



ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES ADVISORY COUNCIL
City of Bloomington Parks and Recreation
Regular Meeting

Wednesday, June 9th, 2021
4:30 - 6:00 p.m.

Join Zoom Meeting:
<https://bloomington.zoom.us/j/92797749614?pwd=amlBT202ZktyOUZlY2tCMjlZSxNHQT09>
Meeting ID: 927 9774 9614
Passcode: ERAC

I. CALL TO ORDER

Dan Myers called the meeting to order at 4:35 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Dan Myers, Cathy Meyer, Denise Gardiner, Autumn Brunelle, David Parkhurst, Jeff Ehman, Matt Flaherty

Staff: Rebecca Swift, Steve Cotter, William. Baker, Tim Street, Joanna Sparks

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – April 2021

Meeting minutes approved unanimously.

IV. AGENDA

A. Public Appearances

A-1 Public Comment Period

No members of the public were present.

B. Old Business

B-1 COVID-19 Update

Rebecca Swift states Monroe County health department and mayor's office have lifted maximum capacity limits for group gathering size. The Mask mandate has been lifted in Monroe County. City of Bloomington employees are still required to wear masks on premises, when interacting with the public outdoors, and when sharing vehicles. BPRD are still encouraging the same proper hygiene protocols including washing of hands, self-screening at home, and staying at home if experiencing any sickness symptoms.

B-2 Meadowwood Pond & Griffy Algae Blooms

Steve Cotter was hoping that Melissa Laney would be able to join this evening. BPRD are mostly concerned with the creek below the pond at Meadowwood. The city has continued to monitor algae blooms. Cotter will attempt to meet with Melissa before the next meeting for any updates. Swift adds that

the parks and recreation department is working on reviewing protocols on reporting and identifying blue-green algae on Griffy Lake. Work is being conducted to provide protocol information to boathouse staff, natural resource staff, and trail staff. Boathouse staff are aware that we are in blue-green algae season as it gets warmer. Rain helps to break up blue-green algae blooms. A blue-green algae bloom occurred in December at Griffy Lake.

Blue-green algae is something that is continuously monitored for at Griffy Lake. The Lake is a no contact lake where individuals are not allowed to swim. However, people bring dogs out to Griffy Lake and allow them to wade in the water. Overall, blue-green algae are more of a concern for pet owners who may allow their pets to drink and swim in the water. These animals will go home and lick/clean themselves ingesting algae which is when blue-green algae become a real health concern. Blue-green algae causes a skin rash on contact. Problem areas include near the Griffy lake dam on the west end of the lake and near the boat launch dock. Boathouse employees monitor the area near the boat launch daily. The dam area is monitored weekly.

B-3 Cascades Trail & Stream Stabilization Project Updates

Tim Street states BPRD is still pursuing stream bank stabilization and Phase 5 of the Cascades Trail system. High bids will prevent the entire project from being completed in the near future. The plan is still to conduct 430 linear feet of stabilization at the most eroded part of the stream. Stabilization will be focused on the area that pulls back the stream bank on the west side. BPRD intend for these interventions to reduce erosive forces and the speed of the water, giving a place for the water to slow down, reducing sedimentation. The project will still include 0.25 miles of trail from the south end of the sycamore lot to a new trail roundabout near the waterfall shelter. An accessible boardwalk and trail will lead to the waterfall. The boardwalk design and path have been left flexible to avoid tree roots and tree disruptions. Support post locations will be shifted to avoid tree roots.

The pre-construction meeting is scheduled for next week. Construction should begin after the July 4th weekend. Scenic construction is the general contractor on this project. Construction will proceed through the rest of the year and into 2022 before a tree mitigation planting will be conducted. 123 trees will be planted north of the former Griffy Filtration Plant. Cotter mentioned that CBU is doing a project at the south end of the park road. Pre-construction is nearly complete and the construction phase should be completed sometime in June. A road closure survey ran through May. BPRD have conducted constituent meetings, phone calls, and gotten survey feedback. The anticipation is that the decision on the road closure will be made next week. Recommendations will be conveyed to the board of public works and the board of park commissioners at their respective June 22nd meetings.

B-4 Griffy Loop Trail & Accessible Fishing Pier Project Updates

Cotter states that BPRD is getting close to getting ready to go out to bid. BPRD is going to be meeting with the consulting team soon to finalize the design and put it out to bid. BPRD is going to the Park Board on the 22nd with a memorandum of understanding with Indiana University regarding the parcel to the south of the lake that straddles Headley Road. The MOU allows the trail to be built regardless of who owns it and it allows IU to have access to the property regardless of who owns it. BPRD believes it is a win-win but are still trying to figure out who owns the land. Understanding who owns the parcel is important for record and liability concerns. BPRD is hoping to begin construction around October 1st. BPRD will be meeting with a consultant to break out several alternates if the whole project cannot be built. BPRD is trying to figure out where the cleavage points on the design and estimate should be. This is the very first project Dave Williams looked at in 1993. ERAC has reviewed the project drawings several times.

Swift adds that the areas of the proposed loop route that is going out for bid are the walkway along Headley Road and the crossing of the dam. The crossing of the dam will include a staircase from the dam down to the parking lot on Dunn St. for easier and safer access to the trail system. An accessible fishing pier will be included in the project with amphitheater like seating that can be used for nature days. Fishing has increased at Griffy Lake however, shoreline fishing is limited.

Cotter mentioned that approval has been received from the Indiana DNR and CBU regarding the trail going over the dam. Everything north of the tree line at Meadowwood trail is owned by the City of Bloomington. Everything east of Dunn Street between the dam and the first house as you go south on the left is owned by the City of Bloomington. Most of it is City of Bloomington Utilities and managed by City of Bloomington Parks and Recreation. The loop will be easily accessible from existing trails on the west side of the preserve. Lower cascades trail, the dog park and Griffy loop trail will be accessible from the parking lot. Portable toilets are located at dog park and restrooms are located at lower cascades park.

B-5 Experience Reality Tours & OuterSpatial Mobile App

Swift state the Parks and Recreation department is continuing to work on OuterSpatial and Experience Reality Tours. BPRD is attempting to create curated tour topics. The cemetery tours in October are very popular and well attended. BPRD understand that visual impaired individuals do not see existing interpretative signage at parks. A goal is to make this information virtual which requires typing out signage and descriptions of photos into the app and webpage respectively. Swift would like to thank Dan Myers for presenting to park board last month and advocating for the use of these apps. She request's people check out these apps and share them with their friends and family. Experience Reality Tours is a live link for the City of Bloomington at this time. These resources are a work in progress.

Information should be put on the app regarding portable toilet and water fountain locations. Water fountain information is on the app. All water fountains are still turned off at this time. BPRD are in the process of researching the correct protocols for reopening water fountains. Autumn Brunelle mentions that Monroe County Parks and Recreation has turned on water fountains if they are in close proximity to bathrooms or hand sanitizer. Swift states that bottle refill stations are operational except for Switchyard Park's refill stations which is not. BPRD have discussed doing a tree tour with Erin Hatch, BPRD Urban Forester, and putting information on the OuterSpatial mobile app. The tree commission is also working on a tour.

C. New Business

C-1 Education Update

Swift provided updates regarding in-person camps since the gathering size limits have increased. Swimming pools have opened. Bancker Nature Club and Kid City have been meeting. Employees are still wearing masks. Hand sanitizer use is being encourage and shared materials are being disinfected. Kids have been taking field trips and there has been excitement in being outdoors in nature. Naturalists are turning rainy days into learning opportunities by making this water week. Leonard Springs and Griffy Lake Nature Days will resume this fall. There will be volunteer facilitator opportunities for these nature days. BPRD intends to continue transitioning to more in person events. Get Outdoors Day will be held on June 12th at Switchyard Park from 11-1 pm in partnership with Hoosier National Forest. At this event, different agencies will be present to promote different outdoor recreation opportunities. Monroe County Parks and Recreation, IUOA, HNF, & Pets and Pals will be in attendance. BPRD is starting to plan the logistics of Bird Fest which will be held on September 18th at Switchyard Park and Bug Fest held October 2nd at Hilltop Park. BPRD is hopeful that events will be in-person if positive Covid trends continue. The City of Bloomington continues to encourage vaccinations.

Brunelle provided updates regarding Monroe County Parks. All shelters are open with the exception of rentals with multiple sides. Only one side is allowed to be rented out at a time. The splashpad will be open on June 11th after maintenance issues. MCPR is looking at the possibility of trail connections in different parks and counties. Updates will be coming soon. Brunelle was awarded a grant through Project Wingspan last month. 600 native plants (12 species) were provided and planted at flatwood park. An additional 100 pumpkin plants were planted at Will-Detmer gardens. MCPR will be conducting a fall festival give away in October. Brunelle has been working with Connie from Monroe County Stormwater regarding management plans for McCormick's Creek in Flatwoods Park. The water quality is less than ideal with only four

macroinvertebrates identifiable; all located in the same area. Large algae blooms are occurring in the Detmer fishing pond- not blue green. MCPR is attempting to find possible aeration solutions.

Cathy provided updates regarding the Monroe County Identify and Reduce Invasive Species group which has been conducting ongoing weed wrangles in parks. They are planning a plant sale in September. June 14th they will be going to Winslow Woods to pull Japanese stiltgrass. They are also promoting the removal of winter creeper by offering a free native plant as a replacement. Women in Nature Gaining Skills (WINGS) planning committee is planning their schedule for the following year. Swift said programs are filling up fast and that WINGS is almost at 1000 Facebook followers in a little over a year.

C-2 Pollinator Habitats & Native Plantings

Joanna Sparks provided updates. Dan requested that BPRD have a report on pollinator plantings and native habitats throughout the city. Native plantings have been installed at 11 park facilities, along 2 trails and 15 different park properties over the last 6 years. 400 Rosa carolina native roses have been planted in Rose Hill Cemetery to take the place of the Knockout Roses. Native pollinator gardens have been installed. The Pioneer Memorial Garden at White Oaks Cemetery has been converted to a native prairie style planting. The Rose Hill office (parks operation center headquarters) has been nativized except for turf on the front of the building. The rear of the building is a wild land of native plants. The square is maintained by the parks department with the exception of the south side of the square which is maintained by CFC and features annuals. Nativization of the fire department headquarters on fourth street has been completed.

BPRD have been working with a butterfly lady who manages monarch waystations at the fire station gardens. BPRD have been prioritizing native plugs, flowering forbs, native grasses, and shrubs for nativization. BPRD have been conducting restoration work along riparian zones at less developed areas of properties. The focus has been on planting bare root trees. All plantings are native and as locally sourced as possible. Plants are sourced from Vallonia State Nursery and Woody Warehouse Nursery. BPRD have planted on average 5000 trees a year since 2018 with approximately 22000 trees planted in total. The majority of which has been bare root trees. Container trees have also been planted but tend to be more expensive and time extensive to plant. Deer also graze container trees more heavily which leads to the added expense of caging. Container trees take off better and are worth the cost for how well they grow in the first couple of years.

BPRD partnered with Ecologic in 2019 who donated 400 trees for their 20th anniversary. These trees were planted in Sherwood Oaks Park south of the goat farm prairie and north of the monarch waystation. BPRD is working to expand planting to implement the Sustainability Action Plan form 2018 and the newly accepted Climate Action Plan. BPRD is focused on protecting waterways and strengthening the riparian zones around Jackson Creek in particular. Work has been conducted at Schmalz Farm Park to take areas out of the regular mowing cycle by converting them to low mow areas that are mowed once a year. Trees are then planted in these low mow areas. BPRD manage invasive species on all properties managed by the Parks and Recreation Department.

Switchyard Park is mostly native except for a few non-native trees. BPRD worked with the landscape architects to stay as close to pollinators-friendly species as possible. BPRD strives to create as much pollinator habitat throughout the properties. BPRD found native species that have been successful at Courthouse Square which has no irrigation and large swaths of concrete. There has been many sightings of Monarch caterpillars each year at these sites. The reception to these species is mixed. BPRD is attempting to make plantings more aesthetically pleasing while maintaining productivity. There are seed banks located at the goat farm and at Miller-Showers Park. There are large beds located in front of the Operations Center on Adams Street. BPRD is attempting to remove all possible areas out of the mowing cycle. Miller-Showers Park is the most obvious example of this practice because it is still actively under construction. 2.5 acres of turf have been converted into prairie to enhance the initial stormwater pond installations. 2 acres of turf remains including the northern section. The goal is to create habitat with plants that are well adapted to this area and are likely to attract insect that are here. The insect numbers at Switchyard Park were impressive 1 year after restoration of the brownfield site.

David Parkhurst mentioned that the environmental commission is in the process of looking into ways to revise and increase its biodiversity program.

C-3 Leonard Springs Nature Park Shelter

Swift provided updates regarding the progress of the project. BPRD have plans and operations crews constructing the shelter in-house. The shelter will be located in the picnic area near the restrooms and turnabout. BPRD are hoping to get the shelter built before nature days resume in September. The shelter will be an A-frame with a low-pitched metal roof that is the same color as the bathroom shelter. BPRD is attempting to limit maintenance requirements on the shelter with minimal perching spots for birds. Further updates will be provided once concrete has been poured.

C-4 Trail Signs and Boot Brushes

Swift provided an update on the replacement of the boot brushes at Griffy Lake. BPRD intend to install boot brushes and trail signage at all of our natural area parks. Leonard Springs is the first park on the agenda. BPRD would also like to add boot brushes at Wapehani, Winslow Woods, and Latimer Parks. BPRD are intending to work with Monroe County Identify and Reduce Invasive Species (MC-IRIS) on signage content. Steve stated the goal is to make signage more personalized for park locations compared to PlayCleanGo signage. BPRD are working on updating our cleaning protocols. BPRD is looking at smaller handheld brushes that could be used on bike tires as well. BPRD wants to encourage best practices, cleaning gear and a leave-no-trace mentality.

C-5 First Saturday Weed Wrangles

Joanna Sparks provided updates regarding weed wrangles occurring on multiple properties. BPRD have been partnering with MC-IRIS who are working throughout the county and region. Members show up every month for first Saturday weed wrangles from March to November. The goal is to educate volunteers by partnering with knowledgeable individuals on invasive management. The March 2020 weed wrangle was the largest and most successful to date. In 2021, weed wrangles are limited to a maximum of 12 people. The smaller number of workers is optimal for communicating and educating. Two volunteers at the most recent wrangle have expressed interest in wanting to participate in Adopt-an-Acre program. Currently there is one Adopt-an-Acre volunteer at Winslow Woods. There was a pop-up garlic mustard pull on Tuesday. There is planned Stiltgrass pull next week. There has been a good enthusiastic volunteer influx that has proved challenging to manage. In July, the monthly weed wrangle will be held on the second Saturday at Griffy Lake to pull Japanese stilt grass. Last year, over 200 acres of Japanese stiltgrass were treated at Griffy.

C-6 August 2021 Meeting Agenda Items

Latimer Woods management plan, Brown Woods management plan, Clear Creek stream habitat, Clear Creek daylighting, wetland and stream mitigation monitoring, Mill property trail donation

IV. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:39. The next meeting will be on Wednesday August 11th.

**NEXT MEETING: WEDNESDAY, August 11th, 2021
(Tentatively) Olcott Park - Young Pavilion**