This year Punxsutawney Phil’s prognostication will be the only one that matters to most Birminghaminans. The Birmingham Zoo announced via their website that Birmingham Bill will be taking the year off, encouraging those interested in getting a prediction on Groundhog Day to turn their eyes to Pennsylvania.

The zoo has hosted a local version of the long-standing tradition since 1990, with it’s digital announcement marking the end of a nearly ten-year old practice of using stand-ins for the original Bill. He passed away in 1996 at age 10 — just eleven days after delivering his final forecast (for those wondering, he didn’t see his shadow that year).

By the way, Phil did indeed see his shadow this morning, meaning there’s at least six more weeks of winter weather in store for us (even though the weather in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania this morning was light drizzle with clouds as a winter storm warning remains in effect for the area, but hey…).

We are still waiting to hear from Smith Lake Jake, though he told the folks at Alabama Power’s News Center last week (through his translator) he thought we would see an early spring.

Photo: Birmingham Bill, via Bhamwiki/Birmingham Zoo