

**ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES ADVISORY COUNCIL
CITY OF BLOOMINGTON PARKS AND RECREATION
REGULAR MEETING**

Wednesday, October 9, 2019
4:30 – 6:00 p.m.

Small Shelter- RCA Park

CALL TO ORDER

Parkhurst called the meeting to order at 4:33 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Cathy Meyer, David Parkhurst, Bill Jones, Denise Gardiner, Angie Shelton
Staff Present: Steve Cotter, Rebecca Jania, Joanna Sparks

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Shelton moved approval of the August minutes, Parkhurst seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

A. PUBLIC APPEARANCES

No public appearance comments

B. OLD BUSINESS

B-1 Aquatic Vegetation Management Update (LARE)

Jania started off by explaining that Aquatic Control came out to treat Griffy Lake. We are stating from 23 acres of Eurasian watermilfoil down to less than 1 acre. They did their second tier survey and found a lot of good natives, but the reality is that it's pretty barren out there since nothing has yet to establish itself. Jania is really looking forward to this next season's vegetation survey. We had Sarah Power's IU class out at Griffy doing some monitoring. She was initially concerned when they came back and there wasn't much out there, so Jania informed Powers that Aquatic Control was out there and did a big treatment this year. Jania is curious to see the results. Aquatic Control will be doing an official presentation of the Tier II results at the upcoming board meeting on October 22nd.

B-2 Goat Farm Prairie Restoration

Sparks informed everyone that they had the First-Saturday work day on the 5th of October. About 20 people showed up and they worked on lots of large bush honeysuckle removal. They had Chris Neggors from The Nature Conservancy with Derek who's a forester with the DNR in Monroe State forest. They used chainsaws for 3 hours. Another part of First-Saturdays included the Weed Wrangle which involves a partnership with MCIRIS (Monroe County Identifying and Reduce Invasive Species). Ellen Jacquart took the new people around and showed them invasive species within the tree planting that was done on Arbor Day earlier this year. They planted 400 trees that Ecologic donated for their 20th anniversary. The parks department paid for the fencing and other miscellaneous items. Around 20% of those trees were lost, so the group on Saturday replaced those trees. They were back out there today (Oct 9th) watering because of the drought conditions. Things are progressing slowly but surely, and the prairie seems to be taking off. Sparks' curious to see what happens next year. She thinks this past spring held back the growth of the current trees, and hoping that they will bounce back next year. If not, BPRD just keep an eye on it. Jones commented that he would've liked to attend the event on Saturday to help out, but he wasn't in town. Jones asked how to see the events

coming up, and Jania told him about the online links, and events coming up in November. Jania will follow up and send a link for the Bloomington Volunteer Network website.

B-3 CHAP Program

Cotter informed everyone that there have been some developments since the last meeting. BPRD were hoping that each hunter would be able to take one antlered deer and four deer without antlers this year, just like last year. Although unfortunately there has been an outbreak of epizootic hemorrhagic disease (EHD) in Indiana, so the number of deer that a hunter can take has been reduced to one antlered deer and two without antlers. So the maximum number of deer a hunter can take is three this year. BPRD is still looking into the possibility of becoming a deer reduction zone, which would increase the number of deer that can be taken. A rule was changed: anybody who leads hunts in Indiana has to get a guide license for \$100. Our contractor (White Buffalo) was not happy about that since it seems to be heading in the wrong direction. Fortunately, the legislature voted to rescind that requirement for anyone leading a hunt that's coordinated by the state DNR. So we dodged that bullet. Shelton asked about the reasoning behind limiting the number of deer that can be taken, and Cotter responded that it's so there would be enough deer for everybody, and that the deer wouldn't be wiped out. Shelton commented that Indiana did something similar to that (wiped out deer) in the 1800's. Cotter goes on to say that in five weeks the CHAP hunt will start. People will do it for three weekends in a row. The dates are November 16-17, 23-24, and 30-December 1. The park will be closed all day from sunrise to sunset for each of those weekends. They will be allowed to hunt anytime between dawn and dusk. A total of 27 hunters have passed a proficiency screening, and we're hopeful that each will come for several days to hunt. All hunters are eligible to come all six days, but we don't expect most of them to come all three weekends. The hunters will have the option of keeping the deer or donating it to Hoosier Hills Food Bank. Sparks asked if the hunters will take the deer to a processor if they choose to donate it, to which Cotter responded that we are still working with the processor on that topic. So we are not sure if the hunter will have to transport the deer or if our contractor will help them. Parkhurst then asked, if a deer has one of these diseases is there a problem with people eating it? Cotter replied: not with the EHD supposedly. Although on the Illinois border, a different disease called chronic wasting disease (CWD) in deer is one that people would not want to eat. There is a possibility that it could show up in Indiana. Cotter goes on to say that there are still a lot of deer out at Griffy, and there is evidence of their browsing. Kevin Tungesvick from Ecologic is doing some vegetation studies at Griffy, and will be giving a presentation to the park board on October 22nd.

Shelton asked Cotter if he has communicated with IU at all about their property, and trying to get some deer off on the back south-east corner. Cotter replies that he has, and that he's communicated with the IURTP folks and Greg from the golf course. They are both cooperating. Cotter received a heads up from Sarah Mincey about 10 days ago that the approval is expected to be obtained within a week. Shelton asked if hunters will be able to shoot on the IU property, to which Cotter replies: definitely not, although there will be some parking available at the IURTP lot on Headley and the lot on the golf course near the IURTP parking lot. Hunters will walk on the trails that are off the golf course, but if they get deer back on the southern boundary of the park, they will be able to bring their deer out through the golf course if we get the approval. Parkhurst brings up dropping acorns to lead the deer. Cotter responds that there was talk of trying to shoo the deer from IU side towards the nature preserve, and we may be able to pull that off. Shelton asked if there is any possibility that IU would allow hunting on that property. Cotter replied that he and others will explore that idea and pass it on to IU, but it's highly unlikely. But there is a possible loophole where hunters would be able to do archery because there's currently a prohibition of discharging firearms on campus, to which Shelton responds that most universities do prohibit the use of a firearm. However, Shelton goes on to

say that a lot of other universities, like Notre Dame and Purdue, have nature preserves and they allow hunting on those properties. She goes on to say that IU's reason for not allowing hunting on the nature preserve is that they don't know anything about the topic. Meyer pointed out that IU used to have a gun range on campus that is now a deer sanctuary. Cotter sums up by saying that we want to encourage IU to allow hunting, and anything that anyone else can do to add to that push would be great. Sparks asked if the boundaries between Griffy and the preserve would be marked and Cotter replied that they will be posting signs and releases access points.

C. NEW BUSINESS

C-1 Education Update

Jania starts off by explaining that there is one more nature day round, with GLND tomorrow (October 10th). There will be a bi-week and the fall season will be finished off the following week. LSND has been every Tuesday, and GLND has been every Thursday. For the most part, it's been really great and positive. The kids are doing well, and we've had a good volunteer and facilitator turn out. Although the main thing that is worth mentioning is there's been a little bit of a concern regarding the results from the last two Tuesday's at LSND. Normally at a creek station, the kids collect macroinvertebrates, identify them, and decide how tolerant they are to pollution. Out of the 12 years that this program has been running, the creek has always been in good/high quality shape. For the last two Tuesdays, 90% of the organisms were dead, and the remaining ones that were alive were of low quality. We collected samples of both the water and the creek critters, and staff brought them to Dillman Waste Water Treatment Plant. No word back on results. Some running theories for this die-off are related to chlorine from pools draining, excessive heat/drought conditions, or possibly pesticides draining into the water. The coming Tuesday, Jania sent staff out to get more samples from the creek, and send them to the IU Lab and Purdue. Jania's hoping that this is a fluke, and the water quality and organisms will bounce back. If the water quality remains low, surrounding homeowners should be notified. Cotter mentioned that the health department could get involved as well. Jania plans to follow up with Kriste Linberg (CBU), Sandy Belth (MCPRD), and COB Health Department. Otherwise, Jania reported COB's education programs are going well.

Shelton described her BNHS classes' field trip to sample water quality around the City. Her students learned Hoosier Riverwatch protocol and analyzed field data. Sites sampled included: Miller-Showers, Lower Cascades, Griffy Lake, and IURTP. Meyer mentioned that there is an INDNR tree steward's class going on at Karst Farm Park. Three BPRD employees are attending that which is great. There's also going to be a free soils class, sponsored by the Monroe County Soil and Water Conservation District. Its three classes starting October 29th, on Tuesday's at Karst Farm Park. Meyer goes on to say that Sparks mentioned the MC-IRIS workshops and programs. There is one scheduled at IU Dunn Woods on October 26th. Lastly, Meyer mentioned the Environmental Education Association of Indiana (EEAI) conference at McCormick's Creek is the first weekend in November. The author Richard Louv, writer of *The Last Child in the Woods* will be in attendance.

Jania then transitions to mention Women in Nature Gaining Skills (WINGS), currently a Facebook group, which is a partnership between BPRD, MCPRD, and INDNR Fish & Wildlife. WINGS is a program meant to teach women skills that allow them to feel empowered and encourages them to seek out opportunities to spend time outdoors. There are hiking classes, birding, archery, fishing, kayaking, etc. This will be the 3rd Sunday of every month, starting this coming January. Women can sign up, and spots are already filling up. The goal is to have a potluck at the end of the year with all the participants and their families, in order to recognize participants who have 'earned their wings' after they participated in eight or more classes. For

more information, anyone can like WINGS on Facebook or look for the advertisement in the COB winter program guide.

C-2 Switchyard Park

Jania says that she just came from a planning meeting for the grand opening event that is set for November. Most of the facilities as far as the basketball courts, bocce ball courts, the skate park, and the splash pad are all completed. The playground has yet to be completed, and the grass is also the big hurdle right now. The sod still needs to be laid down and it needs a minimum of 2 weeks to set before we can hold events on it. Jania will know when the ribbon cutting/activation event will take place by this Friday, after talking to the construction crews and get an idea of when the sod, etc. will be ready. At this point the focus is on tying up loose ends such as doing landscaping and making the park look finished. The most important component is safety, so the reason no one can go out to the park yet is because it isn't safe without hardhats and guides. Jania continues on by saying that the indoor pavilion space should be available for ERAC's December meeting. Jones asks if the B-Line trail is open through Switchyard, to which Jania replies that it is. Cotter comments that there is a detour but everything is accessible. Jania asked Sparks how the planting at Switchyard is going with Ecologic. Sparks responded that it's going well, and there's a minimum soil requirement that Ecologic is taking care of. The soil has been the biggest hiccup in the whole process with trying to find enough top soil and in enough time since a pile of soil has a minimum 3 week turn around for testing. Especially when vendors don't want to hold on to their soil while we wait for testing. The trees sitting on the other side of Rogers St. all summer were supposed to be planted this spring, and the agreements with the vendors was that the trees would be dug spring 2019. They forced us to keep the agreement because they didn't want to continue to maintain these trees for another 6 months. Sparks goes on to say that there is a 3-year maintenance contract with Ecologic for all the installations, invasive plant removal, etc.

C-3 Rail Trail Management

Sparks begins by saying that in 2018 a large scale mechanical invasive plant removal program was started. In March, Ecologic was hired to come in with a forestry mower (Fecon) and they took care of almost 10 acres between Country Club Rd. and Gordon Pike. There have been 7 different large-scale invasive treatments since then. The focus is to control Woody invasives and vines infestations, like wintercreeper. Last year, there was an incident with a woman that involved invasive plants, which brought invasive plants to people's attention, and how dangerous and scary they can be. For this reason, funding has continued to go towards managing these invasive species. There has been another fecon treatment this spring and two other herbicide applications across another 10 acres. This trend will be continued in the future, although there will be a focus up north from Hunter Clove Rd. up to the Switchyard area, and work on the final section of the B-Line where it's a big invasive mess. There's been a wonderful public response, even with the construction going on at the roundabout on Gordon Pike and having the bridge removal with huge 'trail closed' signs that have been up for a year. The trail is not really closed, and people still go out there to use the trail. A local resident with the Adopt-an-Acre program has adopted the stretch from Country Club Rd. to Gordon Pike, which has had invasive work done. Sparks concludes that they will keep moving forward.

C-4 RCA Trail Improvements

Cotter starts off by saying that the trail goes in a loop around where the meeting is currently taking place. There's a paved loop through the woods that's a bit of a mess, given the age and the changes in the woods since it was put in. There are a lot of places where the tree roots have pushed up through the path, and a lot of the interpretive signs include information that is no longer true, so they need to be updated. There is also an interest in paving the gravel

section through the woods and replacing the boardwalk with something similar to an asphalt trail at the eastern and northern edge of the property. There's a contractor who spent a lot of time looking into this and hopefully these plans will be finished within a year. Meyer comments that the boardwalk appears to be in pretty good shape, and asks why there is a need to switch to asphalt? Cotter responds that it's near the end of its useful life, and there is a push to reduce the amount of wood structures being used for easier maintenance in the future. Sparks asks if we have bond money for this project, to which Cotter responds that we do. Cotter explains that the hope is to also make every part of the trail accessible to everyone, including people with disabilities. He goes on to say that the existing gravel is a problem since it is washed into waterways, it needs to be replaced often, and it's not a safe or enjoyable surface to walk on. Duke Energy has given permission to put a trail along the powerline, so eventually the trail system in RCA will connect to Wapehani and Switchyard Park. All funded through the Trees & Trails bond.

C-5 Miller-Showers Park Vegetation Management

Sparks begins by saying that Ecologic put together a 10 year management plan last year for Miller-Showers Park, which mostly focuses on managing invasive species specifically on land. Year one of the project is almost done being implemented, which basically focuses on large-scale invasive plant removal. A lot of European black alder, callery pear, and herbaceous plants were removed/treated. Sparks would love to get permission to remove the 6 large callery pear trees at the north end of the park. Collectively between Ecologic and the COB, there has been some sort of invasive plant removal done every month this year. A rather large-scale removal of 18,000 square feet was recently done on the south side of the park, which was treated with herbicide. There is still funding for year two, so there is hope that we can get more support for the work being done and keep expanding the native planting areas to reduce the amount of turf space to only two mow strips between the sidewalk and prairie plantings.

There's also been a huge spike of nutrients going into the water, so Aquatic Control took a look at it earlier this year. We are going to contract with them next year to do some algae vegetation management and try to positively change the channel and get more native vegetation established. Shelton mentions that the algae is benefiting the water in that upper pool in certain ways, but Sparks responds that it isn't aesthetically pleasing and it clogs the pumps. Also, COB uses water from the most northern pond ("cleanest") to fill watering tanks that irrigate the park and other landscaping plots around the city. This way the nutrient-rich water is getting put to good use. Shelton asked if it is possible to get an electronic copy of the maps that show the treatment areas to be able to share with her class. Sparks replied that she would share the files with Jania who would then share with ERAC members.

Lastly, there two new people on the vegetation management crew who Sparks has working on management plans for City parks. They are currently working on a long-term management plan for Miller-Showers Park.

C-6 Cascades Loop Trail

Cotter begins by saying that there's a suggestion to close one of the lanes of the road along cascades to allow for bicycle and pedestrian traffic in the other lane. After hearing feedback from the public, the conclusion was that people aren't comfortable with doing that. Unfortunately, there is a need for travel in both directions, so we think that it's going to be a difficult sell. There's been discussion about whether we should do it on the road or through the park. There are portions of the trail that could be both a north and south traveling trail. Cotter thinks there's a plan to close one of the lanes as an experimental attempt to see if it can work. Shelton asks if there has been a decision to make the lane north or southbound, and Cotter responds that he does not believe a decision has been made. Shelton goes on to ask if there is

a plan to maintain the creek, specifically where the walls are caving in. Cotter responds that a plan has been drawn up by some students at Rose-Hulman engineering school in Terre Haute. This plan has been put forward as a potential solution. There is some money in the bond that will allow for those repairs to happen, but there isn't a clear solution on the horizon so we'll focus on the most damaged sections first. The real problem is that the creek is channelized and it keeps getting deeper. This is a challenging spot for many reasons, especially since there is a road on one side and mature trees on the other side, so there isn't much wiggle room. The Rose-Hulman students recommend that we open up portions of the creek, cut the slopes back, and allow for more natural sinuosity through there. Cotter has looked at the creek and he's spotted places where there aren't big trees, and we could potentially cut back the wall and make a more sustainable slope. This would allow floodwaters to spread out a little bit. Cotter stated that COB was lucky that Miller-Showers was there in 2008 when we had the big flood, because that park really protected Lower Cascades and the walls of the creek from further damages caused by flooding. But the real issues arose after the stream was straightened for the construction of the road way back in the day before people knew better. Cotter said there might be an opportunity for a portion to be off-road on the west side of creek and on-road on east side of the creek. But there are a lot of constraints especially on the south end of the park. Parkhurst then brought up an interesting article on testing for E. Coli that Jania agreed to share with ERAC members following the meeting.

C-7 First-Saturdays Workday Results

Sparks begins by saying that this is the first year that first-Saturdays are happening, because they kept getting volunteer event requests from different groups. A lot of the groups are from IU because they need to reach a certain amount of volunteer hours. MC-IRIS has partnered with us, and they have been the driving force. So far this year, the average has been 20 volunteers for each event, and the most volunteers at an event was 50. There's a total of 445 volunteer hours, only from the first-Saturday events. Not every event is pulling invasive species, there are different things to do such as hiking, answering questions, and invasive plant awareness meetings. With our partnership with MC-IRIS, we are hosting a neighborhood invasive plant awareness summit on the 19th of October from 1-4 PM.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:51 p.m.

The next ERAC meeting will be held on Wednesday, December 11, 2019 at the Switchyard Park Pavilion.