



## City of Bloomington Environmental Commission

The mission of the Environmental Commission is to advise the City of Bloomington on how its actions and policies may preserve and enhance the quality of Bloomington's environment, including the life-supporting processes that natural ecological systems provide to humans and other organisms.

### MINUTES

17 September 2015

City Hall McCloskey Room, 401 North Morton Street

#### 1. Introductions

Present: Dave Debikey, Nick Kappas, Kriste Lindberg, Mike Litwin, Andy Marrs, David Parkhurst, Alicia Reinersman, Chad Roeder, Dedaimia Whitney

Absent: Chaim Julian, Diane Jung, Linda Thompson

Guests: Rhonda Baird, permaculture teacher and consultant; Rebecca Fiedler, concerned citizen; Mary Allman, concerned citizen; Ramsey Mareek, concerned citizen

#### 2. Approval of minutes

July and August minutes approved unanimously.

#### 3. Public comment

Rebekah Fiedler

- Rebekah requests that the EC consider joining a local effort that brings many organizations together in an effort to bring back the population of monarch butterflies, perhaps through Lawns for Life.
  - Monarch populations have declined by about 90% over the last two decades.
- Dedaimia advised Rebecca to draft a formal proposal, providing a brief introduction to the issue and a bulleted list of recommended city actions.
  - Monarchs need milkweed to survive. The EC could advise the city to coordinate mowing efforts, provide information at Farmers' Markets, help identify milkweed patches, offer monarch management courses, etc.
- Once Dedaimia receives Rebecca's proposal, she will add a slot to the agenda for a commissioner vote. Pending approval, Dedaimia will send this proposal to the relevant parties (e.g., the Mayor's Office and City Council.)

#### 4. Presentation: Rhonda Baird, "Permaculture"

- Permaculture is an ethical design system that integrates humans with the natural world. Permaculture seeks to use a systems-thinking matrix to create environments and human cultures that regenerate the landscape.
- Permaculture espouses three core ethics: (1) care for the land, (2) care for people, and (3) limits to consumption and distribution of surplus (i.e., fair share).
- Permaculture began as a critique of industrial agriculture, articulating the need for "permanent culture" and policies surrounding land tenure.
  - Permaculture creates better climatic conditions by conserving soil and improving water circulation.
- Through design, permaculture incorporates the society, economy, and environment in new ways.

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- Permaculture design begins with the aims or ethics of the client. Secondly, permaculture design applies natural patterns that work with the local culture. Thirdly, strategies that can be implemented long-term must be developed. Finally, maintenance tools and techniques must be developed to ensure the long-term success of permaculture.
- The Center for Sustainable Living (CSL) recently changed its board; the leadership invited Rhonda to transform it into a permaculture institute for the region.
  - The CSL is the primary institute for education, research, and community support.
- Municipalities are becoming interested in what permaculture has to offer.

5. Committee reports & discussions

A. Planning Committee & Sr. Environmental Planner (Linda)

Linda was not present to report, and Mike had no updates.

B. L4L Natural Landscaping (Diane & Kriste)

- Diane was absent, and Kriste had no report.

C. Tree Commission (Dedaimia)

- Federal tree care manual guidelines were just released.
  - Lee Huss wants the Tree Commission to revise its manual, using the new federal template.
- A rotting, 200-to-300-year-old oak tree will be removed from Seminary Square. Due to its age, this tree stands as a community monument.
  - Lee Huss wants the EC to have a memorial service for the tree before Christmas.
  - A cross-section of the tree could be polished to use in celebration of Indiana's bicentennial next year.

D. ERAC (David Parkhurst)

- ERAC did not meet this month.

E. Recycling (Dave Debikey)

- The recycling survey is being revised.
- The recycling committee met with the SPEA environmental economics class, which is progressing well with research.
- The recycling committee will visit an Indianapolis materials recovery facility (MRF).
  - Dave will send out a Doodle poll to schedule the MRF visit.

F. MCSWMD (Chaim & Chad)

Board:

- Tom McGlassen spoke about the Monroe County Landfill closure. The county needs "assurance funding" to ensure proper landfill maintenance.
- The board and staff are revising the Executive Director job description.
  - The board appointed Scott Walker as the Interim Executive Director.
- The CAC voted in support of the upcoming single-use plastic bag ordinance.
- Scott Wells, a former county council member, spoke about the money owed to Republic for transportation and disposal costs throughout the district.
  - He mentioned that this debt would be paid with 2015 MRF funds.

CAC:

- Steve Acres, a former chair of the CAC and current IU RPS staff member, discussed IU's food waste and composting program.
  - Composted waste goes to Hilltop Garden; otherwise, IU would have to get a permit from the Indiana Department of Environmental Management.

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- He also discussed IU's new athletics and composting program, which encourages athletes to compost food scraps.
  - The cafeterias on campus compost pre-consumer food waste, but they hope to compost post-consumer waste as well.
    - IU is investigating ways to improve their composting system, using signs and other techniques.
- Steve Volan, MCSWMD council and City Council member, spoke about job requirements for the director.
  - A revision of the 2008 description is up for adoption. This revision includes a requirement to implement a MRF.

G. BCOS (Jana)

- The CSL will hold a Cut Your Carbon Workshop on October 14<sup>th</sup> at 7:00pm at 245 West Grimes Lane.
- The Monroe County Energy Challenge will offer 2 Energy Ambassador training sessions:
  - September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 4-7pm in the Hooker Rm at City Hall
  - October 2, 1-4pm in Hodge Hall Rm 205 on IU campus
- STAR Communities update: there will be a presentation on the "Economy and Jobs" section of the report at the next BCOS meeting.
- The Hoosier to Hoosier sale raised \$45,000, which was about \$11,000 more than last year. Volunteers clocked over 1,100 hours; and the sale diverted about 45 tons from the landfill
- City council is considering supporting Bring Your Bag Bloomington.

6. Old business

A. Bloomington Environmental Action Plan (BEAP) (Alicia)

- Alicia passed out copies of the BEAP draft. She wants commissioner feedback by September 29<sup>th</sup> for her subcommittee meeting.

B. Weimer Lake Dam report (Nicholas)

- The dam has structural deficiencies. The next dam inspection is in 2018, and the City has no active permits to remove the dam.
  - If the dam collapses, nearby wildlife will be threatened, and the nearby mountain bike park will be damaged.
- The Environmental Protection Agency classifies Weimar Lake as impaired.
  - Fish in Weimer Lake contain detectable levels of mercury in their tissue.

7. Commissioner announcements

Kriste: The county and Department of Natural resources cleaned up stormwater at Lake Monroe on September 12<sup>th</sup>.

Nick: Nick became an official Hoosier River Watcher.

8. Adjournment

Meeting times

- A. Environmental Commission: 15 October, 7:00 p.m., McCloskey Room, City Hall
- B. Planning Committee: 30 September, & 15 October, 4:00 p.m., Lemon Room, City Hall
- C. Tree Commission: 28 October, 9:30 a.m., Rose Hill
- D. BCOS meeting: 13 October, 6:00 p.m., McCloskey Room
- E. MoCo Environmental Quality & Sus. Com.: 14 October, 5:30 p.m., Nat Hill III Room, Courthouse
- F. ERAC: 7 October, 4:30 p.m., Bryan Park, Henderson Shelter
- G. MPO CAC: 15 October, 5:15 p.m., McCloskey Room
- H. MCSWMD Board: 8 October, 4:00 p.m., Nat Hill III room, Courthouse