



Bloomington Commission on Sustainability Meeting Minutes
McCloskey Conference Room, City Hall, 401 N. Morton Street, Bloomington, Indiana
Tuesday, February 10, 2026, 6:00 P.M.

1. Call to Order

Chair Justin Vasel called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

2. Roll Call

Members present, in person: Tara Dunderdale, Justin Vasel, Matt Austin, Christopher Miles, Zach Ammerman, Diana Ogradowski, Ross Carlson

Note: Quentin Gilly joined via Zoom at approximately 6:06 P.M. and Alex Jorck joined in person at approximately 6:30 P.M.

Members absent: Dave Rollo, Chenghuai Xu

City staff present: Jolie Perry

Chair Vasel confirmed a quorum of seven members present at the time of call to order.

3. Approval of Agenda

Chair Vasel noted the packed agenda and asked if there were any proposed changes. Hearing none, the agenda was approved by consent without objection.

4. Approval of Minutes: January 13, 2026

Chair Vasel asked if there were any corrections to the January 13, 2026 minutes. No corrections were raised.

ACTION: Matt Austin moved, and Diana Ogradowski seconded, to approve the minutes of January 13, 2026. The minutes were approved by voice vote unanimously.

5. Public Comment

No members of the public were present in the room to offer comments.

Cale (virtual attendee) gave public comment via Zoom: On behalf of several Bloomington and Monroe County residents, Cale read a joint statement regarding Resolution 2026-02 concerning automated license plate reader surveillance technology. In the approximately 3.5 hours since the joint letter was shared online, 155 community members had added their names as signatories. Due to the volume of signatories, Cale stated the group would instead email the

joint letter and full list of signatories to the Commission, requesting inclusion in the meeting minutes and the public record.

The joint letter read in part: "We the undersigned ask the City of Bloomington Commission on Sustainability to approve Resolution 2026-02 concerning automated license plate reader surveillance technology... We fully support all measures of this resolution, including recommending that the city administration disable all currently deployed flock cameras in Bloomington and do not renew contracts with Flock Safety."

Chair Vasel directed the group to submit the letter to the Commission's official email address listed on the BCOS website.

Note: Commissioner Gilly joined via Zoom at approximately 6:06 P.M.

6. Reports from Commissioners

A. Chair Report (Justin Vasel)

- Organizational Updates
 - *New Commissioner:* Chair Vasel welcomed Dr. Christopher Miles, joining the Commission for the first time in seat C-4. Dr. Miles introduced himself, noting his background includes work on the genealogy of sustainability, digital agriculture, and the political economy of ag tech, including a postdoc at Cornell studying ag tech's role in sustainability transitions.
 - *Reappointment:* Zach Ammerman was reappointed by City Council to seat C-5.
- Vacancies and Carryovers
 - Three seats remain vacant (M-2, M-3, M-5) and one carryover seat (C-3, Matt Austin). The Commission currently has 11 of 14 seats filled.
 - *Secretary Position:* The Secretary officer position is currently vacant following the departure of the previous secretary. Chair Vasel noted that given the proximity of the March officer elections, he did not propose filling the vacancy in the interim. Commissioner Dunderdale has been performing secretarial duties in her capacity as Vice Chair.
- Commission Name Change
 - The resolution passed previously recommending renaming the Commission to the "Bloomington Commission on Sustainability and Resilience" had its first reading at City Council the prior week. A second reading and vote are currently scheduled for February 18, 2026. Chair Vasel noted the Commission may have a new name by the next meeting.
- Strategic Planning Retreat
 - Chair Vasel noted that planning for an extended strategic retreat focused on commission priorities for the coming year is still in progress. He indicated he would continue working with staff to identify a suitable date and format.

B. Waste Management Working Group (Matt Austin)

Matt Austin reported no update at this time, indicating he would wait until he had a more substantive report.

C. Council Ex-Officio (Dave Rollo)

No report. Councilmember Rollo was absent and sent his regrets.

7. Discussion of Topics Not the Subject of Resolutions

A. Grant Report: Grandview Hills Pollinator Garden (Tara Dunderdale)

Commissioner Dunderdale presented a report on the Grandview Hills Pollinator Garden project. She noted she was presenting in her capacity as a private citizen and resident of the Grandview Hills neighborhood, not as a Commissioner, given her earlier abstention from the grant vote due to potential conflict of interest.

- Project Overview
 - The neighborhood received a \$1,000 Sustainable Neighborhoods Grant from ESD in late 2024 to be implemented in 2025.
 - The neighborhood made a proportional match to expand participation to six homes.
 - 240 two-inch plugs from Prairie Moon Nursery were ordered, specified to each site's conditions.
- Key Resource Categories Required (beyond grant funds)
 - *Time and labor*: Grant application preparation, bed preparation (weeding, sod removal), planting, ongoing weeding, watering, and documentation (photography uploaded to shared Google Drive).
 - *Additional money*: Costs for mulch, water, professional landscaping assistance, protective materials (fencing, tomato cages).
 - *Knowledge*: Plant care and identification, weed identification, pest control (aphid management), and documentation processes.
- Results
 - 83% of plants planted in May 2025 were still alive in October 2025.
 - Several plants (including prairie blazing star, which was eaten by rabbits) are expected to regrow from roots in spring 2026.
 - Significant increase in pollinators observed, including monarch butterfly caterpillars, hummingbirds, and various bee species.
 - The project fostered strong neighborhood cohesion and ongoing collaboration, including a companion invasive species removal effort.
- Lessons Learned and Recommendations
 - Commissioner Dunderdale noted that while the grant funding was essential, significant hidden costs and labor requirements could be barriers to access, particularly for neighborhoods without existing networks of shared knowledge and resources. She recommended the city consider additional support (such as model project templates, streamlined applications, and community liaisons) to improve equitable access to the program.

Commissioner Miles asked about biodiversity metrics; Dunderdale confirmed that while the official success metric was plant survival rate, the report submitted to ESD included anecdotal documentation of new species observed in the neighborhood.

Jolie Perry noted the grant application has been updated and streamlined since this neighborhood applied, and welcomed specific feedback from neighbors who completed the original application.

Commissioner Gilly (virtual) commended the neighborhood cohesion component of the project.

Note: Commissioner Alex Jorck joined the meeting in person at approximately this point in the agenda (~6:30 P.M.).

B. Election Planning (Justin Vasel)

Chair Vasel reviewed the Commission's statutory and bylaw requirements for officer elections, noting they must occur in March at a regular meeting. The four officer positions are: Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary, and Treasurer. The Commission also has the option to elect two Co-Chairs in lieu of a Chair and Vice Chair.

- Current Officers
 - Chair: Justin Vasel
 - Vice Chair: Tara Dunderdale (also serving as acting Secretary)
 - Treasurer: Matt Austin
 - Secretary: Vacant
- Discussion of Process
 - Commissioners discussed how to administer the March election. The bylaws require elections to occur, but do not specify the procedure. Key points of discussion included:
 - The Commission has historically used an informal, position-by-position approach with nominations from the floor and roll call votes up or down.
 - A more formal approach with advanced submissions was discussed but not preferred.
 - The option of a co-chair model in lieu of Chair/Vice Chair was noted as a proven past model.
 - Secret ballots are not permitted under Indiana's Open Door Law.
- Consensus reached: The Commission will proceed with the same informal, position-by-position process used in prior years, with nominations from the floor.

Chair Vasel indicated he plans to run for Chair again and is open to a co-chair arrangement. He also noted the importance of fresh leadership and that he would support other commissioners' interest in the Chair position. Commissioner Dunderdale indicated she is open to others taking either of her current positions.

C. O'Neill Capstone Statement of Work & Presentation Scheduling (Alex Jorck)

Commissioner Jorck presented recommendations regarding the O'Neill School Capstone project, which is studying the feasibility of a Sustainable Energy Utility (SEU) for Bloomington, using Ann Arbor as a comparative case.

- Presentation Scheduling
 - The students have requested Tuesday, April 28th at 5:00 or 5:30 P.M. as their preferred presentation date.
 - Commissioner Jorck suggested Thursday, April 30th as an alternative if Council Chambers or room availability is a conflict.
 - The presentation must occur at the end of April, as it marks the end of the semester; the May regular meeting would be too late.
 - Commissioner Jorck proposed a co-hosted event with the Environmental Commission in Council Chambers, inviting interested council members and city staff.
 - Jolie Perry noted that if either Commission might have a quorum present, the event should be properly noticed per the Open Door Law.
- Statement of Work — Recommended Modifications
 - Commissioner Jorck outlined three recommended changes to the statement of work:
 - *1. Qualitative to quantitative metrics:* The students' draft uses a qualitative assessment framework tied to the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission's (IURC) five pillars (reliability, resiliency, environmental considerations, affordability, and one additional). Commissioner Jorck recommended converting these to quantitative indicators for more robust analysis and clearer comparison.
 - *2. Financial modeling:* The students plan to use Levelized Cost of Energy (LCOE). Commissioner Jorck noted LCOE is becoming outdated in clean energy contexts and suggested a value-adjusted LCOE as an alternative, with an emphasis on municipal affordability (i.e., the cost of running the utility for the city) rather than simply comparing electricity costs to Duke Energy rates.
 - *3. Duke Energy language:* Certain sections of the statement of work reference benefits to both the City of Bloomington and Duke Energy. Commissioner Jorck recommended reframing this language to focus on the city as the client, and to instead frame the Duke relationship as managing "regulatory and utility friction." Multiple commissioners expressed agreement.
 - No formal vote was taken. Commissioner Jorck indicated he would submit feedback to the students promptly, with a request that any further commissioner suggestions be sent to him in the near future before the project scope is locked.

D. BCOS and Earth Day 2026

Staff Liaison Jolie Perry confirmed the Earth Day event details:

- Date: Saturday, April 18, 2026

- Setup: By 11:00–11:30 a.m.
- Event hours: Noon–3:30 p.m.
- Location: Switchyard Park Pavilion (vendor booth area)

Commissioner Dunderdale volunteered to fill out the form to reserve the Commission's table space. Multiple commissioners, including Ross Carlson and Diana Ogradowski, confirmed they could be present to staff the booth.

Discussion included plans for updated outreach materials (seeds, stickers, QR codes). The Commission agreed to hold off on finalizing materials that would include the Commission's name until City Council votes on the name change on February 18. Commissioner Dunderdale noted she had identified a northern Kentucky vendor for locally ecotype-appropriate native seeds.

8. Resolutions for Second Reading and Discussion

A. Resolution 2026-01: To Applaud The City's Response To The 2025 Lapse In Federal Funding Of SNAP Benefits

Chair Vasel provided background: In late 2025, federal SNAP benefit funding lapsed. The City administration donated \$46,000 to Hoosier Hills Food Bank and City Council shared donation resources at a public meeting, encouraging ongoing community resilience. This resolution thanks the City administration and City Council for that response.

ACTION: A motion to approve was made and seconded.

- No discussion or amendments were offered.
- Resolution 2026-01 was adopted by a role call vote of 9-0-0

9. Resolutions for First Reading and Discussion

A. Resolution 2026-02: Concerning Automated License Plate Reader Surveillance Technology And Its Implications For Social Sustainability, Community Resilience, And The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

Chair Vasel introduced the resolution, noting it addresses flock camera technology specifically while also offering broader analysis of the effects of mass surveillance on social sustainability, community fabric, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. He noted substantial research underpins the whereas clauses.

ACTION: Christopher Miles moved, and Tara Dunderdale seconded, to advance Resolution 2026-02 to a first reading.

- Discussion:
 - Commissioner Dunderdale asked about the dollar value of the Flock contract. Chair Vasel noted one contract (for a security trailer) was \$50,000; a separate police department contract exists but the value has not been confirmed. Ross Carlson estimated approximately \$2,500/camera/year based on publicly available

information, suggesting a total of approximately \$100,000 annually for ~40 cameras, not including installation.

- Commissioner Dunderdale suggested adding a clause to the resolution specifying that upon ending the Flock contract, funds should not simply be redirected to another vendor performing the same function. Commissioner Miles strongly endorsed this approach, noting that the city of Syracuse, New York voted that same day to end their Flock contract but immediately enter a contract with a different ALPR vendor. Commissioner Dunderdale indicated she would draft a proposed amendment for the second reading.
- It was noted that Flock cameras are leased rather than city-owned.
- Chair Vassel referenced ACLU model legislation (cited in Section 2b of the resolution) that could provide a framework for council oversight of surveillance technology contracts.
- Commissioner Miles commended framing the resolution within the SDG framework as providing useful governance language. He also noted a potential sustainability angle relating to the energy and rare-earth material costs of the broader political economy of surveillance technology.
- Multiple commissioners expressed strong support for the resolution, with Commissioner Carlson noting the Commission may be the first city body to take any action on this issue.
- Chair Vassel noted he will send commissioners a line-numbered version of the resolution along with a spreadsheet format for submitting suggested amendments, which will be compiled and presented at the second reading.
- Resolution 2026-02 was advanced to second reading by a roll call vote of 9-0-0.

Resolution 2026-02 is scheduled for second reading, discussion, and vote at the March 10, 2026 meeting.

10. Report from Staff Liaison (Jolie Perry)

Jolie Perry reported the following:

- Solar Energy Efficiency and Lighting Grant Program is now open for applications from nonprofits and small businesses.
- *Bloomington Green Home Improvement Program (BGHIP)*: The residential rebate program has reopened for 2026. Despite the lapse in federal energy efficiency tax credits, the city is maintaining the same rebate levels as last year. The budget for the program is \$175,000.
- Sustainable Neighborhoods Grant Program has also reopened. Perry noted the budget may be slightly reduced from prior years but she would confirm. She encouraged prospective applicants to reach out to commissioners for help navigating the application process, noting city staff can answer questions but cannot assist in writing applications. Public inquiries can be sent to the Commission's official email (sustain@bloomington.in.gov) and Perry will forward them to available commissioners.

- *Solar Panel Installations*: ESD will fund solar panel installations at the Animal Shelter and Allison Jukebox Community Center through the municipal energy efficiency budget. The respective departments will manage vendor selection and installation coordination.

11. Member Announcements

No member announcements.

12. New Business

None.

13. Adjournment

ACTION: Alex Jorck moved, and Ross Carlson seconded, to adjourn.

- The motion carried with a roll call vote of 8-0-1

The meeting was adjourned at 7:24 P.M.

Next Regular Meeting: March 10, 2026, 6:00 P.M.