

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

Wednesday, December 11th, 2019
4:30 – 6:00 p.m.

Pavilion- Switchyard Park

CALL TO ORDER

Laney called the meeting to order at 4:38 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Melissa Laney, Denise Gardiner, Bill Jones, Angie Shelton, Cathy Meyer, David Parkhurst

Staff Present: Steve Cotter, Rebecca Jania, Dave Williams, Dominic Hephner

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Laney moved approval of the October minutes, Parkhurst seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

A. PUBLIC APPEARANCES

No public appearance comments

B. OLD BUSINESS

B-1 Switchyard Park Grand Opening

Jania started off by explaining how Switchyard Park was officially opened up on the 16th and 17th of November. She points out that there is some landscaping and last minute touches that still need to be done. However, the facilities are open and ready to use, including the skatepark, playground, sports courts, etc. Jania is looking forward to even more activation happening this spring. Williams goes on to say that there is a May 20th completion date, and the hope is that Weddle Bros Building Group LLC is out of Switchyard Park well before then. There are some areas that have reached 'final grade' according to the workers, but there are some areas that still need to have top soil amended before sod can be added. Williams states that obtaining top soil has continued to be a problem for this project because it's wet and difficult to transport. Weddle has been reminded that there is a requirement for erosion control, which they are exceeding. Weddle can either get the sod and cover the exposed dirt, or mulch the site for the winter and come back in early spring. This puts us in a situation where "we're damned if we do and damned if we don't". The City would love to continue to haul sod on the 40 degree days because that'll give us a jump start to open the dog park in May instead of July. Additionally, there are already events booked in 2020, which have need of the concert lawn and rely heavily on the sod installation occurring early. Moreover, native trees, native seeds, and a lot of native plant plugs have been installed around the park and alongside the bridge embankments. This work has been done by Williams Creek and Ecologic. Jania has the specs for all of the plantings in case anyone is interested in the numbers or has students that might in interested in more detailed information.

Cotter brought up the success of the first Winter Farmer's Market that was hosted in the Pavilion on the previous weekend. Jania continued on by saying the Pavilion already has 2020 bookings for weddings, retirement parties, company training sessions, and conferences.

Additional events to be hosted at the SYP Pavilion in 2020 include: Bird Fest (April 4) and the 50th celebration of Earth Day (April 18).

B-2 Rail Trail Management

Jania says that Joanna Sparks was here to give a quick update at the last meeting. Staff rented a Fecon machine to remove vegetation along the trail. This machine is basically a large forest mower, staff cut back a lot of invasive woodies during that time. In the spring, the vegetation crew went back and treated for resprouts from a previously feconed area. This management method cuts down the herbicide required for treatment because the surface area of the invasive is much smaller. City vegetation crews continue to reintroduce native seeds to this site that were collected from local parks. The hope is to introduce native seeds and see what takes hold in the spring. This is an ongoing project that continues to need long-term management. Jania reminded ERAC members of the news report regarding a jogger who was unfortunately attacked by an assailant who took cover in a dense patch of Bush Honeysuckle. This situation has brought the problems associated with invasive species to others' attention. Going forward, the City plans to continue invasive management work on this site alongside staff from Ecologic.

B-3 RCA Trail Improvements.

Cotter informs everyone that the loop trail at RCA Park is going to be redone. He walked the trail three weeks ago with some of our Urban Forestry staff, a consultant and a contractor. According to Cotter, the whole thing is basically going to be asphalt. There will be quite a few trees removed, mostly dead, mostly Ash. The City is going to try to reduce the number of boardwalks, take the boardwalk out from the west edge of the open space, and replace it with a paved trail. There are also plans to pave the area through the little woods, which is currently limestone. Unless it's perfectly flat, rain consistently damages crushed limestone surfaces. The new trail system will be 8-10 feet wide and have an accessible route. Additionally, the interpretive signage on the trail will be updated. It will also be safer because a lot of the hazardous trees will be removed. This project is bond-funded, and Mader Designs has been hired to create the bidding documents.

B-4 Miller-Showers Park Vegetation Management

Jania reminds everyone that Joanna Sparks spoke about this at the last meeting. The Vegetation crew's work is ongoing over there, mostly cutting back undesirable woody vegetation as well as introducing more native plantings. At a site like this, the City buys the native seeds instead of collecting them due to cross genotypes. Moreover, there is ongoing management of the actual aquatic vegetation, as well as the algae and the buildup of sediment at the bottom of the upper-most retention pond. More studies are needed to determine the actual depth of the sediment on top of the built-in liner. This is something that Sparks and the Vegetation crew will be working on in 2020, with the help of Aquatic Control and CBU, to get those cleaned out so they're a little more aesthetically pleasing and function properly. Although, it does appear the plants are doing their job as far as filtering. Landscape crews continue to use the nutrient rich water from the top pond to water landscaped beds around the city as well as the plantings around the park. Williams concludes by saying CBU is responsible for maintaining the pre-treatment devices, like the swirl chambers, and setting up an on-going maintenance schedule.

Jones recalled the work that Aquatic Control has already done to manage the aquatic vegetation at Griffy Lake. Aquatic Control gave an update on the management results to the Park Board back in October. In summary, the herbicide usage was drastically reduced by switching brands to Procella COR and the acreage of invasive Eurasian milfoil found on site was reduced from ~23 acres to less than 1 acre based on the Tier II survey conducted in July. Jania stated that the City has submitted the application for the 2020 LARE program to continue this management plan with the help of Aquatic Control. The 2020 plan has been updated to recommend treatment earlier in the season to avoid off-target damage to natives.

B-5 Cascades Trail

Cotter points out that Cascades Trail is the trail that will connect Miller-Showers Park to the Sycamore Shelter at Lower Cascades. Williams steps in to explain that there are five phases in the master plan regarding this trail system. The first phase starts at the Sycamore Shelter on Clubhouse Dr. and extends to the intersection of Old SR 37 and Stone Mill Rd. The second phase starts at Sycamore Shelter and goes to Kinser Pike along Clubhouse Dr. The third phase, begins at the intersection of Old SR 37 and Stone Mill Rd. and extends to the old Griffy Filtration Plant. The fourth phase has been designed and it's ready, but it requires more sufficient TIF funds to build. That plan would continue along Kinser Pike and stop at Rosewood Rd. The last phase for Lower Cascades that we have studied, was to build a side path, cross over the main road, and go into the internal park where there are already soft surface trails and improve those. The administration is very interested in two options. 6 months ago, the preferred option was to close one vehicular lane of traffic. The predominant feeling was to have one open lane heading southbound. That option was gathered from a Facebook survey (200 responses) and, as you may suspect, we got hammered. Not only from people who use it to escape game traffic, go home, or go to work, but also from all of the emergency services that use the road. The other option that BPRD staff didn't agree with was a complete closure of the road. However, this is the option the Mayor's office would like us to pilot. There's a small restroom facility on the south side of the playground that's alongside a fairly new pedestrian bridge. The City would close it from that point to just north of IMI. The City can't take IMI's entrance/exit away since they're a viable business. Staff suspects this closure may create issues related to security and increased vandalism due to the reduced traffic and eyes on the park. The latest word from the administration is the closure will be delayed until March.

Williams concludes that the City has hired a contractor to look at developing an accessible trail up to the waterfall at Lower Cascades as well as improve the creek channels to allow for safer access to the water and reduce erosion issues. BPRD is working with DNR and a contractor on these design specifications.

B-6 First-Saturdays Workday Results

Jania begins by saying that Joanna Sparks presented the results to ERAC members at the previous meeting, and the overall summary was that it went very well this year. The program was initially the City's attempt to make a volunteer workday that could accommodate large groups of people because our Volunteer Coordinator consistently gets requests. Many people, from IU students, Greek houses, businesses, Eagle Scouts, or Brownie Troops have all requested outside workdays. It seems everyone wants to give back to our parks, which is wonderful, but scheduling and coordinating all those bodies can sometimes be difficult. So now, we partner with Monroe County - Identify and Reduce Invasive Species (MC-IRIS) to do First-Saturday Workdays. This program runs from March through November. Sparks and Jon Behrman, along with our Volunteer Coordinator and volunteers from MC-IRIS are currently

making a list for the 2020 workdays. Soon, anyone can look up what park will be worked on, when, and find instructions on how to register. There's no cap to how many we accept, but the program is really meant to accommodate larger groups. If anyone is interested in these workdays, you can look for them on the Bloomington Volunteer Network's website.

C. NEW BUSINESS

C-1 Education Update

Meyer starts off by announcing she is retiring in January. She plans to still be a Hoosier River Watch Facilitator and participate in some committees like ERAC. The Storm Water Environmental Education Team (SWEET) has met, and they've been doing some videos with the Monroe County Conservation District. A lot of different people have been featured because of the conservation-minded things they're doing. MC-IRIS met today and helped finalize the schedule of the First-Saturday workdays. MC-IRIS has a grant to provide several educational "take control" workshops. One of those workshops is going to be directed at landscape maintenance companies in February. This will be an all-day workshop with continuing education credits to try to get landscapers aware of the demand for businesses that remove invasives and plant natives on private properties. Meyer is hoping that it will be well attended. MC-IRIS is also looking for 20 people who have wooded property that have invasive plants present to do a controlled deer enclosure experiment to see how much they're browsing on native versus invasive plants. Specifically, they're looking for people who have enough property that they could put up an enclosure as well as setup a comparison plot on the same lot.

Jania informs members that Sustaining Nature and Your Land (SNAYL) Day is scheduled for May 23rd from 9 AM-noon at City Hall, Bug Fest is scheduled for June 20th from 10-3 PM at Hilltop, and Bird Fest is on April 4th from 1-4PM at Switchyard Park. Volunteers will be needed for both Bug Fest and Bird Fest. Additionally, we are going to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Earth Day at Switchyard Park on April 18th from 1-9PM. The idea is for this event to be an education seminar, so we're going to invite local businesses that have green missions or highlight sustainable practices. Hopefully there will also be a concert or live entertainment. Moreover, there will be staff there talking about natural resources, urban forestry, vegetation management, and more. There may also be an awards ceremony involving the Eco-Hero's contest as well as a recognition ceremony to honor our Adopt-a-Stream/Trail/Acre/Park Ambassadors.

C-2 CHAP Results

Cotter reminds everyone that there were three CHAP weekends at Griffy on Nov 16th/17th, 23rd/24th, and Nov 30th/Dec 1st. By far, the first weekend had the best weather as well as the best results. The park had the most hunters visit that first Saturday, with a total of 18 hunters. They killed 14 deer on the first day. There were 14 hunters the next day (Sunday), and they killed 8 deer. On the following weekend, 5 hunters killed 2 deer on Saturday, and on Sunday 7 hunters killed 2 deer. On the last weekend, only 2 hunters came out on Saturday and 4 hunters on Sunday. None of them killed any deer. Cotter feels that this was a worthwhile endeavor. The City learned a lot and removed 2.5x as many deer as researchers think should be in the preserve at this point. Cotter thinks there are a lot more deer, since the hunters saw a lot more than they shot. He also thinks that the program could have benefited from more hunters. The City hired White Buffalo, who was previously hired to do the sharpshooting in 2017 that removed 62 deer. White Buffalo coordinated our CHAP hunt and sent out 327 hunter solicitations. They also invited the Quality Deer Management Association, Martinsville Conservation Club, and the Paragon Conservation Club to take part. We received 65

applications from those 327 solicitations, which is roughly 20% of the total people we invited. Only 26 hunters were able to pass the proficiency screenings that were held in August and September. Participants had to hit 3 out of 3 shots within 2 inches of the bullseye from 50 yards. Ultimately, we invited 21 hunters to participate over 6 days. Hunters were permitted to kill one antlered deer and two without-antlers.

C-3 Griffy Pier/Loop Trail Update

Cotter starts off by talking about the pier that's being built across from the boathouse. This pier will provide accessible fishing opportunities at Griffy Lake. Additionally, there is a proposed Griffy Loop Trail that will go around the western portion of the lake. BPRD staff have finalized the route and the City's ITS folks are working on the map. Basically we went to the park board and merged the two projects. The consultant, Mader Design, is helping us inspect the project and will help us put a bid package together. We hope to have it out for bidding in August. Jania continues by saying that the trail is meant to connect the existing North and South trail systems.

C-4 Switchyard Park Update

Jania states that Williams gave a good update earlier in the meeting. But to reiterate, the next "reopening" date will be on May 20th, which is ultimately when keys will be handed off to us and Weddle Brothers will no longer be on site. We have a bunch of things planned in April such as the 50th Earth Day celebration, Bird Fest, things like that. Those events will still take place at SYP, it's just a matter of what lawns will be able to have people on them. Grass needs time to grow and root before people can walk on it. Jania explains that one or two people walking across the lawn is one thing, but a whole concert is not good for new sod. Moving forward, the dog parks are a priority, then activity lawns, then the amphitheaters. 40 degree or warmer weather is needed to plant the grass. This means they aren't going to be able to go back until warmer weather comes. Other than that, the Pavilion is operational and able to be rented. There will eventually be a green roof added. The floors are currently heated and there's indoor bike parking as well as a catering kitchen on site. One big question is whether there are public bathrooms on site. When there are large events like the Winter Market, there are bathrooms in the back corner of the Pavilion. However, when it's not open, there are bathrooms over by the splash pad that will stay open to the public during park hours. But those are currently closed for the off-season. There is also a restroom at the BPD Substation that will be open to the public during business hours.

C-5 Leonard Springs Water Quality Update

Hephner went out to Leonard Springs to collect water samples. We had Dillman Waste Water Treatment Facility run the sample and it tested positive for E.coli. However, Dillman didn't do the testing to isolate whether it was human or animal E.coli, but regardless the sample did have elevated levels either way. Since then, Dillman hasn't recommended that we go back out there but we have continued to monitor the creek for macro populations. Furthermore, the Monroe County Health Department and a few other agencies have narrowed down the potential sources of contamination to three nearby properties. Jania was told that property owners were already notified. Two of these properties could possibly have faulty septic systems, while the other property was cited for unpermitted businesses (auto repair shop and pet groomer). MCHD have not recommended further testing but continue to check in on the situation. Hephner has been back out there several times since we first reported the population dieback back in October. As far as the levels of macro and micros, it's hard to tell if the populations are

recovering since they are out of season. On a brighter side, LSNP has had beavers return and they've constructed quite the dam out in the wetland. Last Hephner checked it was about 20 yards long. As far as the water paths, they've widened by about 10 feet. Jania concluded by saying a formal complaint has also been issued to the Indiana Department of Environmental Management, Carol Newhouse, back in November. BPRD has yet to hear a response from IDEM on this issue.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:58 p.m.

The next ERAC meeting will be held at 4:30 on Wednesday, February 12th, 2020 at the Parks & Rec Conference Room.