

**Bloomington Common Council-Budget Hearing Minutes**  
**Bloomington Council Chambers, City Hall, 401 N. Morton Street, Bloomington, Indiana**  
**Wednesday, August 20, 2025, 5:30pm**

**CALL TO ORDER [5:31pm]**

Matt Flaherty, Chair, called the meeting to order.

**1. ROLL CALL (\*Indicates participation via Zoom) [5:32pm]**

**Councilmembers present:**

Isak Nti Asare (arrived at 5:37pm)	At-Large
Courtney Daily	District 5, Council Parliamentarian
Matt Flaherty	At-Large
Isabel Piedmont-Smith	District 1, Council Vice President
Dave Rollo	District 4
Kate Rosenbarger	District 2
Andy Ruff (arrived at 5:37pm)	At-Large
Hopi Stosberg	District 3, Council President
Sydney Zulich	District 6

**City staff, officials, and guests present:**

Nicole Bolden	City Clerk
Lisa Lehner	Council Attorney
Christine Chang	Temporary Council Researcher
Kari Bennett	Deputy Council Attorney
Gretchen Knapp	Deputy Mayor
Anna Killion-Hanson	Housing and Neighborhood Development, Director
Jessica McClellan	City Controller
Jeff Underwood	Capital Improvement Board, Controller
John Whikehart	Capital Improvement Board, President
Geoff McKim	Capital Improvement Board, Treasurer
Holly Warren	Economic and Sustainable Development, Assistant Director
Jane Kupersmith	Economic and Sustainable Development, Director
Roger Kerr	Fire Chief
Michael Diekhoff	Police Chief
Kerry Thomson	Mayor

**2. TOPICS DISCUSSED [5:33pm]**

This week’s budget hearings will include budget presentations from each city department. Each night, department heads will present on their proposed 2026 budgets along with the goals and outcomes they hope to achieve for their departments in 2026. These presentations are a preview of what each department is hoping to see reflected in the 2026 budget as a whole.

There will be no council votes taken this week on each department’s proposed budget because the adoption of the 2026 budget will not include department-by-department votes. Instead, councilmembers will make comments during council comment periods as to what changes they wish to see in each individual department’s budget before later this fall, when the Council is scheduled to consider the budget as a whole through a vote on three appropriation ordinances and four salary ordinances.

The three appropriation ordinances include the civil city budget, the Utilities Department budget, and the budget for Bloomington Transit. The three salary ordinances will include salaries for officers of the police and fire departments, salaries for appointed officers, non-union, and A.F.S.C.M.E. employees for all the departments of the city, and salaries for elected officials.

Council discussion and a public hearing on these items of legislation are scheduled for September 24th beginning at 6:30pm. The budget adoption meeting is scheduled for October 8th beginning at 6:30pm. There may still be changes between this week's presentations and the seven budget ordinances that come to Council later in the fall. Throughout the remainder of August and September, the administration will work with the Council and various departments to prepare a final version of the 2026 budget for the City.

Flaherty summarized the agenda and noted the priority areas to be discussed were Affordable Housing and Homelessness, Economic Development, and Public Safety.

Piedmont-Smith moved and Rollo seconded that the following two points be added to how council conducted the remaining budget hearings:

(1) After public comment on each budget presentation, during the Councilmember comment period, Councilmembers may use their 3-minute time allotment to redirect questions made during the public comment period to staff. The 3 minutes would still include the question, the answer, and (if any time remains) any final comment from the Councilmember.

(2) Each 3-minute period of Councilmember questions and Councilmember comments is limited to one turn for each Councilmember to allow for accurate timekeeping.

The motion was approved by voice vote.

Deputy Mayor Gretchen Knapp introduced the Affordable Housing and Homelessness priority area. She reminded everyone that the programs were still being defined and placed into priority areas. She delineated the city departments that had programs within Affordable Housing and Homelessness. Knapp summarized what was included in the programs as well as what was excluded, like rental inspections. She discussed community partnerships.

There was no public comment. There was no council discussion.

Anna Killion-Hanson, Housing and Neighborhood Development (HAND), Director, presented HAND's proposed 2026 Budget. She highlighted the priority-based areas including Affordable Housing and Homelessness, Community Health & Vitality, Public Safety, and Economic Development and explained the overlaps. She spoke about the Residents Academy, HAND events, grants, financial literacy and education, housing counseling, tenant support, federal grants, projects funded by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). She explained other duties staff performed such as code enforcement, environmental review, and historic preservation. She noted some proposed changes to HAND's budget. There was council discussion on landscaping enforcement, AirBnBs, the housing development fund, the expiration of ARPA funds, and how residents received information on HAND programs and grants. Additional discussion included the open position for the grant compliance manager and a neighborhood compliance officer, incentives for landlords to have long-term instead of short-term rentals, Indiana University properties and their inspections, and a possible error in the budget book worksheet on HAND expenditures.

There was no public comment. There were no council comments.

Knapp introduced the Economic Development priority area and gave examples of programs that fell in the area such as arts, culture and community building, long-term economic development, small business ecosystem, and workforce development.

There was no public comment.

Rollo expressed concern over the word ecosystem for human activities.

McClellan noted that the budget resided in the controller's office and a portion of it was the lease payment that paid the bond for the Convention Center.

John Whikehart, Capital Improvement Board (CIB), President, introduced Geoff McKim, CIB, Treasurer, Deb Koontz, Owner's Representative, Jeff Underwood, CIB Controller, and then presented the CIB's proposed 2026 Budget. McKim spoke about the Food and Beverage (FAB) tax, the groundbreaking of the Convention Center expansion, the demolition of the Napa building, and the award of all construction Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP) packages for new construction. There was a target completion date for the new and old building. The budget being presented that evening did not include the construction budget, which was funded by the bond, and the architectural fees, which were paid from an open purchase order. He summarized the 2026 budget request from the FAB tax. The line item titled "Other" had \$8,423,366 for things like utility connections and relocations, arts, furniture, and more. Council discussed the timing of the schedule of the budget and the benefit of allocating funds for arts in the expansion.

There was no public comment. There were no council comments.

Jane Kupersmith, Economic and Sustainable Development (ESD), Director, presented ESD's proposed 2026 Budget. She first noted that ESD's current budget had been aggregated under broad categories which made things difficult to track so McClellan had reorganized the budget by priority areas. Kupersmith presented ESD's proposed 2026 Budget and highlighted ESD's role in the city. She described ESD's programs including growing the workforce population, wage growth, and reinforcing the economic base. She gave a variety of examples and referenced a recent survey that revealed that many Indiana University (IU) graduates wished to remain in Bloomington but 91.5% of those said it was not possible due to lack of jobs and the challenges in the housing market. She provided information on current efforts for economic development at places like The Mill supported by the Lily Endowment grant. Kupersmith noted the city's support for small businesses, tourism, and enterprise zones, arts, sustainability, transportation and transit, and more. Council discussed ESD's decision to not sponsor Bloomington Economic Development Corporation and the Small Business Development Center; those funds would be used for other essential things for the city. The Economic Development Local Income Tax (EDLIT) funds, expenses, and usage were discussed. Council discussed the interlocal agreement and funding for Bloomington Transit. Flaherty asked about adding the budget amount to the tables in the budget book and Knapp said that would be added once the priority-based budgeting process was completed with software; there would be a dollar amount as well as staff time, likely for the 2027 budget. Rollo asked about solar panels, and Shawn Miya, Assistant Director of Sustainability, explained how the city monitored the panels and used Verogy for maintenance. ESD covered the costs.

There was no public comment.

Ruff commented on retaining IU graduates as well as graduates returning to their communities around the state. Piedmont-Smith acknowledged that ESD had to cut their budget due to Senate Enrolled Act 1 (SEA 1) and understood that it was necessary to think critically about how to best implement city goals. Flaherty referenced previous budget hearings and books which had more granular detail pertaining to where city funds went and gave examples. He said that information informed council and the public more clearly. He commented on the EDLIT's original purpose which focused on doing new things based on city plans like the Climate Action Plan. Having ESD's personnel costs in EDLIT did not adhere to the purpose of the fund. Rollo said that attracting businesses from outside the city caused competition for housing so it was important to ensure that a high proportion of the workforce was employed locally. Stosberg stated that she too had been looking at the number of things shifting into the EDLIT as a funding source. She asked if everything would have to move back once the EDLIT expired, in a few years. She noted it was difficult to compare budget spreadsheets across multiple years.

Knapp introduced the Public Safety priority area, which was comprised of the Fire Department, Police Department, Community and Family Resources Department, Office of the Mayor, Parks and Recreation, and Facilities. Rollo asked about infrastructure and services, like public safety, and the anticipation of new developments like Summit. Knapp said that the fire and police departments had been discussing the increase in need for services; SEA 1 would have an impact. Additional discussion would occur to ensure the success of developments.

There was no public comment.

Piedmont-Smith commented that community safety included other ways to address emergency situations, like with social workers and more. The Community Advisory on Public Safety (CAPS) commission had recommended that the city conduct a study on things like Community Responder Programs. She spoke about mental health and drug addiction and noted that sometimes the police and fire departments were not the best responses to some situations.

Roger Kerr, Fire Chief, presented the Fire Department’s proposed 2026 Budget. He thanked Deputy Chief Max Litwin for his work on the budget, Assistant Chief of Operations Jason Zeeks, Battalion Chief of Training, Travis Drescher, and Assistant Chief Tonia Daffron who ran the Mobile Integrated Healthcare (MIH) prevention work. The Fire Department responded to 911 calls, conducted inspections and investigations, provided MIH services, and trained. The budget mainly consisted of personnel via the collective bargaining agreement. There had been an increase in 911 calls, inspections, and MIH responses with services, referrals, and visits to clients. In 2025, there were two hundred and seventy two job applicants resulting in the department being fully staffed by September 15, 2025. Kerr summarized capital projects and a joint recruit academy with the Monroe Fire Protection District. Those recruits received credits from Ivy Tech Community College.

Rollo asked about response time for 911 calls. Kerr said it had been challenging but being fully staffed would help as well as moving back into Station 3. When asked, Kerr said the fastest growing part of 911 calls was for emergency management services (EMS). There were discussions on the Summit development and the impact from SEA 1. Stosberg asked about the Fire Merit Commission and the budgeted amount for training. Kerr said the commission seemed to be working well. In 2023-2024, there were no staff to send to training, but with more staff, training would increase. Piedmont-Smith asked about overtime pay needed, and Kerr said it had been needed in the past, but hopefully would not be with more staff. He explained how overtime hours were earned per Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and scheduled work hours. Ruff asked about IU’s contribution to the expanded services and Kerr explained that IU paid the salaries for staff at Station 3 per a long held agreement. Flaherty asked about usage of the Public Safety Local Income Tax (PSLIT) and McClellan said that administrative expenses were moved to PSLIT as a dedicated funding source only for police and fire. Flaherty noted that the PSLIT’s primary purpose was for capital expenditures and investments and asked if state law changes allowed for other expenses. McClellan explained that the bulk of the expenses included repairing capital, fuel, and insurance costs and that capital expenditures were still paid from PSLIT.

There was no public comment.

Stosberg appreciated that the Fire Department would be fully staffed. She hoped IU would compensate for the new services like inspections of sororities and fraternities, especially since property tax was different with IU-owned properties. Rollo reiterated that the southwest side of town by where the largest development would be built, needed a fire station. The developer had promised the city land for the fire station and it needed to be in place before the other structures were built.

Michael Diekhoff, Police Chief, presented the Police Department’s, and Dispatch’s, proposed 2026 Budget. He said there were 75,951 calls for service in 2024, a 24.3% decrease in violent crimes, and an increase of 40.7% for community engagement. In 2024, the Bloomington Police Department (BPD) was awarded the Affiliate of the Year for its investigation and assistance with regional law enforcement agencies on crimes against children. BPD was recognized for that work in 2025, too. He spoke about community engagement efforts like Pack the Cruiser; a food drive, and a bike index program where people registered their bicycles to combat the bike theft problem in the city. He appreciated the increases to salaries for sworn officers. Diekhoff spoke about recruitment and retention efforts and recent hiring of eleven people. He discussed BPD’s partnerships with service providers in the community, like Centerstone, which had a significant impact on community members. He summarized statistics on alternative responses like the Police Social Support Services program, and Stride Crisis Center which served as an alternative to the hospital emergency room or jail, and provided essential mental health services and recovery services. Its response team was available twenty-four hours a day. Cook Incorporated was involved in a marketing plan with the city for those alternative services. Diekhoff spoke about the Downtown Resource Officers and calls for service

despite being understaffed. He discussed Reunification Funding which assisted unhoused individuals to reunify with family in other areas of the country. The funds would also support those individuals needing work related equipment like goggles or boots. Diekhoff discussed emergency response and criminal investigations. There were crimes involving weapons, overdoses, dealers that preyed on vulnerable people, human trafficking, crimes against children, and more. The proposed site for the new BPD Headquarters was located at 714 South Rogers, and reused an existing structure.

Rollo asked about vehicle speed enforcement and Diekhoff said there had been an increase in traffic enforcement as more officers were added. Piedmont-Smith asked about the Equalization Payment in Other Services in the memo. Diekhoff explained that it was based on a city-county agreement dating back to when the new Dispatch Center was built. Stosberg asked about electric vehicles (EVS) and Diekhoff responded that national studies showed very few agencies used EVS because they did not hold up well. Stosberg asked about the community, and departmental, impact on BPD having more staff. Diekhoff noted there was still overtime because the new hires were not on the street yet. Current officers were not leaving for other departments, too, and salary increases and take-home cars helped with that issue.

Kevin Keough discussed cybersecurity and cybercrime.

Stosberg expressed concern that there were fourteen out of eighteen job vacancies in Dispatch and asked what could be done to support Dispatch with staffing. She valued dispatchers and encouraged the public to consider that job. Piedmont-Smith assured the public that all questions on the written form, and answers, would be posted on the council’s website likely in the September 24, 2025 meeting packet.

3. ADJOURMENT [8:02pm]

Flaherty adjourned the meeting until August 25, 2025 at 5:30pm.

APPROVED by the Common Council of the City of Bloomington, Monroe County, Indiana, upon this 17 day of December, 2025.

APPROVE:



Hopi Stosberg, COUNCIL PRESIDENT

ATTEST:



City Clerk Nicole Bolden

Clerk’s Note: The above minutes summarize the motions passed and issues discussed rather than providing a verbatim account of every word spoken.

Bloomington City Council meetings can be watched on the following websites:

- Community Action Television Services (CATS) – <https://catvstv.net>
- YouTube – <https://youtube.com/@citybloomington>

Background materials and packets are available at <https://bloomington.in.gov/council>