



CITY OF BLOOMINGTON
Parks and Recreation

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

Wednesday, August 12th, 2020
4:30 - 6:00 p.m.

ZOOM (virtual) Meeting
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84474376433>
Meeting ID: 844 7437 6433

CALL TO ORDER

Laney called the meeting to order at 4:35 PM

ROLL CALL

Members present: Melissa Laney, Bill Jones, Sarah Murray, Cathy Meyer, Dave Parkhurst, Jeff Ehman, Sue Sgambelluri, Dan Myers, Denise Gardiner

Staff present: Steve Cotter, Rebecca Jania, Joanna Sparks, Jeff Mader

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – June 2020

Laney moved approval of the June meeting minutes. Motion carried unanimously.

Public Appearances

A-1 Public Comment Period

No public comments.

Old Business

B-1 Interpretive Trail Apps

Jania commented on Parks and Recreation working with Image Matters to develop a trail app to create stories and adventure walks throughout city parks. In addition, Parks and Recreation is working with OuterSpatial to create a trail map app that users can download on their smartphones to plan outings. Both platforms will be used to help managers determine park traffic and provide a means to communicate with park patrons about important information such as trail closures, events, etc. These applications will allow for the newest GIS data from Parks and Recreation to be easily accessible to the public for the purposes of enrichment and education.

Ehman mentions that OuterSpatial is a commercial product that the city has a license for; Image Matters is also a commercial product, but only has a memorandum of understanding with the city to develop the product. Image matters is still in its infancy and currently working with IU Visitor and Information Center and individuals building the Heritage Trail at IU in order to get more feedback on its performance. This product comes at no cost at the city – feedback from the city will be used to improve the application.

Cotter added that Professor Reynolds of IU will be helping with the content of the applications.

B-2 Griffy Lake Master Plan Update

Cotter mentions that the Park Board has approved a contract with WEST Inc. – they will be updating the reptile, bird and amphibian inventories for the Griffy Lake Master Plan. The original plan was done by IU and Bill Jones in 1984. With the help of the Utilities Department, funding was received in 2008 to update the master plan with JF New. It is difficult to secure all funding to update the master plan in one round, making this an incremental process, which has its own advantages of being able to put more effort into individual components of the plan. West Inc. has begun its literature review. Rebecca Schmitt, a SPEA graduate, will be the primary person of contact at WEST Inc.

Jones asks how ERAC will be kept informed on updates regarding the master plan, WEST Inc. literature review etc.? Cotter answers that it will be possible to send information to interested parties of the ERAC council or invite members of WEST Inc. to an ERAC meeting.

C-2 Griffy Lake Loop Trail & Fishing Pier Projects

Moved up the agenda so Mader could present. Jania gives an overview of what will be discussed: the Griffy Lake loop trail, the pedestrian causeway that will connect the south and north shore trail and plans for the dam crossing.

For the past 6-8 months, Mader states that there has been work done to search for preliminary new routes for the trail, trying to avoid wetland areas. Much of the design time has been spent developing plans to construct a pedestrian walkway on the west side of the causeway, provide a guard rail, and produce a trail and embankment along the road. There is an emphasis on creating a natural looking embankment that blends in with the natural scenery. The causeway will have some “bump outs” that can be used for fishing or as a viewpoint. In addition, plans are being developed with the City and County to create a safer road crossing and entryway at Griffy. At this main crossing, there will be an overlook and a pier that can be used by the public for fishing and as an outdoor classroom space. At the south end of the causeway, the trail will connect to a pedestrian walkway that feed into a proposed boardwalk that will connect to existing trails. At the north end of the causeway stairs will be installed to replace deteriorating railroad ties. The area surrounding the railroad ties will be revegetated.

A trail, with fencing on either side, will be constructed on top of the dam to connect the north and south trail networks. The spillway section of the dam has a staircase currently used to connect the north and south loop trails, however DNR does not want this walkway to be improved and discourages its use. From the Dunn Street parking lot to the dam, a new staircase is being proposed. Jones mentions given prior Homeland Security concerns, the idea of dam crossing has been an issue – he asks what caused a shift in policy? Cotter responds that by consulting with Christopher Burke Engineering, plans and drawings of the walkway to ensure the safety of patrons and integrity of the dam were developed. This was followed by meeting with the DNR to discuss concerns and safety of crossings over dams, given their experience with the matter, in which they confirmed the feasibility.

From the south end of the Headley Rd. bridge there will be a boardwalk that extends across the swale/valley that will connect to the bridge and trail.

Mader said bathymetry of the water along the causeway was recorded and it is relatively uniform along the causeway. Additional fishing spots have been proposed to distance anglers to create more accessible fishing areas.

Parkhurst mentions environmental impact of using concrete for a trail. Mader responds that a cost benefit analysis determined that concrete is the best choice to minimize maintenance, promote accessibility, and limit use of petroleum products. Cotter adds that they will look into ways of minimizing the carbon footprint of using concrete.

Myers asks if there are plans to put a vegetation buffer along the causeway. Mader responds that the plan is to create 3-6 feet of green space between the road and trail, with the intention to plant native plants. Cotter adds that they are hoping to plant sycamores along the causeway.

Gardiner asks if there are fishing line disposal receptacles along fishing areas? Jania responds that there are some along the Griffy shorelines, but additional receptacles will need to be installed where the proposed fishing pier will be. Cotter adds that there is a receptacle over by the boat ramps and agrees there should be a receptacle by the proposed fishing pier.

Ehman asks what the timeframe for project completion is? Cotter responds that the plan is to have the project out for bid by the end of the year with construction going on during the winter off season and completion set in 2021. Jones asks if construction of the causeway will require the road to be closed? Mader says that after consulting with the engineering and traffic department, one lane of the road may have to be closed with an intermittent traffic light managing traffic. However, the intention is to try to avoid closing the road entirely.

B-3 Clear Creek Trail Update

Sparks states that nothing has changed since last meeting, with the exception of bush honeysuckle growing. Work is being done on Japanese stiltgrass. Herbicide will be applied to resprouts along the Clear Creek trail once the leaves drop. Positive feedback from individuals about previous herbicide applications, improving quality of individuals visit. Callery pears near the Tapp Road parking lot. Urban forestry will address this once bird nesting season is over.

B-4 Tree Planting at Schmaltz Farm Park

Sparks reports that all trees are still living due to the efforts of the vegetation management crew. A portable pump has helped during the 6-week dry period recently. Sparks would like to expand on the Schmaltz Farm Park tree planting into Northfield. The hope is that trees will be established in the fall so that the upcoming cicada season will be less damaging to the trees.

Jania asks if there will be a volunteer tree planting? Sparks says that Eco Logic has hosted tree plantings in the past and would like to do some events in the fall. If no events are scheduled Parks staff and Eco Logic staff will be planting trees. Only one volunteer showed up to a tree-planting event in August, which is indicative of the uncertainty the community feelings given the pandemic.

C-1 Education Update

Jania states that schools have elected to go remote. Field trips, extra excursions will not happen. However, Parks would like to be able to make e-learning or distance learning that can meet the needs of the students during the Pandemic. The goal is still to connect Bloomington students to nature. Some in-person outdoor events have still been able to happen.

A Bio-Blitz will try to be organized for the month of September.

Monroe County Parks and Recreation has hired their new Naturalist, Autumn Brunelle– she has worked with Cathy and Rebecca and has participated in the Master Naturalist program and the Nature Day programs.

C-3 Saturday Weed Wrangles (Invasive Plant Removal)

Sparks provided an update on the invasive plant removal. After partnering with the Monroe County Identify and Reduce Invasive Species (MC-IRIS) a year ago. Last year, 9 events were held with 420 volunteers, producing 1,071 of volunteer hours removing invasive plants. The first event of this year in March resulted in 46 volunteers accruing 138 hours at Griffy Lake. The pandemic has made hosting events difficult due to both staff concerns and lack of volunteers. Events will not be hosted for the remainder of the year. To compensate, additional vegetation management staff have been hired, and the amount of contractual invasive removals at a number of properties have been increased. Additional funding from the Mayor has been received to allow for hiring additional Centerstone staff to work as part of the landscaping crew. They will be working with the vegetation management crew. Currently there is difficulty with developing social media outreach to get people out into “virtual weed wrangles” and cultivate personal interest at home.

C-4 Miller-Showers Park Update

Sparks provides some background on Miller-Showers Park. In 2004 began a shift to incorporate more native plantings. There have been some negative comments from the public due to a less showy nature of plants. As result of public complaints, funding was increased to allow for aesthetic improvement of Miller-Showers Property.

Miller-Showers has an excellent seed bank that allows for cheap sourcing of seeds and educational opportunities. In the next 18 months, there is a bike/pedestrian trail planned to be put on 17th street at the south end of Miller Showers. There is a Canada Goose issue; snow fencing has been put as a temporary measure to protect native plantings, but further action will need to be taken.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:57PM.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 14th

ZOOM (virtual) Meeting

<https://bloomington.zoom.us/j/96109195287?pwd=TDBTN0c5bEQ2dnlma1ZVYmI0aVFZdz09>

Meeting ID: 961 0919 5287

Passcode: 597674.