



ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES ADVISORY COUNCIL
City of Bloomington Parks and Recreation
Regular Meeting

Banneker Community Center
Wednesday, December 10, 2025
4:30 - 6:00 p.m.

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I. CALL TO ORDER at 4:33 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL –

Denise Gardiner, Marne Potter, Cathy Meyer, David Parkurst, Jeff Ehman, Angie Shelton, Adam Fudickar

Staff: Heidi Shoemaker, Mary Welz, Rebecca Swift

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – October 2025

IV. AGENDA

A. Appearances

A-1 Public Comment Period

Jeff Ehman notified the Council that he would not be applying for another term and that he is actively trying to find his replacement from Utilities.

B. Old Business

B-1 Deer Management at Griffy Lake Nature Preserve Results

Welz presented some results from the November deer reduction noting that 26 deer were culled this year compared to 19 deer in 2024. White Buffalo, who helps coordinate the hunts, will provide a full report of the results including our first year collecting deer chest measurements to track health metrics on the deer. Twenty-four hunters were approved from the screening process, but only 22 participated over the 4 days of the reduction. Complete results will be shared during the February meeting. Fudickar asked if hunters are allowed to take both males and females and Welz replied since Griffy is within the DNR Division of Fish and Wildlife Deer Reduction Zone, hunters can take all

ages and sexes. The breakdown of ages and sexes of the deer removed in 2025 and more information about IDNR Fish and Wildlife Deer Reduction Zone policies will be part of the information shared in February. Welz explained that hunters are not guaranteed to be successful during the 4-day hunt so as the numbers of deer are decreasing, we have also seen some hunters drop out of the program. In their report, White Buffalo will provide more detail about the selection process for the hunters including background checks and proficiency screening.

Kevin Tungesvick from Eco Logic joined the meeting virtually to share the 2025 vegetative study results. Eco Logic did not conduct a woody browse survey in 2025, but continued to focus on herbaceous plants, specifically Solomon's seal and Jack-in-the-pulpit. Solomon's seal had an increase in heights this year, but after 5 years of increasing heights jack-in-the-pulpit declined to the height it was in 2020. Jack-in-the-pulpit produces a corm to store energy that will allow them to grow the following year. Eco Logic believes there was a change in the weather in 2024 or early 2025 that prevented the corms from storing enough energy. Jack-in-the-pulpit is a more nuanced indicator of the impact of deer compared to Solomon's seal that experiences direct browsing from the deer. Jack-in-the-pulpit is an indicator of soil compaction due to deer trampling, and recovering from compaction is a slower process than restricting deer browse. Solomon's seal 2025 plant height was the tallest on record since we began inventories in 2018. Tungesvick stated that deer both benefit from and spread invasive species and that both issues need to be managed in order to protect the park. The deer hang out mainly upstream in the Griffy Creek valley where there is an abundance of invasive privet providing winter browse. The Council expressed concern about the privet in the area and Welz and Swift shared that there is money in the 2026 budget to tackle invasives in that area. There also need to provide outreach and education to the surrounding properties to encourage invasive removal.

Meyer asked if Jack-in-the-pulpit and Solomon's seal were the only two plants being monitored as indicators of deer browse. Tungesvick mentioned that trilliums can also be studied but there are currently too few individual trillium plants in the study quadrants to provide scientifically sound results. The woody browse survey was discontinued because approximately 16% of the woody plants in the sampling quadrants are now young ash trees that are not favored by deer. When the study first began, ash samplings were heavily browsed because there was a high demand for food. As the deer population declined, the browse on ash samplings decreased and the study results began to level out from year to year.

Fudickar asked Shelton about her interpretation of the data. Shelton stated that so far the deer reduction effort looks to be successful. The number of harvested deer is on an overall downward trend that would indicate there are fewer deer in the park and a near 50% increase in the height of Solomon's seal plants in a good indicator of forest health. Additionally, seeing no signs of browse on the ash saplings is a surprising result that is showing these management practices to be effective. Swift added that the City has not been able to get an official count of the Griffy deer population, but technology is improving and when the opportunity becomes available, it is something the City would like to accomplish. Determining carrying capacity can be challenging because the deer

don't stay within park boundaries, but we continue to remove more deer each year than we have been advised the park can sustain.

C. New Business

C-1 Griffy Lake Aquatic Plant Management Update (Aquatic Control)

Brendan Hastie, Aquatic Biologist from Aquatic Control, joined the meeting virtually to share the 2025 updates to the Griffy Lake Aquatic Vegetation Management Plan. Aquatic Control has used the herbicide ProcettaCOR EC to treat invasive Eurasian watermilfoil on and off since 2019. Bloomington Parks and Recreation was awarded a LARE (Lake and River Enhancement) grant from Indiana Department of Natural Resources for a Tier Two survey and invasive aquatic plant maintenance. The survey found Eurasian watermilfoil in low quantities in eight locations around the lake. The highest density was at the boat ramp. Boats and boat trailers often carry invasive plants and animals from one aquatic property to another aquatic property. In total, Aquatic Control treated 4.68 acres of Griffy Lake in May 2025.

They returned in late June 2025 to study 50 sites in the lake to compare to the historical records of the plants found in these sites. They found native coontail and slender naiad in 14 of the 50 sites. Nonnative brittle naiad was found in 3 sites and Eurasian watermilfoil overlapped in 2 of those sites. Additional plants noted during the survey included water willow, American pondweed, swamp hibiscus, pickerelweed, water stargrass, duckweed, creeping water primrose, and bulrush showing a good diversity of native plants throughout the lake. Hastie noted they are seeing some native plants return that haven't been there for a while. Hastie also noted that there was a need to treat 15 acres last year and just under 5 acres this year showing the treatments are making good progress. He recommends continuing to apply for LARE grants. Shoemaker confirmed that Bloomington LARE grant application has already been submitted for 2026 and she has received confirmation from IDNR that they have received it. Swift noted that in future grant applications we may apply for funds for shoreline restoration. Welz asked about creeping water primrose and if it was a cause for concern. Hastie replied that it is native and provides cover for young fish, but it is a creeping plant as the name implies. If it did become a problem in an area, it could be treated, but LARE funds would not cover the treatment since it is native.

C-2 Education Update

Shoemaker updated the Council that Joanna Sparks will no longer be making regular appearances at these meetings but may come from time to time if she has things to share.

The Winter/Spring 2026 program guide has been sent to the printers and scheduled to arrive at homes on December 17th so keep an eye out for that. Programs and activities are already available online, but registration will open on the 17th. With new staff comes new program ideas so the first program of the year will be Winter's Tea Time at Lower Cascades Park taking advantage of the option for a warm fire.

We are also making progress on the Griffy interpretive signs. The locations for sign installation have been determined and funds will be carried over from 2025 to 2026 to cover the costs of installation. Shoemaker met with Jon Behrman and Welz at the site of previous prescribed burns so the sign covering the management of Griffy Lake will connect with what visitors are actually seeing at the sign location. This is the first winter that we have a year-round education employee besides the Natural Resources Coordinator so the year-round education specialist will focus on the information on the history of Griffy Lake as a drinking water source. She has already met with the Historical Society to look for photos for the sign and the Society has mentioned they will waive any fees since we are with the City.

Shoemaker recently met with representatives from the other organizations that make up WINGS (Women in Nature Gaining Skills). WINGS originally began to get more women involved in more male-dominated outdoor activities like hunting, fishing, and skeet shooting. Over the years, it branched out to include more organizations and included more skills and knowledge-based classes. WINGS has made some changes that include more flexibility with the program calendar, each organization being responsible for their own registration, and the option for organizations to charge a fee. Bloomington Parks offers 2 programs a year as part of their partnership. In 2026, we will offer Monarch Tagging in September and Nature's Tea Time in November. Swift added these changes align with the department's goals of being more financially sustainable. Indiana Senate Bill 1 (SB1) has made some changes to the public budget and the Parks Department is adjusting.

Griffy Lake Boathouse will have some fee changes for 2026. Annual launch permits for 2026 will be \$25 more for motorized boats coming on boat trailers than non-motorized boats. The presentation from Aquatic Control has shown the impact boat trailers can have on the lake. There are additional impacts on our parking lot from the boat trailers and the fee increase will help mitigate some of these costs. The annual launch permits for kayaks, canoes, and paddleboards will remain the same and the daily launch permit fee will remain the same for motorized and non-motorized. Annual launch permits are limited to 100 sales per year based on the 22 boat maximum for the lake but they don't always sell out. The annual launch permits will be reduced to \$40 after Labor Day since they expire at the end of the season. Rental fees for watercraft will increase from \$10 per hour to \$12 per hour.

As stated earlier Ehman is not pursuing another term on ERAC. Crecelius also ended her term early so there are 2 seats available for ERAC. Shoemaker will take the 4 renewal applications to Park Board on Thursday for approval. Hopefully the 2 additional seats will be filled in the beginning of 2026.

C-3 Project Updates

The Power Line Trail is a .9 mile multiuse trail that will connect the Rogers Street entrance of Switchyard Park to RCA Community Park through the power line easement. It will temporarily come to a dead end until a neighboring housing development is constructed and then it will connect to the Mill Trail and the Clear Creek Trail. This project will hopefully provide more bike access to Wapehoni since the parking area is small for that park. The plan will hopefully include a glow in the dark path, but the company we are planning to work with is Canadian so figuring out the financials is a

slow process. Indianapolis recently added glow stone to Pogue's Run Trail. Meyer raised a concern about the glow stones effects on fireflies. Swift mentioned that she was told it had no negative impacts on wildlife, specifically migratory birds because it does not emit a bright light, but she would follow up with the company and ask specifically about fireflies. Swift also mentioned she had some samples she could bring in to show the group that it is not a replacement for streetlights, but does guide users as to where the trail is. No amenities are allowed along the trail due to the easement, but benches, a sign, and bike racks will be at the trailhead. Swift added that public comments requested a bike rack so residents could bike to the trail and then run or walk the trail.

The Bloomington Rail Trail crossing on Rogers St is complete and open. A crossing beacon has been installed, but we have noticed some issues with it functioning. It runs on solar power so we will have to work that out with the contractor. A new street light will be installed in the spring and thermoplastic striping will be added when it is warmer.

Asphalt projects are also complete including the entrance to Griffy Lake parking. It is now one smooth surface with a designated pedestrian crossing and walking area for added safety. Cracks in the trails were repaired at Miller-Showers and the basketball courts were fixed at RCA Community Park. Pickleball and tennis courts at RCA will be repaired in the spring. A new connector entrance was added at Rose Hill Cemetery on the corner by Crescent Donuts and Hinkle's.

The Community Foundation of Monroe County owns Brown's Woods, but the Parks Department has been tasked with its management, as well as Latimer Woods, also owned by the Community Foundation. Parks has been working closely with the Community Foundation, Bloomington Police Department (BPD), and the Office of the Mayor (OOTM) regarding a large encampment at Brown's Woods. Residents of the encampment have been visited by BPD Resource Officers and the Homelessness Response Coordinator through the OOTM and were given a 30-day notice that the encampment would be removed. Once the cleanup is complete, a permanent hiking trail will be installed in Brown's Woods. The Parks Department will work to conserve these woods while opening this recreational asset to the community.

C-4 February Meeting Agenda Items

The group has asked for a representative from White Buffalo to join the February meeting to discuss the deer reduction results. An update on the aquatic plant health at Miller-Showers has also been tabled to February or later.

C-5 2026 Meeting agenda Items

There were no requests for specific agenda items but the Council will continue with the same meeting schedule.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:59 p.m.

NEXT MEETING: WEDNESDAY, February 11, 2026

Allison-Jukebox Community Center