



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

Cascades Golf Course Clubhouse
Wednesday, February 12, 2025
4:30 - 6:00 p.m.

The City is committed to providing equal access to information. However, despite our efforts, at times, portions of our board and commission packets are not accessible for some individuals. If you encounter difficulties accessing material in this packet, please contact Kim Clapp, Office Manager at clappk@bloomington.in.gov and provide your name, contact information, and a link to or description of the document or web page you are having problems with.

I. CALL TO ORDER at 4:36 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL –

Anne Crecelius, Marne Potter, Adam Fudickar, Cathy Meyer, Denise Gardiner, Dave Parkhurst, Angie Shelton, Andy Ruff

Staff: Heidi Shoemaker, Rebecca Swift, Joanna Sparks, Ella Thompson, Lucas Redmond, Emerson Wells

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – December 2024

IV. AGENDA

A. Appearances

A-1 Public Comment Period
No Public Comment.

B. Old Business

B-1 Bird Town Support

Shoemaker provided an update on the Bird Town requirement that is mandatory to show support from local leaders. There was a motion for ERAC to write a letter of support which passed with all ayes. This letter will be presented to the Park Board when it is finished.

C. New Business

C-1 Elect 2025 Chair and Vice-chair

The Committee motioned, voted, and approved Denise Gardiner for Chair and Anne Crecelius with a unanimous decision.

C-2 2024 Deer Browse Results

Kevin Tunesvick from Eco-logic virtually joined the meeting to share his findings of the 2024 deer browse study. The same 12 transects at Griffy Lake have been monitored by Eco-logic since 2018. Results show that improvements to the average height of woody plants have tabled off in the last three years. There have been years when Tunesvick has recorded heavy browse on unfavored species by the deer, but with the reduction in size of the deer herd, he is noticing the unfavored species are being left alone as the deer are not as desperate for sources of food. There are also marked improvements to the browse on the preferred food sources. Maple leaf viburnum and roundleaf greenbrier were being browse at 90-100%. That has been reduced to 50-80% of the new shoots being browsed during the 2024 study.

The study will continue to focus mainly on the herbaceous plants. This is not because the woody plants aren't showing results. We are focusing our future efforts to the most evident indicators. Average heights for Jack-in-the-pulpit went down slightly in 2023, but in 2024 they reached their highest height. Soloman's seal also went down slightly in 2023. Soloman's seal had an increase in average height for 2024, but did not surpass its peak from previous years. Tunesvick also shared that deer are not the only factor impacting the health of forests. 2022 and 2023 experienced dry conditions and these may have led to the lower growth in these plants in 2023.

Parkhurst asked if deer were less of a problem with Jack-in-the pulpit. Tunesvick replied that Jack-in-the pulpit is impacted mostly by the soil compaction caused by hooves while the deer are walking.

Fudickar asked if anyone was conducting deer surveys. Swift replied the City does not currently have the resources to conduct a deer survey. Fudickar suggested camera traps to help count deer. It was mentioned that the deer go on and off the park property so it is also hard to track them as they pass onto private or University land. Shelton added that cameras were being used on campus at one point but they were stolen. Swift shared that we are going to start collecting and recording more data with the resources we have. The City will be getting the map of the deer stands used during our annual reduction and we are going to start collecting chest measurements of the deer to estimate weight so we can track the health of the deer as well as the health of the forest. Swift continued that the goal of this research is to get the deer to a healthy carrying capacity but knowing exactly how many deer are at Griffy Lake might not be possible. Shelton mentioned doing deer pellet counts might be an option. This study may have been done with George Parker and Purdue. This is something the City would like to look into. Meyer suggested eco-counters to count the deer and Tunesvick mentioned he would know some good locations to put them if the City wanted to install them. Swift mentioned that if no hunts take place on surrounding properties, it can be tough to manage the deer. Shelton added that more deer equal more ticks that can spread more disease.

C-3 2024 Griffy Lake Aquatic Vegetation Management

Swift presented that invasive plants at Griffy Lake negatively impact the native habitat and recreational opportunities. Eurasian milfoil grows quickly and long and can reach the water's surface. Areas thick in milfoil can be impossible to paddle through and prevent sunlight from entering the water column. It is not a food source for native wildlife.

Previous efforts to eradicate Eurasian milfoil was done from 2000-2002 with the milfoil beetle, but this was only semi successful. The City is cautious of using any nonnative biological control so with limited results, the Parks Department applied for a received a Lake and River Enhancement Grant to apply herbicides in 2024. The LARE grant is part of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources and the City usually receives some funding from the program every year.

For a bit of history, Griffy Lake was drained almost in its entirety in 2012 to work on the dam and then it was drained again to work on the causeway trail. These drains did impact the Eurasian milfoil, but are not a sustainable management tool do to the impacts on native flora and fauna. It also limits recreation opportunities and we experienced a lot of erosion along the shorelines during these drains.

Herbicide seems like the most viable option at this time. We use Procella Core which recommends use for two years followed by a year without application. 2025 will be our second year of applying Procella Core. The LARE grant also includes funding to survey the aquatic vegetation to identify the species that are present. This survey helps direct where to apply the herbicide treatments which take place between late March and early May. At the time of the meeting, the City has not heard about grant funding, but if they receive no funding, they will use budgeted funds to cover the costs. Aquatic Control has been a partnering in Griffy Lake management for several years.

The Committee asked where the milfoil comes from and Swift answered that it is usually on boating equipment. It can also flow in through streams and creeks. A third potential is when people empty hobby aquariums into the lake. This can introduce unwanted plants and animals. Griffy is a DNR stocked lake so you cannot prevent boats and boat trailers from entering the property. Griffy has signs to ask boaters to stop hitchhikers, but it is hard to enforce. Swift mentioned that a social media campaign may be needed in the future.

C-4 Education Update

Shoemaker presented a rough draft of the first Griffy Lake interpretive sign for review. This sign include human uses for the lake as well as some of the common wildlife you may see. After this draft is approved, it will be sent to the City's graphic designer to tidy it up. The sign is designed with similes like a standup paddleboarder and Great Blue Heron or the paddles of a kayaker and the webbed feet of an aquatic turtle. The committee asked if Shoemaker was aiming for a specific audience and Shoemaker replied that as an industry standard you should try for a 7th or 8th grade reading level. It was added that having image forward signage is important because it draws people in, but can also help a non-English reader.

Shoemaker also presented a student project of a bird tour that will be placed on OuterSpatial for Bryan Park. This will be a self-guided hike that will share photos and information about native bird species that you may see. Shoemaker shared a few updates will need done including capitalizing the common names of birds and making sure photos of both male and female birds are used when appropriate. Shoemaker has not read and proofed the information in its entirety and hopes the Committee will help with that task as they also look over the information. There was a concern brought up that a phone screen may be too hard to read this information. Parkhurst added that Haskell Smith may be updating a tree tour for Bryan Park because the park is not certified as a level 1 arboretum. Swift added that the bird tour may move to RCA Park so Bryan Park can stay focused on trees.

Sparks and Shoemaker shared there will be a pollinator habitat workshop at Rogers Farm Park in partnership with US Fish and Wildlife Service in June and invited the committee to attend. Topics will include site prep, choosing the right plants, and plant and insect identification.

C-5 Project Updates

Swift announced the ribbon cutting for Hopewell Commons is scheduled for April 23. The City was hoping to have temporary pickleball courts for the winter, but the snow accumulation has slowed their installation. The park is already experiencing some signs of wear from skateboards.

Building Trades is in the review stages of permit approval. Proposed improvements are ARPA funded and will focus on accessibility. The trails and boardwalk will be updated, a water fountain will be installed, and the parking lot will see improvements. There were public meetings where we got a lot of feedback from residents. That information will guide future improvements to the park. We permits are approved, Swift will present final plans to ERAC.

There is a signed agreement with Duke Energy and Monroe County Commissioners to move forward with the Powerline Trail. This will connect Switchyard Park to RCA Park with long term goals to continue to Wapehani in the future.

C-6 2025 Meeting Agenda Items

Stormwater management, rain gardens, and CBU and the Winslow Sports Complex retention project.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:01p.m.

NEXT MEETING: WEDNESDAY, April 9, 2025

Olcott Park, Young Pavilion