



ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES ADVISORY COUNCIL

City of Bloomington Parks and Recreation
Regular Meeting

RCA Community Park Large Shelter

Wednesday, October 8, 2025

4:30 - 6:00 p.m.

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I. CALL TO ORDER at 4:35 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL –

Denise Gardiner, Bill Jones, Marne Potter, Cathy Meyer, David Parkurst, Anne Crecelius, Jeff Ehman

Staff: Heidi Shoemaker, Mary Welz, Tristyn Berube, Haskell Smith

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – August 2025

IV. AGENDA

A. Appearances

A-1 Public Comment Period
No Public Comment.

B. Old Business

B-1 Bird Town Support

Shoemaker presented the acceptance of the Bird Town renewal application from Indiana Audubon to the Park Board on August 28 where they unanimously agreed to support this certification. A press release has been created and both Indiana Audubon and Bloomington Parks and Recreation will be sharing this information with the community very soon. Bloomington's acknowledgment and bio can be found on birdcity.org. Shoemaker asked the Council to review the website and to contact her with any changes or updates.

This renewal lasts for 2 years so we will apply again in 2027. Shoemaker has a spreadsheet to track our work over the next two years and has shared it with the Bird Town Committee. Jones asked if the City would be paying for the application fee in 2027 instead of the Sycamore Audubon Society. Shoemaker stated that she could not speak for the City budget two years in the future. Gardiner remarked that members of SAS would rather pay the application fee than compile the information for the application.

B-2 Vegetation Management Update

Welz shared the City is contracted with EcoLogic and KCI Technologies to help staff with vegetation management. Work for 2025 contracts is complete or near complete at Miller-Showers Park, Rogers Family Park, and Switchyard Park. EcoLogic has been working on a broad level mapping project at Switchyard Park. They are currently collecting baseline data and will continue that work into the spring. They are collaborating with the City's GIS department to record the baseline data and to track progress in the future. The City is also hoping to contract with EcoLogic to work on invasive plant management, especially privet, along the Wetland Trail at Griffy Lake. KCI is treating winter creeper at Crestmont and Asian bush honeysuckle at Lower Cascades. Welz is also hoping to encumber some current budget year funds for future prescribed fire at Griffy Lake.

Internal Vegetation staff have been working on managing overgrowth on public trails and treating lesser celandine. Staff has made a lot of progress on Japanese knotweed treatments using the treatment timing and methods to help reduce the quantity of herbicide we need to use. Japanese stiltgrass is still a concern and staff had to prioritize the areas of focus. They are also working on Johnson grass and Canada thistles. Staff has been in the nature preserve of Griffy near Meadowood removing Asian bush honeysuckle. Visitors should see a noticeable difference in this area.

Potter asked about the partial prairie mowing at Rogers Family Park. The mowing is required while the prairie planting is establishing to remove undesired vegetation. It is unfortunate that the timing coincides with a lot of pollinator activity and monarch migration, but will hopefully only occur in the first 2-3 years. If it is not successful, spot treatments will be needed in the future.

Ehman offered his services of an external review to look at quality and data content standards for the vegetation management portion of the City's GIS.

C. New Business

C-1 Urban Forestry

Smith noted there are fewer than 1000 Callery pear trees the City has planted that need to be removed. He and his team have been able to remove approximately 300 City-planted Callery pears this year. He does believe they will reach the goal of completing the removal of all the trees within 15 years.

His team is also removing Tree of Heaven using a basal bark technique and then removing the tree once it dies. There are currently 16 trees ready for removal. There are no signs of spotted lantern fly in Bloomington, but they have been recorded in

Columbus, IN. Haskell is hopeful that it will not reach Bloomington for at least a couple years.

The elm zigzag sawfly has been confirmed in Bloomington by the state entomologist and Haskell. This is another invasive insect from Asia and has already spread past the point of containment in Bloomington. This insect is a defoliator so a healthy elm should be able to survive. If the tree is already stressed or diseased, it will likely not survive it.

Haskell's team planted 142 trees in the spring which is a smaller number than previous years. They are hoping to plant 595 more trees this fall to reach their planting goals. There will be 20 trees going in along Kirkwood and the square. Some of the trees in this planting will be smaller species like redbud and hawthorn and will be in planters. Ehman asked if the sweaters knitted on tree trunks hurt the trees at all. Haskell mentioned there is no harm as long as they are removed from spring to October when the tree is growing.

The tree assistance program closed out 2025 with 22 applications. This program allows property owners to get help with tree removal if they plant a replacement tree. Many of the trees removed in this program are dead trees that pose a risk to person or property. The Urban Forestry team got a new truck last year and that allowed them to increase pruning efforts this year. So far, 1,215 trees have been pruned. After tornado damage, many trees needed to be removed. UF removed 257 so far this year.

Haskell is working on a tree inventory that is reaching close to 24,000 inventoried trees.

Meyer expressed a concern that Gillian Field has encouraged reporting of Tree of Heaven on private property, but there is no action taken by the City if you do. Haskell said he didn't know what could be done on private property. Meyer stated the City code says you can't grow invasive or noxious plants but there is no method of enforcement. Meyer stated there may be inconsistencies in enforcement.

C-2 Education Update

Berube introduced herself as the new OLP fellow through IU. She is getting her Master's in Environmental Science with a concentration in water resources and will be working with the Parks Department for the next 2 years.

Shoemaker shared the Nature Day season is in full swing with the first rain out happening this week. Shoemaker noted that significant learning is being tracked at the Leonard Springs Nature Days this fall. Students take a pre- and post- test to track learning. On the pre-test, there are 9 questions where students show less than 50% accuracy. On the post test, the lowest accuracy rate for any question is 55%. Bug Fest wrapped up with over 1400 participants. Our first monarch tagging season went well with 20 individuals getting tagged. We had a very busy fall and were not able to post on socials and advertise pop up programs as we had originally hoped, but the work still got done. Staff did tag monarchs at the Fairview After School Nature Club and reported the students really enjoyed this new experience and wishing the monarchs luck as they released them on their way to Mexico. Now that staff have experienced the process, Shoemaker is hopeful they can offer paid programs in 2026. Shoemaker also updated the Council on Banneker Summer Nature Club. Staff saw more students this summer and took new field trips, including Hilltop Gardens and Hoosier Heights. The grant report has been shared with the Summer Star Foundation. Griffy Lake is nearing the end of the

season and is now open weekends only. The staff will have an end of season meeting to discuss what went well this year and what improvements can be made in the future.

Gardiner shared Sassafras Audubon Society had their feeder cleaning last week and cleaned 118 bird feeders.

Sparks was absent so there was no Urban Greenspace update.

C-3 Deer Management at Griffy Lake Nature Preserve

Welz stated Griffy Lake will be closed from 11:00 p.m. on Friday night through 5:00 a.m. on Monday morning during the weekends of November 15-16 and November 22-23 for deer management. We will continue to contract with White Buffalo to manage the hunt and register hunters, but are using a new security team this year. MSI security already works with the Parks Department and will partner with us for the hunts. Signage will go up at the park and a press release will go out about the closures, but staff will be stationed at various entrances to make sure the public does not enter the park during these two weekends. Landowners near the property will also get letters in the mail. Welz is hoping to update the deer management section of the Parks website to show the positive outcomes on the plant community because of these maintenance hunts.

Jones mentioned he lives near Griffy and has seen deer in the center of his housing development and he is hoping the hunt yields more than last year.

We will invite Kevin Tunesvick to report on the vegetation study at the December or February meeting.

C-4 Project Updates

Shoemaker spoke on behalf of Swift who was absent. Building Trade Phase 1 is complete. The shelter has two square accessible picnic tables, but the plan is to add one more standard square and a grill. There was a small celebration with the Prospect Hill Neighborhood Association on Friday Sept 26 to celebrate the completion of Phase 1 improvements at the park including the new shelter, a new drinking fountain with bottle filler, three new bike racks, two accessible parking spaces, and an accessible multi-use trail that allows users to connect to Howe St and 2nd St. Phase 1 improvements were funded by ARPA and the City will look for ways to fund future phase improvements at the park.

E&B Paving was awarded the bid for the asphalt repair and enhancement project. They already completed the asphalt repairs at Miller-Showers Park and installed root barriers so the tripping problem does not occur again. Rose Hill Cemetery walkway is next. The Griffy parking lot entrance is planned for repaving the first week in November. RCA Pickleball/Tennis Court repairs are scheduled to take place in the spring 2026.

Milestone was awarded the bid for the Rogers Street crossing and the Bloomington Rail Trail. This project will require a temporary full trail closure some time from mid-October through mid-November as well as some partial road closures along S. Rogers. Work includes realigning the trail crossing, paving sections of the trail on both sides of the road, installing a new street light, and a pedestrian controlled rapid flashing beacon.

The Powerline Trail project is in the 4th round of review. Swift reported she is optimistic this will be the last round review with CBU and Planning with the project going out for bid

in late 2025 to start construction in spring 2026. Work will include constructing a multi-use trail (0.9 mile) within the Duke Powerline Easement to connect SYP and RCA Park. Glow Rock will be laid on the asphalt top layer to aid in visibility since we cannot install lights along the trail. This rock will absorb sunlight and then will glow in the dark. There will be a trailhead installed along S Rogers that includes a couple benches, bike racks, and six native tree plantings that are outside the utility easement. A raised crosswalk will be added at the SYP entrance across Rogers St with a pedestrian crossing beacon installed.

Welz shared she is partnering with Hoosier Hikers Council for a volunteer event at Griffy Lake to reroute a trail. She is hoping to host a volunteer work day on December 20 as long as the weather cooperates.

C-5 December Meeting Agenda Items

Deer management update, Ecologic herbaceous plant survey, Aquatic Control aquatic plant survey and Hoosier Hikers volunteer day update. Meyer would also like an update on the health of Miller-Showers after it was drained and dredged including water quality, sediment, algae, and plant health.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

NEXT MEETING: WEDNESDAY, December 10 2025

Banneker Family Center