



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

Wednesday, April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020  
4:30 - 6:00 p.m.

**ZOOM (virtual) Meeting**  
**Meeting ID: 142 405 205**  
Join Zoom Meeting:  
<https://zoom.us/j/142405205>

**CALL TO ORDER**

Shelton called the meeting to order at 4:39 p.m.

**ROLL CALL**

Members Present: Bill Jones, Denise Gardiner, Dan Myers, Angie Shelton, Cathy Meyer, David Parkhurst, Jeff Ehman

Staff Present: Steve Cotter, Joanna Sparks, Rebecca Jania

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Parkhurst moved approval of the February minutes, Ehman seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

**A. PUBLIC APPEARANCES**

**A-1 Public comment period**

No public comments.

**B. OLD BUSINESS**

**B-1 Election of Officers**

Was completed last meeting. Melissa Laney was elected as Chair and Angie Shelton as Vice Chair.

**B-2 Cascades Trail**

Cotter says that this is a five-phase project. They are currently on the most difficult phase. A portion of Old SR 37 has been closed through Lower Cascades Park, from IMI entrance to the playground to the north. Still a pilot project. Parks Staff is compiling survey responses from Park visitors. Jania shared the survey link with ERAC members who would like to contribute feedback regarding the road closure. (Cotter and Jania discuss maps of Lower Cascades that were shared on screen).

**B-3 2020 Initiatives and Topics of Interest**

Jeff Ehman, trail master planning always of interest. Dan Myers, environmental impacts of COVID-19 on the parks. Jania reviewed previous list; Cascades trails update, Leonard Springs water testing update, invasive species management and education opportunities, boot brushes are worn out, adopt a stream/acre/trail update, Switchyard Park update, trash pickup initiative, B-Line extension, Clear Creek work, Griffy Master Plan, and environmental impact statements.

## **C. NEW BUSINESS**

### **C-1 ERAC Guidelines**

Jania presents the version of the guidelines last approved in January 2014. Shelton asks if, out of nine ERAC members, five is needed for a quorum? Cotter states that that is correct. Jania wanted to review the guidelines for new members.

### **C-2 Education Update**

Cotter, BPRD is working on getting content to share online, some could be used for an interpretive trail app. Cotter speaks to Jeff Ehman about working together to create an interpretive app for city parks. Ehman says they have an available staff member to work on it. Cotter states that bird research on the Clear Creek Trail could be a good place to start. Cotter goes on to say that BPRD is also partnering with a company called OuterSpatial to create a Trail Map app. The first project will provide information about the planned Loop Trail at Griffy Lake Nature Preserve.

Jania states most of the March and April programs have been cancelled, still looking into hosting May programs. Focusing on online content for cancelled programs, sending staff out to record videos and creating printable worksheets. Slight backlash for 'chalk your walk' program because we do not want to be encouraging people to go to the parks right now. Parks have been seeing more use since the stay-at-home order was issued. As programmers and people who want to protect our natural areas, we focusing on things that can be done at or near their homes. BPRD has hired a contractor to help with video editing, using YouTube and social media platforms as video outlets. Shelton asks if any of the videos are available online yet? Jania replies they are waiting on video branding to be finalized before the videos are released to the public. Shelton says she had her students go outside and create a PowerPoint of pictures that they took of anything in bloom and then having them identify the organisms. Using apps like iNaturalist to identify plants, insects, etc. Meyer added that SAS has been posting virtual bird fest activities on their Facebook page. Meyer mentioned that Wild Foray and many other events planned for over the next few months have been cancelled.

### **C-3 COVID-19 Protocols**

Everything that is a planned event or program has been cancelled in the months of March, April, and likely May. Cotter restates BPRD is not encouraging people to go to parks right now, but is still promoting people to go outside and get exercise. Playgrounds and exercise equipment have been taped off. Restrooms are closed, water fountains have not been turned on, other touchpoint equipment have been taped off. Many communities around the US are reporting record trail usage numbers and have elected to open roadways to allow people more space to walk, similar to the Lower Cascades road closure pilot project. Jania adds that signs were put up at trail heads and other outdoor park facilities to try to encourage people to practice good hygiene and respect 6 ft. physical distance of others. Basketball courts are officially closed, but pickle ball and tennis courts still remain open. Shelton asks if BPRD will close tennis courts? Cotter says tennis courts may close in the coming weeks. Cotter reports a park employee does have COVID, but he is recovering. A firefighter also had it but was being cleared to return to work. Jania says Griffy Boathouse and other parks facilities opening dates are being postponed. Cotter adds BPRD will be offering emergency childcare services at Banneker and TLRC. Shelton asks if BPRD has considered closing popular trails? Cotter says there has been talks about of making trails one-way.

#### **C-4 Leonard Springs Water Quality Testing**

Jania speaks on this. Dominic Hephner, Natural Resources Education Specialist, goes out to LSNP every other week to monitor the streams. Shirley Springs is also being monitored by a longtime Adopt-A-Stream volunteer. We are seeing some macro-return but nothing that has intolerance to pollution. BPRD sent water samples to Pace Labs, but nothing in those samples were flagged. We shared these results with the Monroe County Health Department, and they recommended we collect several samples over time because only testing once is not an effective way to track changes in the water chemistry. Monitoring the macro population at Leonard and Shirley Springs will continue. Monroe County Health Department as well as the Planning and Transportation Department have been asked to look into faulty septic systems and unpermitted business around LSNP. Meyer asked if there were high levels of phosphorus in the water? Meyer said during her last visit to the park, the springs were coated in some dark green algae. Jania responded that the levels of phosphorus reflected in the lab reports appeared normal. Dan Myer asked if the creek habitats upstream have changed? Jania responded that no changes to habitat has been noted but most of the upstream waterway is underground, so the impacts are likely related to runoff as opposed to habitat degradation. Meyer reminded the group that Leonard Springs Nature Day participants and volunteers have been monitoring this stream for going on 12 years and suddenly this last fall, all of the once abundant macro organisms had died off with no noticeable changes to stream chemically or physically. Ehman suspects it could be something that flushed through the system one time, killed off the living macro organisms, and flushed out undetected. Hopefully, this water system is in the process of healing itself and there is a healthy enough population of macros upstream to repopulate this section of Shirley Springs. BPRD Staff and AAS volunteers will continue to monitor both Leonard and Shirley springs.

#### **C-5 Trail Signs and Boot Brushes/Scrappers**

Jania states that they are looking into a retailer for boot brushes/scrappers and would like to place them at all major trail heads. BPRD staff is conducting a park-wide inventory of signs and are looking for sites we can replace brushes. Cotter mentioned a Trail Specialist recommended installing blocks to use as a mud scrapper to lessen the buildup of muck on the brushes themselves. BPRD continues to update leash law signs and interpretive signs.

#### **C-6 Adopter Program Updates (Stream, Acre, Trail)**

Cotter states that BPRD are still encouraging participation in these programs because it is mainly individuals monitoring their sites, but they are not putting pressure on people to get out there and do it. Jania said Dominic Hephner is the main staff liaison for the AAS program, they have created video content to train volunteers virtually. There is difficulty getting them Hoosier River Watch certified because of COVID-19 restricting in-person training. Program participants can still report things like vandalism and invasive species to staff liaisons without the HRW training. Meyer speaks from experience that she is still monitoring her AAA site and has been out there removing invasive species. Meyer says she has been interacting with people passing by while she has been out there working and said many expressed interest in getting involved.

#### **C-7 Switchyard Park Updates**

Jania spoke on this, they started laying out sod, finishing off areas of dog park, middle to end of May it should be complete. The SYP Pavilion has Wi-Fi now. Increased number of

vandalism incidents have been reported since students have been “out of school”. Meyer brought up a couple public comments. She heard there is a Killdeer nest that needed to be relocated on site and that she heard a complaint about it being difficult for disabled people to enter SYP Pavilion. Cotter said updates are still to come, including updates to the Pavilion. Shelton asked how the wetland vegetation along the creeks are holding up after recent rain events? Cotter said that erosion blanket along the creeks was rearranged by water (heavy rain). Sparks added that Eco Logic LLC has been contracted to perform repairs and replace plants in the wetland area. Shelton asked if flooding occurred anywhere else in the park. Cotter said there were still areas holding a lot of water but once the sod has been laid flooding should be less of a concern.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:37 p.m.

**The next ERAC meeting will be held at 4:30 on Wednesday, June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

**Winslow Woods Park - Winslow Shelter (tentatively)**