

Economic Development Commission Meeting

Agenda May 19, 2026, at 4 p.m.

This meeting will be held In-person in the **McCloskey Conference Room (Suite 150, City Hall, 401 N. Morton St)** and may also be accessed via Zoom at the following link:

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://bloomington.zoom.us/j/85079046166?pwd=TMXY1FjbHWYVU5SKyxRCLf2JIJGj1z.1>

Meeting ID: 850 7904 6166

Passcode: 446180

Economic Development Commission meetings can be watched on CATS TV, available here: <https://catstv.net/>.

Materials for this meeting can be found on the Economic Development Commission's website, which is located at the following address: <https://bloomington.in.gov/boards/economic-development>

1. **Roll Call**
2. **Approval of Minutes**
3. **New Business**
 - BHA Bond Finance project, Nate Ferreira, Executive Director, Bloomington Housing Authority and Tyler Kalachnik, Bond Counsel, Ice Miller
 - Opportunity Zone update, staff
 - SB89 update, staff
 - Strategic Sites discussion, staff
 - UDO small business updates, David Hittle, Director of Planning (postponed to June)
4. **Old Business**
5. **General Discussion**
6. **Adjournment**

| Name | Appointed by | Term |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| Kurt Zorn | Mayor (voting) | 2/1/2025 - 1/31/2029 |
| Isak Nti Asare | Common Council (voting) | 2/1/2022 - 1/31/2026 |
| Vanessa McClary | Mayor (voting) | 2/1/2025 - 1/31/2029 |
| Tim Henke | Mayor (voting) | 2/1/2024 - 1/31/2028 |
| Liz Feitl | Monroe County Council (voting) | 2/1/2022 - 1/31/2026 |

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City Of Bloomington - Economic Development Commission

Meeting Minutes | Monday, March 17, 2026 | 4:00 p.m. | McCloskey Conference Room, City Hall

Meeting Information

Date: Monday, March 17, 2026

Time: 4:00 PM

Location: McCloskey Conference Room, City Hall, Bloomington, Indiana

Notice: Meeting was appropriately posted and noticed.

Attendance

Commissioners Present:

Kurt Zorn, President

Isak Asare, Vice President

Tim Henke, Commissioner

Liz Feitl, Commissione

Vanessa McClary, Secretary (virtual)

Staff Present:

Jane Kupersmith

Andrea de la Rosa (virtual)

Guests:

Chris Emge, Randy Cassady

I. Call to Order

President Zorn called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM with four commissioners present in person, constituting a quorum. Commissioner McClary joined remotely partway through.

II. Approval of Minutes — October 21, 2024

One commissioner noted the minutes were more detailed than usual. Staff explained the density of that meeting's discussion warranted a fuller record, and noted that the level of detail should reflect the nature of the content – more thorough when the discussion is substantive, more summary when it is not. Commissioner Asare supported the approach. No change to the standard format was directed.

Motion to approve passed unanimously.

III. New Business: Election of Officers

Commissioner Asare nominated President Zorn to continue; the nomination received broad support. Staff confirmed the prior slate upon review. Motion to retain the existing slate passed unanimously.

President: Kurt Zorn | Vice President: Isak Asare | Secretary: Vanessa McClary

Commissioner Asare noted the Commission's broader goal of functioning more proactively as an advisory body.

IV. Staff Report and Discussion Items

A. Meeting Cadence

Staff described a proposal to retain all monthly meeting dates while designating quarterly meetings for substantive business. The May 19 meeting was confirmed to accommodate the tax abatement annual report, which must be reviewed by the EDC before the June 10 City Council presentation. The April 21 meeting remains scheduled but unconfirmed. No formal vote was taken; staff will notify commissioners in advance of each date.

B. MCCSC Business Roundtable and High School Diploma Workforce Requirements

Staff reported attending quarterly MCCSC business roundtable meetings and flagged a significant development: Indiana's new diploma requirements now include a workforce component across all tracks. Students must log a minimum of 75 workplace hours during high school; higher-tier credentials require 150 or more. Requirements are already in effect.

MCCSC is assembling a 40-member community advisory council – Strong Schools, Strong Community – with applications available online. Contact: jane.kupersmith@bloomington.in.gov.

Discussion was substantive. Commissioners acknowledged the program as an unfunded mandate with real administrative burden for schools, but saw meaningful opportunity: staff emphasized the potential for lasting connections between young people and local businesses, particularly small and Main Street businesses, as a driver of community attachment and long-term retention. President Zorn suggested reframing the central question from student placement logistics to economic development impact – matching placements to genuine community needs. He noted Superintendent Dr. Winston is forming a subcommittee toward that end.

C. Opportunity Zones – Permanent Authorization

The Opportunity Zone program was made permanent by the Trump administration in 2025. The city is identifying eligible census tracts for new designations in coordination with the state lobbying organization and Regional Opportunity Initiatives (ROI), with a regional rather than Bloomington-only lens. Some previously eligible tracts no longer qualify; staff expressed optimism about Hopewell. The New Markets Tax Credit program was also made permanent and may apply to Hopewell.

D. Seminary Square Area – Assessed Value Reduction and Incentive Strategy

Seminary Square-area property owners recently secured a significant assessed land value reduction from the County Assessor. Commissioner Henke, newly appointed to the Property Tax Assessment Board of Appeals, confirmed the reduction was substantial and that high assessed values have historically deterred private investment.

Staff indicated they have been considering the area in relation to Hopewell and the anticipated convention center and proposed assembling the full incentive suite – Enterprise Zone, Opportunity Zone, and others – to support increased activity. Commissioners described the area as highly visible, damaging to downtown perception and foot traffic, and creating a business activity vacuum. Commissioner Asare suggested identifying a strategic anchor use rather than deploying incentives without a broader vision.

On tax abatements: President Zorn noted that the city has 52% of properties tax-exempt, making broad abatement use difficult; however, commissioners agreed that abatements on new investment still net additional revenue over the status quo. Staff raised concern about retaining Kroger at its current location, noting its loss would significantly impact Hopewell, Prospect Hill, and the near west side, and that Kroger’s site control practices could limit alternatives.

Next steps: Staff will schedule a conversation with County Assessor Judy Sharp to explore how city abatements might complement the assessed value reduction, and will inventory available incentive tools for the area.

[The Commission discussed broadening abatement criteria to include business retention. Whether criteria are in ordinance or policy, and whether expansion is permissible under State statute, requires confirmation before any revision is pursued.]

E. SB 89 – Additional Three-Way Alcohol Permits

SB 89 allocates two additional three-way permits to Bloomington with explicit economic development language. Each permit is valued at \$40,000. The city must establish qualifying criteria and execute a commitment agreement with each recipient before permits can be activated. Permits revert to the state if a business fails to meet its commitments; whether the \$40,000 fee is retained in that scenario is unclear.

Commissioner Asare, as a City Council member, stated his intention to draft legislation consolidating criteria across permit categories – SB 89, historic downtown, and any future Riverfront District permits – referencing Valparaiso’s approach as a model. He invited EDC input on priorities such as local ownership criteria. Staff noted the need for careful framing given public skepticism during 2025 discussions. President Zorn agreed to add this to the EDC agenda in the future.

F. UDO Small Business Omnibus Update

Planning Director David Hittle is developing Small Business Omnibus updates to the UDO, expected to advance in fall 2026. He is conducting business outreach, including conversations with businesses that failed to launch due to UDO barriers. Staff is supporting the effort. Commissioner Henke recommended including City Utilities (CPU), given utility requirements as a barrier; staff will pass that to Hittle. Staff are also committed to reporting back on the status of the permitting audit and will explore scheduling Hittle for a future EDC meeting.

V. General Discussion

Guests Chris Emge and Randy Cassady emphasized cross-institutional collaboration – EDC, City, RDC, and County Council – as essential to rebuilding the city’s economic infrastructure and tax base, noting that assessed value reductions on South Walnut affect all taxing jurisdictions.

VI. Staff Update – Hiring

Round 1 interviews are complete for the Special Projects Manager position (103 applicants). The Assistant Director for Arts and Culture position closed Sunday with approximately 53 applicants. Staff expressed interest in adding a standing staff report item to future agendas, modeled on the Indiana Finance Authority format; the Commission was supportive.

VII. Summary of Action Items

- Staff – Schedule conversation with County Assessor Judy Sharp re: Seminary Square incentive strategy and abatement options.
- Staff – Invite Planning Director Hittle to a future EDC meeting re: UDO Small Business Omnibus update.
- Staff – Connect Hittle's team with City Utilities (CPU) as a UDO stakeholder.
- Staff – Report back on permitting audit status.
- Commissioner Asare – Draft consolidated three-way permit criteria legislation; bring to a future EDC meeting for input.
- Staff – Add a standing staff report item to future EDC agendas.
- Staff – Confirm whether abatement criteria are in ordinance or policy; determine whether expansion to include retention is permissible under State statute.
- Staff – Monitor MCCSC Strong Schools, Strong Community implementation; bring updates to future meetings.

VIII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned. The May 19, 2026, meeting is confirmed.

Memorandum on Strategic Sites Initiative

To: Bloomington Economic Development Commission

From: Jane Kupersmith, Director, Economic Development Commission

CC: Kerry Thomson, Mayor; Gretchen Knapp, Deputy Mayor; Margie Rice, Corporation Counsel; De de la Rosa, Assistant Director of Small Business Development; Isak Asare, Bloomington Common Council President

Date: 05/18/2026

Subject: Developing Eligibility Criteria for Strategic Sites

Executive Summary

The USB updated section 24.2 of its Rules & Regulations to allow for extension of sewer service outside of City limits for strategic economic development sites. Expansion of employment and attraction of high-wage jobs through this program will help address wage growth. This conversation will introduce the EDC to the updated rules & regs and have an open discussion about potential eligibility requirements. Staff will incorporate this and other feedback into formal eligibility criteria and a decision matrix for approval by the EDC.

Background

Earlier this year, the Utilities Service Board updated section 24.2 of its rules and regulations to allow for the extension of sewer service outside of the city limits for strategic economic development sites. The site must be named as strategic by the Department of Economic & Sustainable Development, and that must be communicated to City of Bloomington Utilities (CBU) in order for CBU to evaluate demand requirements and issue a will-serve letter. The Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) incentive is identified as the mechanism by which revenue may be captured to offset infrastructure costs for CBU and to drive revenue for the City under I.C. 36-4-3-21. PILOT agreements require approval from the Common Council. This process would ultimately function much like the current PILOT process, where a request is made of ESD; it is reviewed, a staff recommendation is made to the EDC; and EDC makes a recommendation to the Common Council. Common Council may create an ordinance related to that specific PILOT. At that point, annual compliance is handled through ESD and incorporated into the tax abatement report provided to Council every June.

Given that the City and County's employment growth has been constrained by annexation outcomes, this new tool allows the City a path to foster sensible employment growth at key sites in the County.

It is recommended that the EDC, as with tax abatements, develop and adopt eligibility criteria for consideration of sewer extension through the strategic sites mechanism. Typical metrics for evaluation of economic development incentives are jobs created, capital investment, and wages. The Indiana Economic Development Corporation, via President Josh Richardson, has

indicated that wages must meet 125% county average wages for state incentives to be considered. This wage number is based on Bureau of Labor Statistics data and not HUD data (AMI). The local hourly average wage for 2025 is \$25.26. Therefore, the 125% average wage would be \$31.75 per hour or \$65,676 annually. As with the tax abatement program, these wages represent the average for the employer not the baseline.

Other incentive programs do not require specific baseline capital expenditure or total job numbers, but require through the filing of CF-1s or the execution of project agreements, and the filing of annual reporting on these metrics.

On May 17, City of Bloomington Utilities issued a blanket will-serve letter to the Monroe County Airport. This will-serve letter indicates a willingness on the part of CBU to extend service, however actual extension of service would require a specific request from a specific employer, review by ESD and EDC, evaluation by CBU engineers, and a recommendation by the EDC to move through the PILOT process. In short, no legal commitment has been made via the blanket will serve letter.

Conclusion

Eligibility criteria are needed to advance the extension of utility service outside of corporation limits for strategic economic development sites. It is requested that this topic be introduced for discussion at the May EDC meeting on Tuesday, May 19. A draft decision matrix is included in the packet for consideration. The staff will take feedback and develop eligibility criteria and a decision matrix for approval at a future EDC meeting. Staff will seek feedback from local economic development organizations as well as members of the Common Council.

References

City of Bloomington Utilities Service Board. (2025). *Rules and regulations of the City of Bloomington Utilities Service Board* (Section 24.2). City of Bloomington.
https://docs.google.com/document/d/12VFNF7h4WJ7lyH7qIzFE5_B0bUExQKE5DwAN2dGeo/edit?tab=t.0

Indiana Economic Development Corporation. (2025). *2025 IEDC projects county average wage* [Data from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023 QCEW Annual Average].
<https://edcmc.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/2025-Indiana-County-Average-Wages.pdf>

DRAFT UTILITY EXTENSION DECISION MATRIX

Project Application Summary

| | |
|---|--|
| Project / Company Name | |
| Project Location / Address | |
| Applicant Contact Name | |
| Application Date | |
| Proposed Capital Investment (\$) | |
| Projected FTE Jobs Created | |
| Average Hourly Wage Offered (\$) | |
| Industry / Sector | |
| Reviewing Staff Member | |
| Review Date | |

— Evaluation Results (auto-calculated) —

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Tier 1 – All Criteria Met? | Enter Y/N after completing Tier 1 sheet |
| Tier 2 – Total Score | 0 |
| Tier 2 – Pass / Fail | X FAILS – Does Not Meet Threshold |
| Overall Recommendation | |

DRAFT UTILITY EXTENSION DECISION MATRIX

Tier 1 – Mandatory Qualifying Criteria (All Must Be Met)

| Criterion | Specification / Standard | Project Meets? (Y/N) |
|---|--|----------------------|
| A. High-Value Economic Impact Threshold | | |
| Minimum Capital Investment | \$15 million minimum | |
| Job Creation | Minimum 75 new full-time equivalent (FTE) positions | |
| Average Wage Requirement | ≥ 120% of Monroe County median wage | |
| Excluded Development Types | Residential developments; retail strip centers; warehousing/ distribution without significant employment | N/A |
| B. Economic Development Priority Sectors | | |
| Advanced Manufacturing & Technology | Qualifies as priority sector | |
| Life Sciences & Healthcare Services | Qualifies as priority sector | |
| Research & Development Facilities | Qualifies as priority sector | |
| Professional Services & Corporate HQ | Qualifies as priority sector | |
| Clean Energy & Sustainable Technology | Qualifies as priority sector | |
| Higher Education Partnerships / Spin-offs | Qualifies as priority sector | |
| Aerospace / Aeronautics | Qualifies as priority sector | |
| C. Regional Benefit Demonstration | | |
| Serves Broader Market | Must serve Monroe County / regional market | |
| Service Area Alignment | Cannot primarily serve populations outside Bloomington's service area | |
| Workforce / Community Benefit | Must demonstrate workforce development or community benefit component | |
| D. Infrastructure Capacity | | |
| Trunk Line Capacity | Existing capacity must accommodate project without system upgrades at city expense; OR developer funds all required improvements | |
| Service Level Protection | Cannot compromise service levels for existing city customers | |

NOTE: ALL Tier 1 criteria must be met. Failure on any single criterion disqualifies the project from further evaluation.

DRAFT UTILITY EXTENSION DECISION MATRIX

Tier 2 – Scored Evaluation | Minimum Passing Score: 70 of 100 Points

| Criterion | Points Available | Project Score | Notes |
|---|------------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| A. Strategic Value (45 points possible) | | | |
| Partnership with university or research institution | 20 | | |
| Fills critical economic cluster gap | 10 | | |
| Enables anchor employer retention / expansion | 10 | | |
| Catalyzes additional private development | 5 | | |
| B. Economic Impact (30 points possible) | | | |
| Average wage > 150% of county average | 10 | | Select ONE wage tier |
| Average wage 120–150% of county average | 5 | | Select ONE wage tier |
| Capital investment > \$30M | 10 | | Select ONE capex tier |
| Capital investment \$15M–\$30M | 5 | | Select ONE capex tier |
| Job creation > 150 FTE | 10 | | Select ONE jobs tier |
| Job creation 75–150 FTE | 5 | | Select ONE jobs tier |
| C. Sustainability & Community Benefit (25 points possible) | | | |
| LEED certification or equivalent | 5 | | |
| Local workforce hiring commitment (> 30% local) | 10 | | |
| Apprenticeship or training program | 5 | | |
| Public amenity component | 5 | | |

| | | | |
|----------------------------|------------|----------|--------------------------------|
| TOTAL PROJECT SCORE | 100 | 0 | X FAILS – Does Not Meet |
|----------------------------|------------|----------|--------------------------------|

Passing threshold: 70 / 100 points | Mutually exclusive tiers: score only ONE wage tier, ONE capex tier, and ONE jobs tier under Economic Impact.