



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

Switchyard Park Pavilion
Wednesday, December 11th, 2024
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 4:39 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL –

Anne Crecelius, Marne Potter, Adam Fudickar, Cathy Meyer, Denise Gardiner, Bill Jones, Dave Parkhurst, Angie Shelton
Staff: Heidi Shoemaker, Rebecca Swift, Joanna Sparks, Steve Cotter

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – December 2024

IV. AGENDA

A. Appearances

A-1 Public Comment Period
No Public Comment.

B. Old Business

B-1 Brown Trout Introduction at Griffy Lake Decision

Steve Cotter read an email he sent to Indiana DNR staff on Friday, October 18, 2024 letting them know the Environmental Resources Advisory Council did not support the proposal for stocking brown trout in Griffy Lake with five members against, one member in support, and one member abstaining. Cotter shared the main reasons for this decision were concerns for potential negative ecological impacts and the increased demand on parking. IDNR has not responded to the decision. Rebecca Swift thanked the Council for their consideration, questions, and research on the matter. Denise Gadiner called for a vote to accept the Council's decision on brown trout. Anne Crecelius seconded. The vote was accepted unanimously.

B-2 Deer Management at Griffy Lake Nature Preserve Results

Cotter presented that Bloomington Parks contracted White Buffalo to coordinate the deer hunt at Griffy Lake that took place on November 16, 17, 23, and 24 this year. Nineteen deer were taken during the hunt which was the lowest count since the reductions began. Staff are now working to find the cause of the low numbers. Cotter stated previous hunts may have reduced the deer population enough that there just aren't as many living at Griffy or warm weather leading up to the hunt may have made deer less active or less visible. Parks is waiting on the vegetation monitoring study for this year. In the first three years of hunts, plant height showed slight increases but hit a plateau in the fourth year. Cotter shared concerns that hunters may be less interested in future hunts due to the low harvests and that White Buffalo will have to work on ways to keep hunters engaged. One option may be to not host the hunt every year. Bill Jones asked if the effort was the same this year as previous years. Cotter said the number of hunters participating was the same as last year. Swift added the hunts were reduced to two weekends instead of three. The highest harvest of 47 deer was when the hunt took place on three weekends, but the last weekend was during Thanksgiving. That weekend had lower hunter turnout and impacted the community's ability to hike with family over the holidays. Swift added the report will be shared with members and will be added to Old Business for the agenda of the first meeting in 2025 so council members can ask additional questions. Cotter added 23 hunters participated in 2024 with some only participating for 1 day and others participating all 4 days, but overall there was an increase in participation over 2023. Cotter provided context for the newer members of the council that the hunts have been run this way since 2019 and prior to that the City relied on sharpshooters.

Year of the hunt	Number of deer taken
2019 (3 weekends)	26
2020 (3 weekends)	40
2021 (3 weekends)	47
2022 (2 weekends)	46
2023 (2 weekends)	33
2024 (2 weekends)	19

C. New Business

C-1 City Designations (Bird Town Indiana, Bee City)

Heidi Shoemaker has been working on the Bird Town, Indiana application. The application approval process requires a community completes six action steps. Shoemaker has documented that Bloomington has completed 12 action steps but there is a mandatory step that has not been completed. Community officials have to express support of the Bird Town accreditation. ERAC supplied a letter of support for the first deer reduction at Griffy Lake and Shoemaker asked if they would do the same for Bird Town and if the Council thought that would complete the action step. Cathy Meyer suggested this would need to go to the Park Board for support through a formal acceptance or resolution. Swift asked if Monroe County Park Board of Commissioners signed and supported the first application in 2016. Cathy Meyer completed the first application in 2016 and Sassafras Audubon Society (SAS) has been working on it on and off since then. It is a little unclear how often the application has to be renewed. Bill Jones added SAS

had worked on an application that was never submitted. Shoemaker stated the mandatory show of support and proofing and editing are all that need finished before the application can be submitted. Gardiner said she would contact Indiana Audubon to find out more information on the mandatory requirement. There are currently three signs on Park property from the original designation in 2016.

Joanna Sparks spoke on Bee City progress and that she recently found out the Environmental Commission for the Planning and Transportation Department are also interested in completing a Bee City application. Dave Parkhurst also serves of the EC and shared seven people in the November meeting decided to support the Bee City effort. Sparks will plan on attending the January 16 EC meeting through Zoom. Parkhurst shared Bee City is a project of the Xerces Society who are leaders in insect preservation and protection. Bee City designation means committing to an integrated pest management plan, minimizing pesticide usage, and creating insect habitat.

There was general discussion on if Bird Town and Bee City should be submitted to City Council at the same time, but Bird Town is almost complete and Bee City is still in early planning stages. After Shoemaker hears back from Gardiner on the mandatory requirement for Bird Town, she may reach out to Dave Rollo directly for his thoughts.

C-2 Algae Growth and Maintenance at Miller Showers Park

Cotter shared about 15 years ago SPEA (O'Neill) fellows looked into algae growth at Miller Showers and efforts were made to control the growth. Emergent plants grew and successfully competed with algae for nutrients. The algae that remained was hidden by emerging plants improving the overall esthetics. Manual removal has been tried with nets, rakes, boats, and skimmers. This worked well, but is extremely demanding to move cold, wet algae over a concrete wall. The algae has been dragged from the upper pond to the second pond which was easier, but not sustainable. An ultrasonic devise was used to target nuisance algae, but it did not work. High-pressure hoses have been used to break up large algae mats. This was moderately effective if the mats were thin. Barley straw and a biological algae product have also been used as growth inhibitors but have both been ineffective. The stormwater is full of nutrients so Cotter believes emergent plants will be the most effective way to improve the esthetic of Miller Showers. Bill Jones mentioned aluminum sulfate could be tried but if you add too much, it could lead to aluminum toxicity. Swift added the MOU with Utilities says CBU is responsible for the maintenance of the actual ponds and the terrestrial plants and park amenities are the responsibility of the Parks Department. Miller Showers was recently dredged so staff will have to see what happens in 2025. Sparks asked how often the stormwater swirlies are cleaned and Swift replied that there is no timeline for swirly maintenance in the MOU. Jones believes this should be a data-driven decision and the area should be checked in 6 months to monitor the growth. Meyer is glad to hear there is an MOU for maintenance.

C-3 Education Update (Urban Greenspace, Programs, Griffy Interp Signs, Guided Tours)

Sparks celebrated the success of volunteers this year with over 4,800 volunteer hours so far in 2024. Volunteers help with Adopt-a Greenspace, Weed Wrangles, and tree seedling maintenance plots. Many hours have been at Crestmont Park, engaging the Boys and Girls Club, IU classes doing studies there, and a Bloomington North intern has helped with invasive plant removal. Weed Wrangles continue this year at Griffy, along Dunn, Winslow Woods, and Lower Cascades.

Shoemaker shared some programming changes for Natural Resources for 2025. Currently programs are advertised for all ages, but there will be programs for targeted audiences in 2025. There will be programs for preschoolers as well as elementary-aged children in the next program guide. These are starting in January, so they may have a slow start since this is not a time of year everyone wants to be outdoors, but we will try it and see how it goes.

Shoemaker also shared work has started on the Griffy interpretive signs. Some of the sign topics are large or broad so she is narrowing them down to themes and starting to draft the text. When the text is ready, it will be sent to ERAC members for review.

Cotter shared that Heather Reynolds' service learning class created a bird tour for Bryan Park that will be put on OuterSpatial. Bluebirds, Blue Jay, American Robin, and Red-shouldered Hawk are some of the highlighted species. Swift added that we are always looking to add tours on OuterSpatial so if you experience a great tour or see an idea that seems new and fresh to please bring it back to the Department.

C-4 Project Updates (Gateway, Hopewell, Building Trades, Power Line Trail)

Photos of the new Gateway were shared with the Council. The Bloomington sign lights up and is powered by a photo cell receptor. The lights are a soft white and glow around the letters and not up into the surrounding area so hopefully there will be no bird disturbance. The sign is made with local limestone. The Arts Commission will be adding public art with \$125,000 in funding. Callery pear trees were removed from this site and irrigation is being finalized to allow for more sustainable watering during droughts.

Photos of the Hopewell Commons site were shared with the group and Swift shared that most of the construction fencing has been removed but final walkthrough with the contractors has not been done. Housing construction will begin in 2026. Temporary pickleball courts will be put in to help activate the park use through the winter until the official opening in the spring. All live plants are native or native cultivars on the property. There is an underground 35,000 gallon water detention system that will help control flooding. The dry creek bed will slow and filter water before it gets to the stormwater system. Developers will pay a maintenance fee to help maintain the park. The Council would like to meet at Hopewell next year for an official walkthrough. Food truck events and Farmer's Markets may take place there.

Swift spoke about Building Trades. Five bids came in and the project has been awarded to Reed & Sons. A non-ADA compliant boardwalk will be replaced with a compliant one, the parking lot will be improved, and a drinking fountain with bottle filler will be added. This park will have many phases of development. The surrounding neighborhood asked for more pickleball courts, fewer basketball courts, a large shelter, and art at the planning meetings. Shoemaker will send Building Trades plans to the ERAC members.

The Powerline Trail is being designed by Aztec Designs and construction will begin in 2025. Crecelius asked about vegetation along the trail. Swift said the Parks Department will only maintain a 10-foot buffer along the trail but if a tree falls on the trail, the Parks Department will clear access for the trail. The trailhead will have a bike rack, signage with a map, and benches, but no amenities will be along the

trail. Many safety features will be in place to help guide pedestrians and cyclists into Switchyard Park and to slow down vehicular traffic. This trail is helping connect the City's parks and trail system.

C-5 2025 Meeting Schedule

It was proposed that the meeting schedule may change to 4 times a year in 2025 instead of 6 times a year. Jones would like to stay bimonthly. Parkhurst meets monthly with other commissions. Meyer believes we have plenty to cover every time we meet. Crecelius was concerned if someone missed a meeting there would be too much time until they meet again. Gardiner added that one meeting is usually cancelled due to weather. It was decided to keep the schedule on the 2nd Wednesday of the even months from 4:30pm-6pm. Shoemaker will create the schedule and the rotating meeting locations. Swift added that if anyone feels like something has come up that needs to be discussed that additional meetings can be added in between the scheduled six. Shoemaker expressed Crecelius, Meyer, Parkhurst, and Fudickar have terms that are expiring in 2024 and will need to reapply in 2025. Swift added that if something comes up members can leave before the end of their term.

C-6 February 2025 Meeting Agenda Items

Any questions Council has about the Griffy deer and vegetation study that was shared.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:13 p.m.

NEXT MEETING: WEDNESDAY, February 12, 2025

Location TBD