Indiana and the venison donated to the Hoosier Hills Food Bank. The nonprofit group Hunters and Farmers Feeding the Hungry will assist financially with the cost of processing. Carcasses will be transported to the processor immediately following each day's sharpshooting efforts.

Mr. Williams addressed the Board and discussed the safety issues surrounding the deer cull:

Safety is the first priority of the deer herd reduction effort, and takes precedence over all other considerations. Sharpshooting will take place from elevated stands so the trajectory of bullets will be down and into the ground. Where possible, baited stations will be located away from human habitation and beside earthen backstops. Bullets to be used are lead, which are frangible and will fragment upon entering the deer, minimizing the possibility of ricochet.

A private security firm will be hired by the city to patrol the area surrounding Griffy Lake Nature Preserve, and to advise members of the public of the temporary closure of the property during the sharpshooting activities. Security personnel will be in contact with White Buffalo at all times to inform them of potential conflicts with property users. Signs placed conspicuously at parking areas and trail heads will inform the public of the closure of the property during sharpshooting activities.

Ms. Ramey addressed the Board and discussed the public information plan:

### **Public Information Plan**

Studies of the deer population in Bloomington officially began with the establishment of the Joint City of Bloomington-Monroe County Deer Task Force, a citizen group created by local government in response to concerns from residents, and from ecologists and residents about deer damage in Griffy Woods. The task force conducted community outreach meetings to gather input and collect information from local residents. In addition, the task force collected 742 electronic opinion surveys about the deer issue from local residents during 2011. The Deer Task Force submitted their official report of findings in 2012, and the report was formally accepted as an advisory document by the Common Council on December 12, 2012.

Because the City of Bloomington prohibits the discharge of a firearm anywhere within the corporate boundaries of Bloomington, a change in the city ordinance BMC §14.20.020 was necessary to conduct sharpshooting activities. The public had additional opportunities to provide feedback on the issue of deer at Griffy Lake Nature Preserve on April 2, April 9 and April 23, 2014 during Common Council meetings to discuss the ordinance change. The proposal to reduce the deer herd by sharpshooting has received extensive coverage in the local daily newspaper, *The Herald-Times*.

The Griffy Lake Nature Preserve may be periodically closed for short periods of time. Conspicuous signs at the three main parking areas (at the Griffy Lake boathouse, at the former water treatment plant on Dunn Street, and at the former dog park below the dam on Dunn Street) will inform park users of the possibility of temporary closure of the property. These closures will take place intermittently during the allotted sharpshooting activity window (November-February) when property use is fairly low, so park users will be minimally inconvenienced.

Bloomington Parks and Recreation will also communicate with staff from the IU Research and Teaching Preserve to coordinate notification about property closures. While sharpshooting activities will not take place on IURTP-owned property, some hiking trails do cross property boundaries.

Mr. Renneisen stated that there are several logistics, including applying for a permit from DNR to conduct the sharpshooting activities, that the department must pursue if approved by the Board today. Staff feels the recommended sharpshooting is the most humane method of reducing the deer population at Griffy.

Mr. Coyne acknowledged the Deer Task Force, Councilman Rollo, Councilman Ruff, and the IU Outdoor Research and Teaching Preserve for all of their time and efforts in researching the deer effects at Griffy. He reiterated that today's meeting is to discuss the process of using sharpshooting of managing the deer population, not to discuss whether or not there is in fact an issue. He recommended an initial 5 minutes per person for public comment. More public comment may follow after everyone has had an opportunity to speak.

The following individuals addressed the Board and expressed their support of the efforts to decrease the deer population at Griffy: Richard Martin, Dave Rollo, Andy Ruff, Keith Clay.

Keith Clay, Phd., addressed the Board and stated that he has been working in the Griffy area since the 1980's doing research. The vegetation at Griffy has never been worse and the deer population has never been higher. He feels the Department has an obligation to follow the Deer Task Force recommendation to reduce the deer population.

Richard Martin addressed the Board and stated that he has lived on Hinkle Road for about 40 years. The past 14 years he has observed a distinct increase in the deer population and has observed a noticeable difference in the vegetation at his home. He agrees that the deer population does need to be addressed. He asks that surrounding neighbors be notified when the shooting is to occur.

Councilman Rollo addressed the Board and stated that the Shelton research paper provides empirical data that there is an over population of deer at Griffy. The Griffy Lake Master Plan refers to scientific studies that have clear evidence of deer over population. The Deer Task Force met for over two years and took public comment and represented a large population of the community and concluded that the deer cull is the only way to reduce the population. Sharpshooting is the safest way to kill the deer. He stated that Dr. Cook-Patton also indicated that an aerial count is not necessary as there is already evidence that there is a deer over population and because of the lack of containment, it would be difficult to obtain an accurate count.

Councilman Ruff addressed the Board and stated that the Council has been accused of being dismissive, but the Council members have spent countless hours responding to e-mails and hearing public comment, but the disagreement remains. While some people see no damage at the preserve, there is a lot of scientific documentation and clear evidence that notes severe ecologic damage from the deer population at Griffy. He also feels as though something needs to be done rather quickly, and that we don't have a lot of time as some would think. When the Deer Task Force report was released and the opponents to the sharpshooting began expressing their concerns, the DNR indicated they would be willing to do further research on the sterilization options, but none of the opponents came forward at that time to help find funding for this research.

The following individuals all addressed the Board expressing their concerns regarding the deer population and voiced their opposition to the deer cull at Griffy:

Bruce Anderson, Larime Wilson, Sandra Shapshay, Dave Stewart, Lucille Bertuccio, Anne Sterling, Maria Heslin, Danna Jackson, Eric Oast, Bruce Bundy, Suzanne Halverson, Alyce Miller, Steven Weeks, Marc Haggerty.

Highlights from the comments:

- A concern was expressed about using an out of state firm to conduct the sharpshooting rather than allowing local citizens to conduct the hunt.
- The Shelton research study notes that invasive plants grew 30 times more in fenced areas where deer could not browse. If the deer population is reduced, that would increase the need and cost to contain invasive plant growth.
- Bloomington Advocates for Non-Violence oppose the sharpshooting plan. It is difficult to measure deer density based on pellet counts and that raises the question as to how large the population is and what the ideal population is. Low deer population is good for biodiversity. There is little to no difference between the vegetation outside the exclosures and the vegetation inside the exclosures. An aerial density count should be conducted to gain a more accurate count.
- This is a very divisive issue in the community. The homeowners near Griffy are creating places that are attractive to deer. Why not try to provide plants that deer do not like to eat?
- A concern was expressed regarding the use of lead bullets to kill the deer. There is a fear that the lead ammunition will contaminate the environment at Griffy and they will contaminate the meat that will be donated to the food pantry.
- Little to no deer damage was observed on a tour of the preserve. No deer were seen during the tour. The Parks Department is ranked high in the country and they should be able to find a better, more creative way to control the deer population.
- Has the Board done due diligence in considering the contract with White Buffalo? One deer cull will not be sufficient and ongoing kills will be necessary to control the deer population.
- Is there empirical evidence that Griffy is dying? There does not appear to be a sense of urgency to take action right now.
- Supporting the deer cull – one person stated that sharpshooting is the most careful decision ever made by local government. Would like to see something done to coordinate with Indiana University to control the deer population on the contiguous property at the IURTP.
- One person expressed her concern that many of the people who have addressed the Council members have been dismissed. It is important to listen to the voices of those that are concerned.
- The Shelton study does not provide enough evidence that there is an over abundance of deer at Griffy. No one knows how many deer are at Griffy and an aerial count would provide that information.

Mr. Carter asked the representative from White Buffalo if the weapons are silenced.

Mr. Rodts stated that there is some sound. It is muffled but there will be noise.

Will there be lead residue from the bullets?

Mr. Rodts stated that, yes, there is some lead residue, but the lead from cars is substantially higher than the lead from the bullets used for the sharpshooting.

Mr. Hoffmann asked how much advanced notice will be provided.

Mr. Renneisen stated that any closure of the park would be 12 hours in advance, but 24 hours notice may not be possible.

Mr. Hoffmann asked why there is no aerial count.

Mr. Renneisen stated that the snapshot at Griffy today may look very different from tomorrow or a week from now. The number of deer is less relevant than the fact that there is evidence of over population.

Mr. Hoffmann asked Mr. Renneisen what happens if this moves forward. If the DNR were to decide that other methods would work, could the City make a decision about that before November?

Mr. Renneisen stated that, yes, the permitting time would allow for the City to take a different route should an alternative solution be found suitable.

Mr. Coyne stated that he is comfortable with the count issue and feels that staff and the outside experts have satisfied any questions regarding the number of deer being less relevant than the evidence of over population. He still has some question regarding the urgency. He asked Mr. Cotter if this issue is becoming more urgent.

Mr. Cotter stated that the deer herd is increasing in size and will continue to increase with no predators. He is concerned that some of the plant species may not be able to recover. He feels that the issue is becoming very urgent and needs to be addressed.

Mr. Hoffmann asked why the White Buffalo proposal was being considered over the other two that were submitted.

Mr. Renneisen stated that all three proposals submitted sharpshooting as the best response. White Buffalo has the most diverse offerings and has been the service provider with the longest history. Staff checked references and all were very good.

Ms. St. John thanked everyone for their comments and feels this is as uncomfortable for her making this decision as it is for those who are speaking to oppose. All opinions are important. This matter has been deeply debated for a long time. She is going to vote to approve the contract as she feels it is important to be good stewards and manage the nature preserve as much as possible. Public education needs to increase so the public is aware of things that dissuade the deer from living in urban settings.

Mr. Hoffmann thanked everyone for all of their creative energy and passion and for speaking today as well. This is not an easy decision, nor should it be an easy decision. He's glad to see the number of people that care so deeply. He feels there are three distinct dimensions to the issue: 1) Scientific – do we really have a problem with the number of deer at Griffy? If so, how serious is the problem? He feels the task force was able to answer these questions and has spent the past few years devoting time to this issue. 2) Ethical – How should we respond to the problem? This is the most difficult of all the questions. This is what the City Council has dealt with over the past months. This is their responsibility to represent their constituents and make the best decisions based on the information provided. He stated that he wrote a letter to the City Council to take responsibility for the ecological issues at Griffy. He feels the political process answered that question. 3) Logistical – He feels these are the questions that are the decision of the Park Board. He is confident that the Parks staff has done due diligence and the contractor is the best contractor and the method of sharpshooting is the best method. He also feels that conducting an aerial count is not necessary, but rather to regulate the problem and measure the results. He has also done research and watched video and is confident that White Buffalo is the best choice and he will be approving the contract as well.

Mr. Carter stated that the 2008 Griffy Lake Master Plan clearly indicates that there is an issue with the deer population at Griffy. He also attended City Council meetings and listened to the debate for hours. He also thanked everyone for coming to speak about something that is so important to them. He too feels White Buffalo and sharpshooting is the best choice.

Mr. Coyne stated that he has walked Griffy for the last 35 years and has witnessed the degradation of the nature preserve. A lot has changed in the past 35 years. He supports the due diligence that has been done and he too will support the contract with White Buffalo. He hopes there will be other options in the future, but for now, he feels this is the best option.

Mr. Hoffmann made a motion to approve the wildlife services management contract with White Buffalo. Ms. St. John seconded the motion. Motion unanimously carried.

## **D. REPORTS**

D-1. Recreation Division – No Report

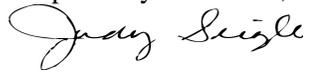
D-2. Sports Division – No Report

D-3. Operations Division – No Report

**ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



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Judy Seigle, Secretary Board of Park Commissioners