

Bloomington Common Council-Budget Hearing Minutes
Bloomington Council Chambers, City Hall, 401 N. Morton Street, Bloomington, Indiana
Wednesday, August 25, 2025, 5:30pm

CALL TO ORDER [5:34pm]

Isabel Piedmont-Smith called the meeting to order. She explained that Rollo would chair the meeting that evening in her stead due to her having lost her voice.

1. ROLL CALL (*Indicates participation via Zoom) [5:34pm]

Councilmembers present:

Isak Nti Asare (arrived at 5:40pm)	At-Large
Courtney Daily	District 5, Council Parliamentarian
Matt Flaherty (absent)	At-Large
Isabel Piedmont-Smith	District 1, Council Vice President
Dave Rollo	District 4
Kate Rosenbarger	District 2
Andy Ruff (arrived at 5:36pm)	At-Large
Hopi Stosberg (arrived at 5:36pm)	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
Kerry Thomson	Mayor
Gretchen Knapp	Deputy Mayor
Jessica McClellan	City Controller
Shatoyia Moss	Community and Family Resources, Director
Tim Street	Parks and Recreation, Director
Adam Wason	Public Works, Director
Virgil Sauder	Director, Animal Care and Control
Katherine Zaiger	Utilities, Director

2. TOPICS DISCUSSED [5:35pm]

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.

Rollo summarized the agenda and stated that the priority area was Community Health and Vitality.

Mayor Kerry Thomson presented the Community Health and Vitality (CHV) priority area. She said the funds that had been reserved for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) training were removed from the proposed 2026 budget. They were one-time funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). She emphasized that Senate Enrolled Act 1 (SEA 1) would have a significant impact on Bloomington. She urged the community to work together. Deputy Mayor Gretchen Knapp summarized the estimated allocations and departments that contributed to CHV. There were also other departments that had costs that fit under CHV like the Common Council’s Jack Hopkins Social Services Fund and Economic and Sustainable Development (ESD) programming. She noted some programs.

There was no public comment.

Stosberg wished to hear more about how the administration planned to continue to support diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Shatoyia Moss, Community and Family Resources Department (CFRD), Director, presented CFRD’s proposed 2026 Budget and gave a brief history of its services. CFRD works as a vital connector between residents, local agencies, city resources, and more, in an effort to foster resilience, safety, and belonging. The three focus areas for 2026 were resources, partnerships, and belonging. She described direct services like after-hours ambassadors, Human Rights Commission complaints, crisis response, and resource navigation. Some examples were resource guides, housing and food assistance, grants for treatment and recovery, violence prevention, childcare, and medical debt relief. CFRD had programming and events that fostered trust and connection, like Fiesta del Otoño. However, there were discontinued programs like Black y Brown Arts Festival and the Latino Holiday Gift Program in an effort to streamline resources. Moss discussed goals for 2026, like the 100,000 Volunteer Hours Challenge to honor one hundred years of Black History Month.

Piedmont-Smith believed that DEI training should be integrated with training for all employees. Sharr Pechac, Human Resources Director, said that DEI training was not explicitly part of the onboarding for new employees but there were best-practices. Zulich asked if any more cultural events would be discontinued, and Moss said it was possible but not currently planned. Zulich asked about translating services and Moss explained that CFRD did translations for residents. Daily asked if the one-time funding from ARPA and the \$300,000 for DEI had been used the previous year. Moss stated it had not, but she would confirm with the controller. Jessica McClellan, Controller, explained that most of the ARPA funds had been used, but the \$300,000 was not spent and would revert to the General Fund. There was brief discussion on why that dedicated funding had not been spent. Stosberg asked about pass-through funding for the South Central Community Action Program (SCCAP) and support for non-profits. McClellan noted it was from the Economic Development Local Income Tax (EDLIT) fund and there was an agreement between the city and SCCAP. Margie Rice, Corporation Counsel, said President Donald Trump had issued an executive order in January to end “radical and wasteful government DEI programs and preferencing.” Indiana Governor Mike Braun had also issued an executive order. Her legal advice was a conservative approach to follow the guidelines so as to not risk all federal funding for the city. She stated that the city signed certifications affirming it was compliant with federal policy. Rollo asked if the city would still adequately address populations with needs and Rice said yes and that outside legal counsel had weighed in on the decision. Rollo asked about needs per geographic area. Moss said the Helping Bloomington Monroe database contained that data and was shared with partner agencies for strategic planning.

Christopher Emge, Greater Bloomington Chamber of Commerce, appreciated the After-Hours Ambassadors.

Jim Sims spoke about DEI and the city's definition of it. He wondered about the context of the federal and state executive orders. It was important to fund the city's values.

Claudia Lara, Commission on Hispanic and Latiné Affairs, Commissioner, commented in favor of the Latino Holiday Gift Program and gave various reasons in support of it. Families went to the CFRD Latino Program Office because they felt safe, seen, and supported. She was disappointed it was discontinued.

Clerk Nicole Bolden, spoke as a Bloomington resident, and expressed disappointment that some questions were directed to Moss and not Mayor Thomson or Deputy Mayor Knapp when they presented the priority overview. The budget was determined by the mayor and department heads did not have much say in what was cut in their budget.

Stosberg asked about combining the Latino Holiday Gift Program with other programs. She noted it was a difficult fiscal time. Zulich apologized to Moss and said the administration had vowed to serve all residents but how it would do so was unclear. Rosenbarger had looked back at 2023 ARPA spending and asked if the marginalized community owned business loan fund had been established. Moss said it had not. Rosenbarger said it might be a good option since DEI training was considered radical and wasteful, which she did not agree with. Rollo spoke against the potential sanctions from the state or federal government and noted the city's long history of helping people and hoped it would continue.

Tim Street, Parks and Recreation (PR), Director, presented the department's proposed 2026 Budget. PR maintained the city's parks, trails, facilities, natural spaces, and urban forest, and offered programs to help residents explore, play, and connect. He discussed staffing levels, operations, recreation, sports, and administration and community relations. He highlighted 2025 successes like a grant for repairing the Banneker Center's front steps and Parks Accessibility Projects. The department was reaccredited by the National Recreation and Park Association's Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA). It had been accredited since 2001. He discussed Hopewell Commons and Bloomington Community Farmer's Market. The department's budget was a separate general fund cash balance with a combination of taxes and program revenues, with a surplus four out of the last five years. He summarized major changes in the proposed 2026 budget as well as key challenges like aging facilities. It was important to balance current programs with new facilities and more, like Hopewell.

Asare asked about public-private partnerships and other potential revenue and Street said that had been discussed. There was not much opportunity for increasing new revenue. Street encouraged council and the public to provide feedback. Rosenbarger asked about the overlap in funding for cleanup at Miller Showers Park, the Gateway, between Parks and Recreation, Economic and Sustainable Development (ESD), and Public Works. Street said there were different components by department, separate but coordinated. Rosenbarger noted that edible plants could be planted in planters and volunteers could help maintain them. There was additional council discussion on an increase for instruction, clarification in the budget sheets, the printed PR program book, and the replacement of invasive Callery Pear trees which was in year three of a fifteen year plan. Rollo asked about deer management in Griffy, and not using blue light-emitting diode bulbs. Street said deer management was ongoing. There was discussion on park security, and the plan for when ARPA funds were used up.

Christopher Emge commented on park maintenance, baseball games being canceled due to rain, and investments into parks as an economic development plan. He praised Cutters Soccer Club and Karst Farm Park for their fields.

Stosberg appreciated PR, the accessibility map, and congratulated the department on their accreditation. She was pleased about the improvements to the Banneker Center. Rosenbarger supported having soccer fields in the city, like at Third Street Park, because it was an affordable sport and the park was next to the bus station and the Boys and Girls Club. Asare spoke about attracting young professionals with amazing programs through PR. Rollo praised the presentation and reiterated the need for deer management.

Adam Wason, Public Works Director, presented the Animal Care and Control (ACC) Division’s proposed 2026 budget. The animal shelter, and staff, were at capacity. He praised staff’s excellent work, and the volunteers who served at the shelter or fostered animals. He summarized 2026 initiatives including a focus on increasing direct animal care hours and continued success with adoptions and fosters. In 2024, there were 2,408 adoptions; the highest in five years, and 1,878 animal control calls. He described the types of animal control incidents. Wason spoke about major challenges anticipated for 2026 like more intakes, rising medical and treatment costs, and recruiting volunteers. Daily asked what residents could do to support ACC, aside from adoption. Wason said residents could volunteer as well as provide supplies like food and bedding. The community was very good about giving supplies when a call-out was made for things like wet cat food or bedding. Stosberg asked about responding to wild animals. Wason said it was limited and that, for example, the division had to respond to calls about bats in a home by law. Virgil Sauder, ACC Director, said the primary concerns for wild life were safety and disease and gave various examples. Rollo asked about the 94% adoption rate and Wason clarified that was the live release rate which included reuniting an animal with its owner, adoption, and transferring to another rescue group. The current rate for euthanasia was 6% for things like aggression, severe injuries, or difficult medical issues. The majority of wild life calls were for deer.

There was no public comment.

Daily appreciated the division and spoke about an injured deer in her backyard. Stosberg appreciated the staff and volunteers at the animal shelter as well as those who foster. Rollo thanked the division’s staff and reiterated the need for deer management.

Wason presented the Sanitation Division’s proposed 2026 Budget and briefly described services like solid waste collection. In 2017 there was a major overhaul and modernization of the division resulting in lower injuries to staff, higher customer satisfaction, and better efficiency. He discussed 2026 initiatives like enhancing the diversion rate of waste not going to the landfill, improving worker safety and reducing injuries, and modernizing systems. Major challenges included rising operational costs and growth in the city. Asare asked about recycling and the data from the recycling study, especially for Indiana University (IU) students. Wason said there were educational efforts on how to recycle. There was discussion on the quality of the recycling collected and items that were included that were not recyclable. The recycling company provided notice if a particular load was bad with many unrecyclable items.

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

Katherine Zaiger, City of Bloomington Utilities (CBU), Director, presented CBU’s proposed 2026 Budget and briefly described CBU’s mission, vision, and staff in the six divisions. She noted improvements at the Monroe Water Treatment Plant, a Notice to Proceed for the Chemical Feedline project, asset inventory, cleaning of multiple chemical tanks, and network and server improvements at Blucher Poole Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP), capacity improvements at Dillman WWTP, and efforts to street sweep with a focus on water quality. Assistance to customers totaled \$17,195. Zaiger discussed challenges like increases to operating expenses and project costs. Aging infrastructure and leaks in the fluoride delivery system were problematic. There were safety risks for staff, too. She spoke about progress on the Winston Thomas site, the proposed Service Center, floodplain redetermination, and progress on the water rate case. She clarified that the CBU budget was separate from the city’s General Fund and summarized the water budget and CBU’s divisions. She reviewed the revenue budget summary and noted some key points in the budget. Ziager then reviewed the sewer budget and highlighted key points.

Piedmont-Smith asked about the interdepartmental portion of the budget. Zaiger said it was primarily for city services to CBU like Human Resources. Stosberg asked if it was typical for utilities to have significant bonds and if SEA 1 impacted bonding capacity and Zaiger said yes, it was typical to use bonds for expensive projects and bonding was not impacted by SEA 1. Stosberg asked if CBU collaborated with partners in the community on financial assistance and Zaiger confirmed yes. Asare inquired about the potential rate changes and Zaiger said that operating expenses increased every year and that had not been addressed since before the COVID-19 pandemic. Ruff asked for clarification on the problem with the fluoride delivery

system. Zaiger said it had not been formally presented to the Utilities Services Board (USB) until two months ago but the contracts to fix the problem had been before the board. Rollo asked what portion of the upcoming significant rate increase would pay for the new service center, and Zaiger said the service center would be paid with bonds which would go into CBU’s debt service.

There was no public comment.

Rollo expressed concern about the city’s hidden costs to growing which were subsidized by the public. Developers did not internalize those costs and the city incurred the debt to pay over time.

3. ADJOURMENT [8:05pm]


Rollo adjourned the meeting until August 27, 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:

ATTEST:


Hopi Stosberg, COUNCIL PRESIDENT


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>