

BLOOMINGTON COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCE

MINUTES SPECIAL JOINT MEETING BLOOMINGTON COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

Council Chambers, City Hall
401 N Morton St, Bloomington, IN 47404

Tuesday, September 15, 2026

APPROVED OCTOBER 13, 2026

BCOSR Commissioners Present In-Person: Tara Dunderdale, Justin Vasel, Rebecca Payne, Christopher Miles (arrived 6:17 PM), Zach Ammerman, Dave Rollo, Alex Jorck, Maria Aarstad, Diana Ogradowski, Ross Carlson

BCOSR Commissioners Absent: Therese Dorau

EC Commissioners Present In-Person: Justin Meschter, Adam Martinez, Karl Gaisser, Carrie Albright, Matt Caldie

EC Commissioners Absent: Mitchell Owens, Heidi Brown

Commissioners Present Virtually: None

Staff Present: Shawn Miya, Jolie Perry

1. CALL TO ORDER

BCOSR Chair Justin Vasel called the special joint meeting of the Bloomington Commission on Sustainability and Resilience (BCOSR) and the Environmental Commission (EC) to order at 6:01 PM.

2. ROLL CALL AND QUORUM DETERMINATION

The roll was called separately for each commission. Both BCOSR and EC had a quorum.

Chair Vasel reviewed the procedures for the joint meeting. Final actions, such as adopting an amendment or the resolution, would be decided by separate roll call votes of each commission. Procedural matters, such as motions and seconds, would be handled by the joint body as a single meeting under Robert's Rules of Order.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

No changes to the agenda were offered.

ACTION: Commissioner Ammerman (BCOSR) moved to approve the agenda. Commissioner Caldie (EC) seconded. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote, with no abstentions.

4. OPENING REMARKS FROM CHAIRS

a. BCOSR Chair, Justin Vasel

Chair Vasel welcomed the Environmental Commission and thanked staff from both commissions, the commissioners who researched and drafted the resolution, and the members of the public who wrote in support. He reviewed the history of collaboration between the two commissions since the first BCOS meeting in October 2005, including joint energy forums in 2006, shared Earth Day tables, climate forums, and film screenings; joint committees on climate, greenhouse gas emissions, and education in the 2000s; a BCOS seat on the EC's planning committee in the 2010s; joint meetings with mayors and joint letters; and coordination between BCOS's Sustainability Trends Assessment and the EC's Bloomington Environmental Quality Indicators report. He expressed hope that joint meetings like this one would become a template for other commissions.

b. EC Chair, Carrie Albright

Chair Albright thanked BCOSR, staff, and the public for their work and input. She noted that the EC began discussing dark sky status a couple of years ago, first raised by Commissioner Martinez and developed further with Commissioners Caldie and Gaisser, and that BCOSR's resolution was an ideal way for the two commissions to advance that work together. She looks forward to additional collaboration.

5. OPENING REMARKS FROM RESOLUTION AUTHORS

a. BCOSR Lead Author, Zach Ammerman

Commissioner Ammerman summarized the memorandum and resolution. The primary goal is to meaningfully reduce light pollution in Bloomington, with Dark Sky community status as a potential outcome. Using the DarkSky community standards, he identified gaps in the City's lighting code. The resolution would:

- Lower allowed color temperature for lighting.
- Establish an amortization schedule requiring all light fixtures to comply with the code within 10 years.
- Restrict exterior uplighting, except for flags.
- Require a warrant for new public lighting, with a higher standard near environmentally sensitive areas.
- Extend the lighting curfew to all mixed-use and nonresidential districts, and move 11:00 PM curfews to 10:00 PM.
- Strengthen restrictions on illuminated signage and rules on light trespass.

He also presented 311 data showing that complaints about harsh or glaring streetlights averaged 11 per year in the decade before the City began installing higher color temperature (bluer, harsher) streetlights around 2022, and have exceeded 100 per year since.

b. EC Lead Author, Matt Caldie

Commissioner Caldie emphasized the effects of light pollution on people and the environment, including emissions from unnecessary lighting and the disruption of nocturnal animals and insects, with effects throughout the food web.

6. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment in person or online. Chair Vasel noted that the commissions received 11 letters from the public over the past month, all in support of the resolution. The letters are included in the meeting packet.

7. BCOSR RESOLUTION 2026-06 / EC RESOLUTION 2026-01

a. Motion to Adopt

ACTION: Commissioner Jorck moved to adopt the resolution. Commissioner Carlson seconded.

Commissioner Aarstad expressed concern that the resolution recommends extensive UDO changes whose implications, including for economic development, are not yet fully understood. She suggested focusing first on the general recommendations to inventory City lighting and establish a sky quality measurement program, so that baseline data is available before code changes are made.

Several commissioners responded that the commissions' advisory role is to provide research and their strongest recommendations, a roadmap toward reducing light pollution, and that the Council can decide how and when to implement them. Commissioner Caldie suggested that the general recommendations could be placed before the UDO recommendations. Commissioner Dunderdale highlighted a letter in the packet showing that light pollution from Bloomington rivals that of Indianapolis and affects surrounding communities.

Council Member Rollo thanked the commissions and stated that he would abstain because he has not yet been able to gather input on the proposal from his constituents. He shared with the commissions a follow-up email from Liz Irwin, Government and Community Relations Manager at Duke Energy, describing Duke Energy's gradual replacement of 4000K streetlights with 3000K streetlights, and encouraged the commissions to aim lower, such as the 2200K recommended in the resolution.

b. Proposed Amendment Included in the Packet

ACTION: Commissioner Caldie moved to consider the amendment included in the packet. Commissioner Jorck seconded.

Commissioner Ammerman explained that he drafted the amendment in response to Commissioner Aarstad's written comments. It would remove the 10-year amortization requirement in Section 1a, remove references to Dark Sky status, and clarify that new requirements apply primarily to public lighting. Removing the amortization requirement would make Dark Sky certification unattainable.

Commissioner Caldie supported the amendment as still strong but less burdensome for staff. Commissioner Miles asked what would serve as an enforcement backstop without certification; Commissioner Ammerman responded that existing code already requires compliance during

substantial renovations and that the public lighting provisions are unchanged. Chair Albright noted concerns about the resources the resolution would require and said the amendment would give departments flexibility on timelines. Commissioner Dunderdale preferred the original version. Commissioner Jorck suggested providing both versions to the Council and noted that DarkSky International is moving to a performance-based certification, under which Bloomington is unlikely to qualify unless it shows progress soon. Commissioner Ogradowski supported either version but asked that dark sky status be mentioned if the amendment passed. Commissioner Aarstad said she would likely vote no or abstain on either version. Commissioner Ammerman stated that he would vote against the amendment, preferring the original resolution.

Without objection, the commissions agreed that subsection lettering would be updated to reflect any sections struck by the amendment.

ACTION: The motion to adopt the amendment failed. BCOSR roll call vote: 3 yes, 5 no, 2 abstentions. EC roll call vote: 1 yes, 3 no, 1 abstention.

c. Recess

ACTION: Commissioner Jorck moved to recess for three minutes. Commissioner Carlson seconded. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote, with no abstentions. The commissions recessed at 7:05 PM and reconvened at 7:09 PM.

d. Proposed Amendment to Attach an Alternative as Exhibit A

ACTION: Commissioner Jorck moved to amend the resolution to recommend its adoption as presented and to transmit the proposed amendment to the City Council, attached as Exhibit A, as an alternative for its consideration. Commissioner Gaisser seconded.

A commissioner asked whether the motion could also convey the urgency of pursuing Dark Sky certification before the certification process changes; commissioners agreed that this could be addressed separately by letter. Commissioners Carlson and Ammerman opposed the motion, stating that the commissions should send a unified recommendation and that the alternative had just been voted down. Commissioner Jorck stated that the alternative would give the Council options and the best chance of passing a measure on the first attempt. Commissioners noted that the proposed amendment is part of the public record and that the transmittal could mention that it is available in the packet.

ACTION: The motion failed. BCOSR roll call vote: 1 yes, 6 no, 3 abstentions. EC roll call vote: 1 yes, 3 no, 1 abstention.

e. Vote on Adoption

A commissioner asked why the general recommendations direct City of Bloomington Utilities, rather than Public Works, to conduct the lighting inventory. Staff noted that Public Works is responsible for street lighting maintenance, repair, and planning; commissioners agreed this detail could be corrected at the Council level. Council Member Rollo proposed that the Council periodically hold deliberative sessions in Council Chambers with staff, commissioners, and the public on topics such as this one, and offered to sponsor them.

ACTION: The motion to adopt the resolution as originally presented in the packet passed. BCOSR roll call vote: 8 yes, 1 no, 1 abstention. EC roll call vote: 4 yes, 0 no, 1 abstention. BCOSR Resolution 2026-06 / EC Resolution 2026-01 is adopted.

8. CLOSING REMARKS

Commissioner Gaisser thanked both commissions and City staff.

9. ADJOURNMENT

ACTION: Commissioner Carlson moved to adjourn. Commissioner Ogrodowski seconded. The motion passed by voice vote, with no abstentions. The meeting adjourned at 7:30 PM.

NEXT BCOSR MEETING:
Tuesday, October 13, 2026, 6:00 PM