



ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES ADVISORY COUNCIL

City of Bloomington Parks and Recreation Regular Meeting

Wednesday, August 11th, 2021 4:30 - 6:00 p.m.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Dan called the meeting to order at 4:31 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Dan Myers, Jeff Ehman, David Parkhurst, Autumn Brunelle, Denise Gardiner, Matt Flaherty, Bill Jones

Staff: Rebecca Swift, Joanna Sparks, Steve Cotter, Tim Street

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – June 2021

Meeting minutes approved unanimously

IV. AGENDA

A. Public Appearances

A-1 Public Comment Period

B. Old Business

1. B-1 Pollinator Habitats & Native Plantings

Joanna Sparks has no updates other than it is marvelous to see how well native plants can do in hot dry conditions. They are incredibly resilient and it's really nice to drive through the city and hike through our properties and see lots of natives taking hold and the associated communities. Lots of Lepidopteran and it's wonderful. Rebecca Swift adds that seeing the rain garden at Switchyard Park in action with some of these intense rain events we've had, seeing them do their job.

2. B-2 Leonard Springs Nature Park Shelter

Swift shared her screen and stated just a little update on the Leonard Spring Nature Park. Here is just a general design, while this does look like a shingle roof it is going to be a metal roof to coincide with the metal roofing that is on the existing restroom and storage shelter that is out there. This is going to be installed at the roundabout end of Leonard Springs at the end of the access road. It is going to be primarily used for our Leonard Spring Nature Days program which are coming up here.

The shelter is going to be a roughly 20 x 30 shelter space. It is going to have a concrete slab that it will extend about 5 feet around. It is now going to be constructed completely in house which is wonderful. While there is a turnaround spot it is still a one-way access road to get back there with some overhanging branches so having our Ops crew be able to construct this in house is preferred. BPRD is just waiting on approval of our building permit from the Monroe County Planning office.

In the meantime Swift is pursuing renting a large event tent from Master Rental to go to provide shade for the roughly 800 6th grade students that will be going out there. The initial goal was to get this built before we started nature days in September but because of permitting, it is more likely this will happen in November, after the fall nature days.

Dave Parkhurst asks when Nature Days will be taking place. Swift states she will happily share that schedule with all of you. They start on September 7th and September 9th. They will be held at Leonard Springs every Tuesday and Griffy Lake Nature Day is every Thursday. Bill Jones asks if volunteers need to be available for every Tuesday or Thursday as he will be out of town for a lot of September. Swift states she will take one day if you have it. Jones states that when he hears from whoever is contacting him, he will look it over and try to find open dates.

3. B-3 Trail Signs and Boot Brushes

Swift states that she has a couple updates regarding boot brush stations. She has ordered one of the boot brush stations that will be installed at Leonard Springs toward the trail head. She is showing a mockup of signage that was provided by SICIM and Monroe County Soil and Water conservation. These are examples of their boot brush signs. We are going to be making ones that are more tailored to our parks and our invasive species of concern which tends to be a lot of Japanese Stiltgrass. If you have seen the ones at Griffy already, they have a lot of good content on there, we're just going to try and simplify it by using good visualizations.

In addition to these larger much more expensive boot brush stations BPRD is also going to be installing smaller signs. This a mockup, a draft of the ones we're thinking about printing and putting up at some of our other natural surface trail properties. Think about Wapehani and Winslow Woods. Again, dirt/natural surface trails where people are still going to be accumulating stuff on their gear. We're going to attach using a cable these horse hooves cleaners that actually PlayCleanGo advertised on their website along with these boot brush stations as a thing you can do when you don't have as much surface area to work with and are not able to put in the larger stations.

We're excited to put these out, we will be starting off with ten and hopefully going more from there. Once we are ready to install these it has been recommended to try and get some publicity to get some attention so people know about it, hear about it, recognize it and will be more likely to use it.

Dan Myers asks if the brushes will be used to clean off bicycles at Wapehani. Swift replies yes, bicycles and boots for that matter because you hike out at Wapehani, it's not only for mountain bikes. But again, that is one of the benefits as you can't really run your bike tires through the boot brush stations. You can however use this little horse hooves cleaner. Myers states his only suggestion would be if it's not too much, that the signs at Wapehani should say "remove plants, mud, and seeds from pets, boots, bikes, and gear".

Jeff Ehman asks are you planning on putting more than one of these cables at one site or will it just be one per site? Swift responds that is an interesting question, it wouldn't be difficult because the signposts we are looking at are those ones with the holes in them. So assumingly it's just adding another cable - if you can see it might not be as noticeable there's a hole at the bottom of these already too. They are plastic, so we'll see how long they last, they uphold and whether, we're trying to strategically place them in area on posts that aren't always going to be directly in the sun, it's hard to always know that, but, there is plenty of shade at some of these trail heads. Jeff Ehman states it seems like if you put the sign and the post and the incremental cost of an extra brush, it might be really a good investment, given a group that shows up will be inclined to use it if there is more than one brush, rather than waiting to use the one brush.

4. B-4 First Saturday Weed Wrangles

Joanna Sparks states we just had one program on Saturday at Lower Cascades. It was kind of steamy, but was really good, we had about 20 people, with staff and volunteers, and 5 totally new people. The vegetation management team and Sparks attended the CISMA conference last week, an organization that educates folks and tries to create CISMAs throughout the state to better manage invasives. Steve Cotter explains, CISMAs are cooperative invasive species management areas. People switched over from CWMAs, which are Cooperative Weed Management Areas, mainly to be able to incorporate animals as well as plants.

Sparks continues, part of the conference was virtual, and part was a field day at McCormicks Creek, which was fantastic, we learned a lot there. The emphasis on the virtual conference was working with volunteers and outreach to the public in maintaining a positive attitude. As we all know, it can be real easy to just show up on a property, and say, oh my gosh, look at all those invasives, or look at that trash, so we were all inspired to start our day with a hike through part of a 10-acre area that we've been successfully Asian bush honeysuckle, and other invasives, for the last 4 years. There were many nice natives to check out there, and we started the day off well. We're going to continue doing that, and it was helpful for us, but for others to see the progress we've made and how nice it looks. That was the best take away of our most recent weed wrangle. In July, we had a really nice one at Griffy, we met at the dam, working on Japanese Stiltgrass in July as

well. And in September, for our next weed wrangle, at RCA, I hesitate to even say it, we don't have much Japanese Stiltgrass there, we'll work on it if we haven't gotten to it already in house.

Myers asked Sparks if we reach out to BPRD directly if someone wants to attend a Weed Wrangle. Sparks responds, you can do that or sign up on the city website. We can send out the link to get signed up.

5. B-5 Griffy Loop Trail and Fishing Pier Update

Steve Cotter states the project is out to bid right now. BPRD had a pre-bid meeting yesterday. City of Bloomington utilities needs to draw the lake down partially, so that potential bidders can see conditions along the west side of the causeway. It's down about 5 feet right now. The area that was cleared of sediment many years ago when the lake was drawn down for dam repairs, is still open enough for boats to get from the dock to the other side of the lake, with the 5 foot draw down. That is encouraging, we didn't know how deep that channel would still be. We will be opening bids on August 20th, and are hoping for a lot, but we've only had one firm show up to the pre-bid meeting, but they did bring several employees. We're hopeful that indicates their level of interest. The design looks good, we are excited about the possibility of getting multiple bids, our consult told us that some of the bid numbers are coming down, are more reasonable, and we're hopeful that this time of year will help us out as well. We'll know more on August 20th.

Cotter continues, we've put several things in to alternates in case things come in high. We're hopeful that we'll be able to get several of the alternates, but the base bid includes the walkway along the causeway, and the pier itself.

Myers asked Cotter how long it takes the lake to be lowered. Cotter responds, it can be as long as a day if we get a lot of rain, or weeks if we don't. We think that they were able to get the gate closed today but are waiting to hear. I would guess it will be between a week and two. I don't know if Bill Jones has any other insight. Jones adds, for a small reservoir with a large watershed, it can respond rapidly or slowly. My earlier comment about 30 years in the making, we had put sketches and recommendations of a boardwalk/fishing access along the causeway in the 1984 management plan report that SPEA did. I'm delighted to see it finally come to fruition.

Cotter adds, we may be able to find a few additional dollars here and there in some of our other bid series. The budget currently is about 1.5 million, we'll see what these bids come in at, but there may be some nickels and dimes elsewhere we can put towards this project.

C. New Business

1. C-1 Education Update

Rebecca Swift mentioned upcoming Nature Day programming at Leonard Springs and Griffy Lake, reminding individuals that volunteering at events is still welcome. Leonard Springs is for 6th graders from MCCSC with meetings every Tuesday starting on September 7th, and Griffy Lake hosts every 4th grade class every Thursday. Each nature day location has various stations, with materials and lesson – volunteers only need to bring themselves and a passion for youth education. Baseline and end-line data is collected from nature day events for the purposes of grant applications and reporting.

Dan Meyers asked what time of day the nature day events are held and volunteer time commitment expectations. Swift responded that volunteers are asked to show up at 9am and leave at 2:15 pm, making this an all-day event for both students and volunteers. Swift shared a Bloomington volunteer network link for ERAC members to sign up for upcoming events such as weed wrangles, Birdfest and Bug Fest.

Swift mentioned upcoming events that will occur before the next ERAC meeting. Birdfest will take place on September 18th from 11am-3pm, with the Sassafras Audubon Society co-hosting the event. Live presentations, tabling from local organizations and government agencies, and family friendly activities will be part of the event. Bug Fest will be hosted by the Hilltop Nature and Garden Center at Indiana University on Saturday, October 2nd from 10am-3pm. It is a partnered event with MCPRD, Purdue Extension, IU, and Wonder Lab Museum.

Autumn Brunelle mentioned that day camp has finished, with full sessions despite COVID restrictions. It was just announced that Purdue Extension and Monroe County will be hosting a master natural naturalist certification course starting September 2nd ending October 28th on Thursday's from 6-9pm. Class sizes will be capped to 25 people.

2. C-2 Latimer Woods Management Plan

Steve Cotter provided background to the property. Latimer Woods is a 10-acre parcel south of the mall donated to the community foundation in 1999. In 2005, there was a push to make the area more accessible which was met with a trail and interpretive signage created. There are parking spots to the south of the parking lot complex developed after the property was developed. The land was donated to the community foundation, but asked the Parks Department to maintain and manage the property for them. With this partnership the community foundation has an endowment that allows for continued maintenance. Dave Parkhurst commented that the loop is 10-15 minute walk with interesting views.

Joanna Sparks discussed the vegetation management plan providing a brief overview of invasive plant management. The plan includes information of the site ecology, with a focus on mapping plant populations. Latimer Woods is surrounded by development and is small which makes it difficult to maintain ecological integrity, with invasives creeping around the perimeter. This property has invasive issues throughout, such as purple wintercreeper. One invasive that is particularly prevalent and difficult to manage is the lesser celandine in the waterway and surrounding riparian zones due to propagules

washing in from upstream from frequent extreme rain events. Management efforts have shifted to areas in which more progress can be made, as is the case with woody invasives such as Asian bush honeysuckle and purple wintercreeper. Although the community foundation had the funds to pay for the management plan, they do not have funding needed to implement it. Funding continues to be an issue to adequately carry out the management plan.

Jeff Ehman asked about how funds from the community foundation endowment are dispersed. Steve Cotter responded that is done on a needs basis, with Parks and Recreation paying upfront and sending a bill. Priorities include hazardous trees and invasives management.

Joanna Sparks asked about future management plans for trails and signage. Steve Cotter responded that a vandalized sign was replaced and trail access from the northeast is being examined.

3. C-3 Brown Woods Management Plan

Steve Cotter provided background on Brown Woods. Like Latimer woods, when this land was donated to the community foundation, Parks and Recreation was asked to manage the land. The property is next to Twin Lakes. There are karst features that fill with water and trash easily, which present liability concerns. There are two pieces to the donated land separated by the road running through it which includes a spring that runs through the Twin Lakes ball field. One of the parcels in the Browns Woods was donated by the Mueller family. Parkhurst asked if there are walking trails in the woods. Steve Cotter responded that there are walking trails on the east side of Basswood, but not on the west side.

Joanna Sparks added that Browns Woods is an underdeveloped site with little management done since the property was donated. Currently there are not funds to enact the management plan. An area of Japanese Stiltgrass has been identified and effectively managed before it could spread out of control. The property continues to be monitored so that no new invasives take hold.

Autumn Brunelle noticed that there were no plans for animal habitat management even though the area has high traffic for deer crossing and asked if there were any plans for future wildlife management. Joanna Sparks responded that there are no current management plans that consider animals, except for beaver dams by the Twin Lakes sports complex being disrupted to prevent field flooding.

Joanna Sparks added that adopters for the property are needed to minimize invasive pressures.

4. C-4 Daylighted Stream at Switchyard Park

Joanna Sparks presented a map of the 290 linear feet of former culverts that were daylighted, showing where the Clear Creek Stream run through Switchyard Park. Part of the project includes .07 acres of wetland mitigation, which was started in 2018 with planting and seeding occurring in late 2019 and continuing into 2020. Part of the plan which includes minimization of chemical pesticides requires mechanical removal of invasives. The soil brought in to Switchyard Park included agriculture seed and Johnson grass, and other farm field weeds that present an uphill battle for management. Eco Logic continues to work on the project, with the status of the project reaching substantial completion and the 3-5 years of wetland monitoring now taking place.

5. C-5 Ongoing Restoration Projects

Joanna Sparks will present on ongoing restoration projects during the October meeting.

6. C-6 Mill Property Donation & Trail Extensions

Tim Street discussed the new trial Parks and Recreation is in the process of acquiring near the Woolery Mill, presenting the proposed route. There is potential for connection to the Duke Trail, Weimer, neighborhoods to the south of RCA Park, and neighborhoods to the west of Switchyard. The 0.2 mile-long trail will be built to the same standards as the Clear Creek trail, and will primarily serve as a walking trail for the surrounding neighborhood, but will be included in future planning for trail connections.

Jeff Ehman asked if the trail was built as a condition of arrival for development. Tim Street responded that this it came out of the plan from the planning department.

7. C-7 October 2021 Meeting Agenda Items

The October agenda will include a discussion on ongoing restoration projects and an update on a statement to a letter to the editor regarding unsustainable sourcing of wood furnishings within park spaces.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Rebecca Swift adjourned the meeting at 5:58pm.

NEXT MEETING: WEDNESDAY, October 13th, 2021 (Tentatively) RCA Community Park – Small Shelter