



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

Wednesday, June 10th, 2020
4:30 - 6:00 p.m.

ZOOM (virtual) Meeting
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83326922623>
Meeting ID: 833 2692 2623

CALL TO ORDER

Jania called the meeting to order at 4:36 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Cathy Meyer, Dan Myers, Bill Jones, Denise Gardiner, Angie Shelton, Dave Parkhurst, Sue Sgambelluri, Meliassa Laney, Sarah Murray
Staff Present: Steve Cotter, Rebecca Jania, Joanna Sparks, Dominic Hephner

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Laney moved approval of the April minutes. Motion carried unanimously.

A. PUBLIC APPEARANCES

A-1 Public comment period

No public comments.

B. OLD BUSINESS

B-1 Election of Officers/ERAC Guidelines

Was completed two meetings ago. Melissa Laney as Chair and Angie Shelton as Vice Chair.

B-2 Covid-19 Protocols

Jania commented on this, the Parks and Recreation Department has been putting up increased signage related to social distancing and park etiquette. Following CDC guidelines, the Parks department elected to keep trails, tennis ball courts and pickleball courts open, and decided to close playgrounds and basketball courts. The Parks department hopes to be able to open these later this year if Bloomington continues to progress in reopening stages laid out by the Governor of Indiana. The Griffy Lake Boathouse is now open and taking call ahead reservations to allow for time to properly disinfect watercrafts. Twin Lake Rec. Center is now starting to open. Both Griffy Lake and TLRC are operating under limited capacity, making use of face masks, and disinfecting surfaces as much as possible. At the boathouse, they had to be cautious when selecting what type of disinfectant to use, because ultimately whatever was used would end up in Griffy Lake.

Cotter adds that their Wellness Coordinator, Jess Klein, and PR Manager, Julie Ramey, have helped coordinate these challenging times. Myers asks if restrooms and drinking fountains are now open? Jania explains that those ought to open during stage four, and that it will be a park wide decision. Cotter states that the Parks department website shows what facilities, restrooms, etc. are open and continues to be updated as we progress into different stages. Murray asked for information regarding the cleaning supplies used at Griffy Lake. Jania explains that the

Boathouse staff is using bleach diluted down to 20 percent, and dawn dish soap because other disinfectants can be harmful to the aquatic organisms that reside in the lake.

B-3 Leonard Springs Water Quality testing

Hephner, a Parks and Recreation Education Specialist and the coordinator for the Adopt-A-Stream program, explained that there continues to be a problem with the water quality at Leonard Springs Nature Preserve. Poor water quality was first noted in October 2019 at the creek station during Leonard Spring Nature Days. It was evident there was a problem with the quality of the water by comparing microorganism populations to previous sample days. Most populations were depleted, with the exception of organisms with high tolerance for pollution. Shirley Springs is the waterway at the park that is currently exhibiting poor microorganism population numbers. Leonard Springs is the other main waterway and serves as the control spring for Hephner when he goes out to sample.

He samples by looking at the Pollution Tolerance Index of the stream. In April, Leonard Springs was at a 21(good). In May, it rose 1 point. Shirley on the other hand, scored a 0 (poor) in April, and rose to an 11(fair) rating in May. Shirley Springs has an elevated Nitrate level. Parkhurst asks what the units of the index are? Hephner explains that each organism found to be present in the waterway is given a weighted factor, and that the numbers in the index are the summation of the weighted scores. Jones asks which pollution tolerance scale is being used. Hephner states that he is using the Hoosier RiverWatch. Myers asks what the historical pollution tolerance of Leonard and Shirley Springs has been? Hephner says that Leonard has always ranked very high and that up until October Shirley would have been within the good range. Neither of the two have hit excellent, but both have been doing rather well up until the incident. Jania asks if Jones recommended any other organization other than the Hoosier Riverwatch that they are currently using. Jones says that he does not, and that because BPRD have been using Hoosier Riverwatch, they ought to continue so that their data is easily comparable.

Cotter explains that BPRD has been in touch with the Indiana Department of Environmental Management and the Monroe County Health Department about the problem at Shirley Springs and that they have also been looking into it. Myers asks if there have been any changes in recent years to the aquatic habitat? Hephner says that he has noticed an increased discharge at Leonard, which has led to increased erosion. This could be caused by increased rain and flooding events brought on by climate change. Meyer says there is a lot more algae present at Shirley spring.

B-4 Trail Signs and Boot Brushes/Scrappers

Jania states that BPRD have ordered boot brush replacements for Griffy Lake. She plans on ordering more in the future with the hope of eventually having the boot brushes at all of the main trail heads. She also plans on monitoring the boot brushes, to ensure that the brushes stay in good shape. She said that Trails Crews are also looking into installing some sort of surface for hikers to initially scrape their boots on before using the boot brush, so that the brushes do not get caked up with mud as quickly.

Jania says that as the department begins to roll out content for OuterSpatial, the trail map app for City parks, she hopes to update some of the trail markers and educational signage. The plan is to start by updating the signage at Griffy Lake and RCA. Cotter says that Trail crew has recently updated the signage at Wapehani, and that they are currently looking at different sign

ideas for how to update the trail intersections at Griffy Lake. Jania says that BPRD has recently spent time making sure that all of the trails at Griffy Lake are color coordinated, have designated names, and that the GIS coordinates are correct. All of this information can be seen on the new Griffy Lake trail map can be found at the boathouse or online at:

https://bloomington.in.gov/sites/default/files/202003/Griffy%20Lake%20trail%20map%202020_0.pdf

B-5 Adoption Program Updates (Stream, Acre, Trail)

Hephner says that the Adopt-A-Stream program has five returning members and six new members. Three of the new members have joined in the last month, and are currently waiting to have their sites assigned. The program has recently acquired a few more kits to be used by the volunteers. All of the volunteers who are currently Hoosier Riverwatch trained are now back to borrowing kits. The new members who are not Hoosier Riverwatch trained are watching short educational videos that outline what volunteers are able to do in the meantime. Jania asks if Meyer would be interested in leading some socially distant or e-learning volunteer training sessions. Meyer says that she is unsure of whether or not they are able to do that, but that Hoosier Riverwatch Manual is available online. She says that she will reach out to the state coordinator to see if there's a way to train the new volunteers under the new conditions that we are all operating under due to COVID-19.

Sparks spoke about the Adopt-An-Acre program, saying that BPRD has two new volunteers as well as many returning volunteers. She said that all of her volunteers are trained except for one, who will be getting their training very soon at Griffy Lake Nature Preserve. Meyer says that there have been numerous questions on social media about why the city does not get rid of the invasive species at Bryan Park. Meyer says that she has been suggesting that these individuals reach out to Joanna Sparks with Landscaping. Sparks says that Meyer can continue to refer those individuals to her.

Cotter says that there are currently 14 volunteers for the Adopt-A-Trail program and they have been reporting back fairly regularly with E-reports. BPRD plans to hire an active volunteer, Allen Edwards, out at Wapehani to pick up some trail laborer hours. Volunteers have currently been using JotForm that allows the laborers to receive the information electronically. Cotter says that this system has been working very well.

B-6 Switchyard Park Update

Jania says she had reached out to the Operations Director, Dave Williams, and learned that contractors are adding the handicap accessible door buttons to the pavilion. There has also been a lot of landscaping going on at the park. The hope is to open up the Splash Pad when the City moves into Stage Four of the reopening plan. The SYP Pavilion now has Wi-Fi, which is very important for the staff members who have offices there. Myers asks when the construction to the Walnut Street entrance will be finished? Jania and Cotter are unsure of when it will be completed. Shelton says that there have been large crowds at the park, and asks if there have been any complaints about social distancing? Jania says that there have been quite a few complaints through social media. She says that unfortunately, other than putting up some signage, their list of options is slim when it comes to controlling other people's etiquette on the trails. Jania said that there has also been increased vandalism reports. Shelton asks how the plantings in the wetlands are doing? Sparks said that there was a large area that had to be replanted. She said that Eco Logic is in charge of the restoration project and that they are

on-site on a weekly basis installing and maintaining plant life. She said that it has been a difficult process for Eco Logic however, as they have to work around the contractors. This has led to many delays, but that overall things are going well.

C. NEW BUSINESS

C-1 Education Update

Jania says that there is a lot of virtual programming content being shared on social media. She says that every Thursday BPRD have been posting a “What’s in your yard?” video done by a member of the education staff. The education staff are also creating videos for some of their cancelled programs. One of the most popular videos was a ‘Lawn to Micro-prairie’ video, where an education staff member talked about converting our grass lawns into diverse prairie strips that better support wildlife. The videos are shared via YouTube, but then advertised to the public on the BPRD Facebook page.

Jania says that although the in-person Banneker Day Camp has been cancelled, the education staff have still been creating content for them in the form of activity packets that are sent home with weekly meals by Banneker staff. The packets have all the information and supplies that participants need to complete an activity.

Meyers says that there is currently a “Love our Land” contest for students who do some sort of artwork about invasive plants. She said that Monroe Parks have recently reopened and that like the city, MCPR have most of their facilities still closed. Jania says that there have been many other events that have since gone virtual as well, such as Women In Nature Gaining Skills (WINGS) workshops. Jania hosted the WINGS Wild Edibles workshop via Zoom and shared the recording on the WINGS Facebook page. These programs were in the program guide, but are mostly advertised through their Facebook page.

Jania says that Hephner and an expert Ecologist from Eco Logic created an educational video that outlines the recent prescribed burn at Griffy Lake and gives details as to why prescribed burns are a necessary management tool and how they benefit the local ecology. The video is not yet open to the public, but should be soon. Hephner says that the video was created using five different devices, two different recording devices, and about six different individuals.

C-2 Interpretive Trail Apps

Jania says that a trail map app contract was approved last month by the Park Board. The contract allows Parks to hire a company called OuterSpatial to create a trail map app for city parks. She hopes that this will make it easier to get park information and environmental education content in the hands of park users. The app will use City GIS data to allow park users to locate park trails and points of interests like parking lots and restrooms. The public can also use this app to better plan an outdoor adventure by having access to the most accurate trail locations and distances.

Additionally, the app will allow park managers a quick way to communicate to park users about trail closures and hazards. The app will also collect useful information about trail usage and allow park users a platform to post photos, questions, or concerns to be addressed by parks staff. Cotter says that the app will give different staff members different capabilities so that there

can be a few individuals designated with editing privileges, and the general public will just have user privileges.

C-3 Griffy Lake Master Plan Update

Cotter says that BPRD has been updating the master plan in sections since the last one was completed in 2008. Last year, with the help of Eco Logic, BPRD updated the vegetation portion of the plan. Now they hope to update the reptile, amphibian, and bird inventories. BPRD is currently waiting on a proposal from West Environmental to take before the Park Board in July.

C-4 Clear Creek Trail Update

Sparks says that replanting trees has been a large part of the restoration efforts for this area. She says that their current work has been based on the goal to “conserve green space and enhance acres of habitat in priority areas surrounding Clear Creek, Griffy Lake, and Jackson Creek by 2023”. She says this is an attainable goal to achieve due to the nature of the properties and the areas of watershed. Landscape crews have worked extensively south of Country Club Road with the forestry mowers to cut back invasive species, and are now working by hand and applying herbicide to plant re-sprouts. Further up the trail, they have done work by B-Line Trail. They have effectively done management on seven miles’ worth of trail and are now in the follow up stage. She said that there has been lots of positive feedback from the public who is excited to see native species coming back.

Landscape Crews started planting trees along the Rail Trail in 2019, and have since put in about 4,500 trees. They are now following up with herbicide to control the encroachment of undesirable species. There have been no new trees planted along the Clear Creek Trail. Meyers asked for Sparks to address the property owner that asked for trees to be removed that had been planted in the Schmaltz Farm Park area.

C-5 Tree Planting at Schmaltz Farm Park

Sparks said the Landscape Crews planted 841 trees around the Clear Creek watershed in 2019. Of the trees planted, there is usually only about 80% that survive. In an effort to increase the number of trees that survive there were tree cages put up to help protect the trees. The property owner did not like the aesthetic that the cages produced. She explained that while the city owns the parks, the neighborhoods do as well, and that it is very important that people like the parks and that a positive relationship is maintained. In order to compromise, BPRD reduced the planting in the southern field and moved it into the northern field. This is a win-win situation, as everyone in the neighborhood seems pleased, and the trees were still planted in the watershed.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:39 p.m.

The next ERAC meeting will be held at 4:30 on Wednesday, August 12th, 2020