



## ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES ADVISORY COUNCIL

City of Bloomington Parks and Recreation

Regular Meeting

**Lower Cascades Park – Sycamore Shelter**

**Wednesday, June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

**4:30 - 6:00 p.m.**

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### **I. CALL TO ORDER at 4:36pm**

### **II. ROLL CALL –**

Denise Gardiner, Autumn Brunelle, Jeff Ehman, Bill Jones, Marne Potter, Dave Parkhurst, Angie Shelton  
Staff: Steve Cotter, Joanna Sparks, Rebecca Swift, Natalia Dickerson

### **III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – February 2024 (April Meeting was Canceled Due to Poor Weather)**

### **IV. AGENDA**

#### **A. Public Appearances**

A-1 Public Comment Period  
No Public Comment.

#### **B. Old Business**

B-1 Griffy Lake Nature Preserve Deer Browse Study

Cotter discussed current contract with White Buffalo, planning to contract again with Eco Logic for at least 1 more year. Results from study: Plant growth plateaued, potentially due to environmental conditions. This is surprising because the number of deer harvested decreased as well as average plant height has plateaued. ERAC members expressed support to continue contracting with White Buffalo to conduct deer hunts at Griffy.

#### **C. New Business**

C-1 Education Update

Nature Days concluded in April for the 2023/2024 school year, hosting 780+ 6th graders and 750+ 4th graders. Thanks to ERAC members who volunteer to help cover stations and lead student groups!

Get Outdoors Day was hosted on June 8<sup>th</sup> at Switchyard Park in collaboration with Indiana University, Outdoor Adventures, and Hoosier National Forest. The event hosted 350+ attendees!

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Bike To Earth Day event took place on April 20th at Switchyard Park in collaboration with the City's Economic and Sustainability Department 2024. The event hosted 350+ attendees, gave away native tree, and had a volunteer recognition event, however Little 500 conflicted with the event so it was difficult to obtain volunteers and attendance was lower, hopes to change to a different weekend in 2025. Arbor Day celebration took place on April 26th at Crestmont Park Urban Forestry gave away native tree seedlings and planted larger native trees.

Climate Action Workshops: continue to occur monthly typically on Wednesdays at Switchyard Park from 12:00-12:45 in collaboration with the City's Economic and Sustainability Department. Currently, there is an option to join virtually on Zoom and attend in person. Most recently at the June workshop, CBU's Residential Stormwater Grants were discussed; residents urged to apply, great opportunity to address concerns for private property owners and city managers, expecting more water, wetter climate, this fund aims to mitigate this issue, eligible for those who pay taxes to the City of Bloomington or live within city limits, application live now but cutoff on September 1 to apply, typical funding between \$1,000-5,000, best to apply with neighbors when affected together, the city works with a consulting firm that calculates costs compared to benefits to ensure sensible planning before qualified contractors complete the project, natural remedies and green infrastructure preferred especially when spaces for pollinators are involved, hopes to expand program and reach more residents Next Workshop is scheduled on July 10; topic: win-win save money and mitigate climate change; plan to discuss Inflation Reduction Act tax incentives for energy efficient appliances, solar energy, better windows, and weatherizing homes.

Griffy Insect Inventory Project is ongoing, aiming to go from July- September. Staff are hoping to see what insects are out there to help inform management decisions Additional temporary laborers will be hired to help support this project. Additionally, there is a citizen science incentive through iNaturalist where people can take pictures of insects with location and timestamps to aid in inventory effort. Brandon Olson, BPRD Education Specialist, will go through reports and track accuracy. The goal is to incentivize engagement with submissions and educate the public.

Sparks provided an update on her Leaves & Seeds programs and Weed Wrangles Project. The goal is to engage public into the urban green spaces. Currently, there are 9 restoration areas taken out of regular mowing cycle allowing people to tend to small plants and get hands on experience outdoors. On the first Saturday of each month Weed Wrangles occur at Lower Cascades, open to more participants, volunteers, and support staff. Sparks shared an update on a large detention pond project planned by City of Bloomington Utilities between East Southdowns and Sheridan Drives (near Bryan Park). The plan is to clear trees from a plot of land to construct a detention pond to decrease flooding.

Adopt-a-Stream had their first BasicHoosier Riverwatch training of the year, recruited 2 new volunteers, 8 AAS volunteers attended event. Currently, there are 23 active Adopt-a-Stream volunteers.

Swift shared that Bug Fest will be hosted on August 24, 10-2 PM, at Karst Farm Park in collaboration with Monroe County Parks, Wonderlab, and Purdue Extension.

Starting the design process for ~5 interpretation signs at Griffy Lake Nature Preserve, may need to be passed off as Swift is transitioning into new Director role. Potential topics for signs that were discussed by ERAC members; wetlands, trees species, site history, explain sedimentation, explain why there is no swimming allowed, education about wildlife (specifically deer), and plant life including invasive species, explain why not to let your dog off of their leash, reminders to stay on the trail, warning signs for snakes, falling rocks, ticks etc., "you are the visitor not the animals", story of Bloomington's water supply, look into grouping ideas together where possible, Swift ensures ERAC that more ideas can be shared when they come to mind. Goal is to finalize five topics and start researching these topics by end of October so designs can be submitted by the end of the year. Advice for signs: 250 words or less, more photos than words, Canva and Historical Society are great resources for graphics, goal is to come up with 5 signs for the Nature Trail as it attracts the most new people, QR code on signs to take people to YouTube channel and OuterSpatial app.

## C-2 Mossback Fish Habitat Installation – Griffy Lake

Swift shared that the Mossback Fish Habitat installation was carried out on April 22 with the support of Indiana Department of Natural Resources Fish & Wildlife Division. Staff installed 18 fish habitat structures along the Causeway Trail at Griffy Lake Nature Preserve where there was not much aquatic vegetation and a great area to increase fishing opportunities. The materials were purchased using \$2,000 of grant funding from Friends of Reservoirs. GIS coordinates provided exact location of structures, permit approval from the state was granted, federal approval was not needed, and local flood permit was obtained from Monroe County.

Swift shares brown trout stocking proposal for Griffy, goal to increase fishing without threatening the integrity of the ecosystem. Griffy Lake is on the list but is a low priority to receive the fish from the program, group discussed concerns about the fact that trout need moving water to live which is not available at Griffy Lake. BPRD would need to find out if introduction would increase competition and disrupt ecosystem before allowing this to occur. Also the demand may not be there to necessitate bringing in a new species. Ultimately ERAC does not support the introduction of trout in Griffy Lake but rather suggests enhancing the current natural ecosystem with habitat restoration projects.

## C-3 Miller-Showers Park Pond Maintenance

CBU has hired a contractor to perform the dredging work in the pools at Miller-Showers Park. Unfortunately, the Contractor is currently in the eastern region of the United States on another job, however when able they will mobilize to Indiana, hopefully by the end of July. They will aid in pumping sediment out of the main pool, dewatering it in the parking lot then placing the water back in the pools. This operation will force parking on the south end of the park to temporarily close. Parks and Rec will contract vegetation restoration, while CBU is contractually committed to cleaning the vortex filters annually to prevent future problems. Concerns were raised by Brunelle regarding aquatic life being affected by this project, but Sparks assures that most life will not be harmed aside from some small fish that fit through the filters. Sparks added that the final turf removal at the park took place, this area will be turned into more prairie. Swift shared that some Miller-Showers Park signs have been vandalized and will need to be replaced.

## C-4 Project Updates (Gateway, Hopewell, Building Trades, Griffy Loop Trail Project Phase III)

Swift shared updates on the following projects:

The Bloomington Gateway Project formally called Monolith, is underway at Miller-Showers Park. Tim Street is working on the financial aspect of the project with Street and Engineering. The gateway sign will feature dim backlit lettering on limestone blocks. The sign will be built before the art installation is finalized. The project has \$150,000 allocated to pay for the art however submissions from local artists are needed to pick a design. The Bloomington Arts Commission will decide the art installation. The project is scheduled to begin later this year.

Hopewell Commons development is at 60% completion currently and is on track to be complete by the end of the year. Features include walking paths, a seating area under a pergola, a small stage, native landscaping, a natural playscape, and a public art installation. There will be no restrooms on site but there will be two drinking fountains. The “backbone” of this project is to provide green stormwater infrastructure. This park will be built where previous storage areas were. Silva Cells installed for trees, there are enough cells for 120+ trees to go in, nearly all trees will be native trees. Two years worth of contracted maintenance will be expected for all planted areas. Permeable pavers and an astroturf area will be in the final design however a spray pad has been removed due to the difficulty of maintenance.

Building Trades Park Master Plan is close to completion however there is still time for ERAC members to weigh in on final design details prior to its completion. Parks contracted with Mader Design to develop the plan. Tim Street has emphasized the importance of improving accessibility

at this park by fixing, altering, and building adequate walkways, in addition to improving restroom lighting. With the master plan still being finalized, Swift sent out a digital file with work that has already been done and proposals for future construction. The Park's Phase 1 develop for accessbibility improvements has a goal to have bid docuemtns ready by the end of the year.

Cotter reported that the Griffy Loop Trail is now in Phase 3. The walkway and dam trails are now completed as well as the south shore section of the Loop Trail. Staff are still working on getting funding for the north shore imporvements. One approach to doing this could include using unspent BOND money and applying for a Land and Water Conservation Fund Grants. The Griffy Loop Trail will be about 7 miles in total once complete. New direction and orientation signs are being installed at south shore intersections and at major trailheads.

BPRD is still working with the County to connect Switchyard, RCA, Wapehani and the Clear Creek Trail by way of a Power Line Trail. The north extension of the B-Line is currently under construction to make more connections throughout the City and out to Ellettsville.

#### C-5 August 2024 Meeting Agenda Items & Member Recruitment

Swift reminded the board that there is 1 vacancy currently, however an additional member will be leaving soon therefore 2 new members will be needed for the Council. She encouraged members to help recruit people to apply for these positions. Also ERAC members will be asked to vote on how often future meetings should take place at the December meeting.

Swift noted she will no longer lead these meetings due to her new position, however she will still be accessible as a resource. Cotter is to act in her absence until a new employee is hired for her current position.

After Swift opened the floor for potential ideas to discuss at the next ERAC meeting, Jeff Ehman suggested that ERAC should look into environmental impacts and safety of encampments, including human waste, to understand the scope of the problem then decide if action needs to be taken. Swift adds that there is a concern as well with the safety of these individuals with predictions of increased precipitation and encampents location in riparian corridors. To start, Brunelle suggests that ERAC could potentially provide advice as to where are better places than others to camp and to share this information to those who interact with these populations the most. This way the information reaches those who need it.

August agenda suggestions: Park Project Updates, Stiltgrass Management, Encroachment Challenges

#### **IV. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:01 pm.

**NEXT MEETING: WEDNESDAY, August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
Winslow Woods Park – Shelter**