



City of Bluff City  
Mayor Percy J. Brown

## Office of the Mayor

City Hall / 100 Broad Avenue  
Bluff City, Ohio

November 30, 2007

Dear Bluff City Citizens:

**PLEASE STOP CALLING BLUFF CITY CITY HALL! YES, I REALIZE BLUFF CITY PARK IS STILL BURNING. THE FIRE CHIEF SAYS WE CURRENTLY HAVE THE FIRE FORTY PERCENT CONTAINED. WE ARE REEVALUATING NEXT YEAR'S SECOND ANNUAL AUTUMN LEAF BONFIRE FESTIVAL.**

The Fire Department is still fighting fires along Oak Street, mainly in the detached garages of the houses that back up to the south side of the park. According to the fire chief, he estimates that twelve homes have lost their garages to the forest fire. Fortunately, only eighteen homes have been lost thus far, most of those on the park's east side. That number could increase if those garage fires spread. We're thankful to have fire fighters from our suburban neighbors Roachton, Pitsfield, Gassville, and Humpy Creek assisting with our crews. The homes along the park's west side are safe, since the wind is blowing from the west. Crews continue to battle raging blazes along the park's north side.

We were all surprised by how rapidly the wind shifted Friday night during the First Annual Autumn Leaf Bonfire Festival. While the leaf piles were almost ten feet high, they were still a good fifty feet from the trees. And we had the playground and picnic area in-between the bonfire and the trees acting as fire stops, but the fire chief said the playground equipment and picnic tables were so old they burned like paper. Also, this past dry summer left us with a rather crunchy lawn in Bluff City Park, so the grass ignited rather quickly. We're fortunate that the festival-goers had time to flee and that only forty-two people suffered from minor burns and smoke inhalation.

In speaking with the state natural resources department forestry expert, she figures that what we've done in Bluff City Park is to duplicate nature's own process of clearing underbrush within forests. Surely you've heard the term "controlled burn," which is a forest management tool for controlling under-growth. Granted, Bluff City Park wasn't, er, isn't a forest, per say, and thus didn't have a thick tangle of underbrush, but the principle is the same. Instead of controlling underbrush, we controlled the lawn!

Did you know that controlled burning is considered very beneficial for forest management and that, on average, wildfires burn over 4 million acres annually? That sure makes the eighteen acres of scorched earth in Bluff City Park seem trivial, doesn't it?! And the benefits of controlled burning include improvement of wildlife habitat, control of competing vegetation, improvement of short term forage for grazing, control of tree disease, and perpetuation of fire dependant species! In fact, did you know that sequoia seeds remain dormant until fire breaks down the seed coating? I wish we had sequoias in Bluff City!

So who knew fire was so beneficial?! I'll be speaking with the state fire marshal on Tuesday after all the fires are under control. Evidently, the state requires permits prior to implementing a controlled burn. And please keep your garden hoses handy until we reach 100% containment! The garage you save may be your own!

Sincerely,  
**Percy J. Brown**  
Your Honorable Mayor