



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

19 November 2015

City Hall McCloskey Room, 401 North Morton Street

1. Introductions

Present: Dedaimia Whitney, Linda Thompson, Dave Debikey, Andy Marrs, Diane Jung, Chad Roeder, Mike Litwin, Kriste Lindberg, David Parkhurst, Chaim Julian, Alicia Reinersman, Nick Kappas

Absent: All the commissioners were present.

Guests: Rebekah Fiedler, citizen; Katie Glasmire, citizen; John Smith, citizen

2. Approval of minutes (7:05-7:10 p.m.)

Approved by voice vote; 9 yes, 1 abstention

3. Public comment (7:10-7:30 p.m.)

John Smith

John thanked the EC for drafting a letter to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). David P. noted that the Monroe County Board of Health will consider endorsing the letter in their January meeting and that the IU School of Public health already endorsed the letter.

John reminded the EC of its mission statement. He stated that to follow mission statement, the EC must research, conduct field studies, and sample. He said that when the EC learns about the presence of contaminants, they must develop plans for prevention, abatement, and control. He argued that the EC must also publicize this information, so citizens can get informed, ask questions, and offer advice.

Rebekah Fiedler

Rebecca wants the monarch issue on the next EC agenda. She will send her proposal to Dedaimia.

4. Presentation:

Falyn Owens: "Urban Deer Conflict: A Growing Issue for Communities across the Eastern U.S."

- Falyn Owens is the District Biologist for 9 counties in Indiana and the Lead Wildlife Biologist for Monroe County.
- "Deer are second only to humans in their impact on a forest ecosystem. They can, and will, dictate what other animals will survive there." - Dr. Gary Alt

The current deer population problem stems from a few issues. Firstly, does can birth between one and three fawns each year for their entire lifespans, which typically lasts 12 years. Secondly, most natural predators have been extirpated from Indiana aside from coyotes, which only threaten fawns. Thirdly, deer habituate to urban environments well due to high food availability from landscaping and feeders.

January 13, 2016

Large deer populations threaten habitats, the economy, and human health. Forests with large deer populations often have no habitats below deer's 6-foot browse line. Deer harm the economy by damaging property and crops, which cost money to repair. Deer threaten human health by causing automobile accidents and carrying ticks that can spread Lyme disease.

Many deer management strategies exist. Nonlethal options include temporary repellants and deterrents; trapping and relocating, which is expensive, has a high mortality rate, and spreads disease; immunocontraceptives and surgical sterilization, which has been proven infeasible and ineffective; planting deer-resistant plants; banning deer feeding, and installing fences. Lethal deer management options include trapping and euthanizing, which is expensive and requires qualified professionals; sharpshooting, an expensive but effective option; and controlled hunts relying on vetted hunters.

5. Committee reports & discussions

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

Two cases are on the agenda next month:

1. Apartment complex off West 17th Street

- The complex will have 7 buildings containing 44 3-bedroom units.
- The developers want a variance to build a type I instead of a type II buffer yard. With this variance, the developers would construct a 10-foot rather than a 15-foot vegetated buffer.
- This land is currently zoned for commercial purposes and requires a variance for residential construction. The ECPC does not oppose this variance.

2. Certified Technology Park Trades District development

- Motion to write a letter opposing the Trades District development:
Approved unanimously by voice vote.
 - Dedaimia will draft the letter and circulate it to the commissioners. Send points to Dedaimia via email.

A developer plans to build apartments, offices, and a parking garage on about 6 acres of the Technology Park. This development would be called the "Trades District."

The Trades District contradicts the Certified Technology Park Master Plan, which promoted sustainability and green features. The City bought this land to ensure any developments followed the Master Plan.

The Trades District developers request three variances:

1. Landscaping - they do not want to include the required amount of trees and bushes.
2. Pervious surface coverage - they want more impervious surface coverage than allowed.
3. Change in building entrance for their parking garage.

The plans for the Trades District have been sent to the Planning Department, and the Plan Commission will hear this case on December 7th.

B. Natural Landscaping Committee (Diane)

- The Natural Landscaping Committee will not pursue the MLK monarch display idea due to a lack of organization and potential participation. Diane suggests that the Bloomington Habitat Stewards move forward with this project.
- New idea for MLK project: assembling seed packets or seed bombs filled with plant seeds essential for monarchs and other butterflies.
 - Diane hopes to assemble between 500 and 1,000 seeds packets or bombs to distribute either on MLK Day or at the Farmers' Market.

January 13, 2016

- Diane will work on a grant application to fund this project.

C. Tree Commission (Dedaimia)

- A citizen read a statement about removing the oak tree in Seminary Square.
- The City wounded the tree by parking construction equipment under it while constructing the plaza.

D. ERAC (David Parkhurst)

- ERAC did not meet this month.

E. Recycling (Dave Debikey)

- The recycling committee did not meet this month.

F. MCSWMD (Chaim & Chad)

1. CAC

- Kevin Huntly, the owner of Good Earth, LLC on Empire Mill Road, spoke to the CAC. He will be receiving more food waste to compost - mostly pre-consumer waste.
 - Chaim will ask Kevin to speak to the EC at some point in the future to describe the process he went through and difficulties he experienced with composting.

2. Board:

- The Board raised the salary for the director position because they are capping the compensatory time.
 - The Board wants to hire someone willing to investigate the feasibility of a materials recovery facility (MRF), which will be appropriated funds in the 2016 budget.

G. BCOS (Dave Debikey)

- BCOS completed the Economy and Jobs section of the report.
- BCOS discussed the Technology Park issue as well, and their sentiments echo the EC's.
 - They are concerned about the lack of accommodations for recycling, especially.

6. Old business

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

- Alicia held two subcommittee meetings in November
 - The November 10th meeting reviewed the Air, Water, and Waste sections of the BEAP.
 - The November 19th meeting focused on the Water section.
- Alicia gave each commissioner an outline of the plan and requested feedback.
- Alicia expects the BEAP draft to be completed and ready to give to the mayor by January. However, she worries that giving the document to the mayor without getting approval from various organizations and department heads undermines the typical chain of command.
 - The EC should re-visit this issue in the December meeting.

B. Certified Tech Park, Trades District (Linda)

C. Weimer Dam (Nick)

- Nick spoke with a DNR Division of Water representative. Nick asked this representative if any inquiries had been made to the DNR about the low level of Weimer Lake. He learned that a sinkhole might be present, or the dam broke.

January 13, 2016

- Banning Engineering in Danville, IN has the file for Weimer Dam, which means either 1) Bloomington requested that they investigate the dam, or 2) a request for proposal (RFP) to repair or decommission the dam exists.

7. New business

A. Pesticide Use Policy (all)

- The Tree Commission wants the EC to write a letter to the Parks and Recreation Department, requesting that they record and offer quarterly reports about when, how much, and by whom pesticides are used.
 - The Parks and Recreation Department argues that there is no way to maintain the aesthetic qualities of Cascades Golf Course without using pesticides.
 - Dedaimia recommends doing research on golf courses to find alternative management practices.
- Andy will convene an ad-hoc pesticide committee.

8. Commissioner announcements

- The EC will meet on January 14th at the Bloomington Cooking School.
 - Each commissioner should come to the meeting with one environmental initiative they want to see completed in Bloomington before they die.
- The EC elections will be in the December meeting.
 - Contact the Nominations Committee, Mike and Dave D., to be considered for an office.
- Dedaimia: will host a holiday party on either December 5th or 12th at 6pm.
- Nick: saw Mayor-Elect John Hamilton at a Habitat for Humanity fundraiser, and he remembered the BEAP.
- Chaim: Gar Alperovitz will speak to Democracy for Monroe County on Thursday, December 3rd in the City Hall Council Chambers at 6:30pm.
- Chad: the Downtown Recycling Center is approaching the 400 ton mark for the end of the year, which is more than the Center has ever handled.
- Linda: the EC needs to advertise for next semester's intern.

9. Adjournment

Meeting times

- A. Environmental Commission: 17 December, 7:00 p.m., McCloskey Room, City Hall
- B. Planning Committee: 30 November, 4:00 p.m., Lemon Room, City Hall
- C. Tree Commission: 9 December, 9:30 a.m., Rose Hill
- D. BCOS meeting: 8 December, 6:00 p.m., McCloskey Room
- E. EQUAS Com.: 9 December, 5:30 p.m., Nat U Hill Room, Courthouse
- F. ERAC: 9 December, 4:30 p.m., Parks
- G. MCSWMD Board: 10 December, 4:00 p.m., Nat Hill III room, Courthouse