City of Bloomington
Environmental Commission

The mission of the Environmental Commission is to advise the City of Bloomington on how its actions and policies may preserve and enhance the quality of Bloomington's environment, including the life-supporting processes that natural ecological systems provide to humans and other organisms.

MINUTES

17 August 2017
City Hall—McCloskey Room, 401 North Morton Street

1. Introductions (7:00-7:05 p.m.)
   Present: Andy Marrs, Ramsay Harik, Chris Neggers, Dedaimia Whitney, Nick Kappas, David Parkhurst, Mike Litwin, Matt Caldie, Linda Thompson, Riley Zipper
   Absent: Dave Debikey, Chaim Julian, Dani Graf
   Guests: None

   Matt Caldie is a new commissioner. He works at a print shop on the west side. He's been interested in environmental issues for a long time, and was looking for a way to get involved more. He found the commission on the City's website last year and decided to apply.

2. Approval of minutes (7:05-7:10 p.m.)
   No comments on the minutes. All in favor, none opposed — the motion passes.

3. Public comment (7:10-7:30 p.m.)
   No public comment.

4. **No** discussion from Environmental Commission working groups (**B cycle**) (7:30-7:30 p.m.)

   ~~**A Cycle**~~
   ~~A. ECPC/Planning Commission~~
   ~~B. Waste/Hazards~~
   ~~C. Water~~

   ~~**B Cycle**~~
   ~~D. Outreach~~
   ~~E. ECPC/Planning Commission~~
   ~~F. Biodiversity~~

5. Old business (7:30-7:45 p.m.)
   A. Native plants bookmark
      - Motion was made to uphold electronic approval of the bookmark. All in favor, none opposed — the motion passes.
   B. Paris Agreement OpEd
      - Nick has a draft that he'll send to Dedaimia very soon.
   C. Mayors' Monarch Pledge
      - All the pieces to the Monarch Pledge will be included in a binder. An introduction to what it is, the 24 action items, the Proclamation, the Mayor's letter, and the full plan.
      - He's still waiting for feedback on the full report from some people.
      - There's still some legwork that has to be done, like researching vacant properties and fact-checking.
      - How will the City convert lots into gardens?

- May not be able to do it, because the property, once it's vacant, usually goes back to the County.
- Maybe we'll have to collaborate more with the County to do initiatives like this.
- One thing that we still have to determine is when we'll roll this out.
- Mayor has to give a proclamation on a certain date.
- We'll send Matt a copy of the Monarch Pledge plan that Ryan made.

D. Habitat network slide presentation
- Riley sent out slides that he's going to present to other commissions and the Council.
- Will have to tailor the presentation to the different commissions, and the presentation to the Council will be a lot different than presentations to commissions.
- Bike/Ped Commission, Tree Commission, and the Plan Commission are three commissions that may be interested in the plan.

6. New business (7:45-8:50 p.m.)

A. Midyear 360 review

The midyear review is intended to make commissioners reflect on their contributions to the Commission.

Attendance:
- We said that it was "OK" for the most part, so what do we feel is not better about attendance?
- We should look at it in terms of quorum.
- The bylaws say if somebody misses more than three meetings (unexcused) they're out.
  - If they say anything beforehand, then it's excused.
- One thing we could consider is limit total number of absences.
  - If people miss too many absences, it could mean they have too many other obligations and we should consider replacing them.
  - Not many times when people just lose interest and quit coming – but this is the situation that needs to be addressed.
  - Because, when this happens, there's a de facto vacancy on the commission and it's hard to get it filled when you're relying on the Council to appoint someone.

Quality of work:
- Majority of the respondents think the work is high quality — only one person said it was "OK".

Message is consistent:
- Pretty even across the board.
- Nick says that he believes we stay true to our mission when we communicate and hasn't seen any deviation.
  - Maybe we should evaluate clarity of mission, when it comes to talking to other groups and the public.
- Dedaimia is concerned about losing some space for the interns and other things happening at Planning and is concerned about us being marginalized.
  - The director (of P&T) may not understand our mission or purpose — maybe we should have a vote of confidence from the Mayor, saying he endorses what we're doing and we're doing a good job.
- Mike: we're used to having a Planning director who really understands what we're doing, like Tom Micuda.
- Our message just needs to be louder!

Fulfilling the mission:
- Also pretty even.

- But like Ramsay said, we might need more clarity of mission.

Provides benefit to public:

- Many of our projects come from things ourselves are interested in.
    - But other people in the community still have similar interests and concerns, they just aren't vocalizing them.
    - Do we even represent anyone? The Council and the mayor represent the people, we're appointed by the representatives.
    - Part of our job though is to respond to the public — and we've always done that with respect, even for those who might be "bogus".
    - Though we don't want to waste our resources or time on "bogus" ideas.
    - If we want the council to respect us, we have to respect the public who elects them…
        - Which we seem to be doing — e.g., Linda fields questions from community members during the workday.
- Maybe we're supposed to speak for the environment, the flora and fauna and other beings who can't speak for themselves.

Overall commission engagement:

- Dedaimia was the "OK" vote because the waste committee has, to an extent, "lost its way" and the commission needs to help it.
    - Three years ago they had a clear mission and fulfilled it with gusto, but since it's died down, in part because the City Council took over part of the apartment recycling project.
    - No one member of the committee is responsible for the lack of direction in recent months.
    - Projects also have a lifecycle, ebbs and flows, so some lack of direction after a big project has been finished is to be expected.
- We'll need leadership for next year, so people need to step up.
- Nick: we get excited about things but then our tires spin once we get to a certain level.
- Mike: he's been on the commission for a long time, and historically, about a quarter of the commissioners weren't interested in the commission at all, so our current level of engagement is actually pretty good.
- Dedaimia: in the past, lots of energy was squandered on "feel good" projects that didn't make much of an impact. Lately, we've been focusing on much larger things and things that actually matter now.

Collaborative:

- Internally, we've been doing very well — multiple people are involved in more than one subcommittees.
- With other commissions, we haven't been quite as collaborative, but still pretty good.
    - We have people sitting on many other commissions and giving input.
    - We need to improve on working actively with other commissions and especially the County EC.
    - But, unfortunately, there isn't much energy on the County EC.

Follows through on projects:

- Dedaimia was the low mark, because the compost project isn't happening and outreach isn't being as active as it should.
- It's precarious to put projects on 1-3 people, because it's a lot of work and could easily die out.
- It's also difficult to follow through on projects when it isn't clear what the role of the EC is as an "advisory" board.
- Maybe when we have our regular meetings and talk about development plans, ECPC should make a short presentation about their thoughts on the development and some things

they're going to include in the memo. With some effort we could make ECPC more visible to the commission.

7. Commissioner announcements and adjournment (8:50-8:55 p.m.)

Ramsay: Invasive identification Saturday at 2, meet at Deep Roots.
Matt: None.
Mike: Steve Cotter said a new deer cull proposal for Griffy will be presented to the Parks Board.
David P: Has grown 15 artichokes and Minnesota midget melons on a trellis.
Dedaimia: Has a structure to keep deer and cabbage worm butterflies out of her garden.
Chris: Glad to be back and sorry for missing the last meeting, but was fighting wildfires.
Riley: None.
Linda: Reminder to Nick that a CMP meeting should occur soon to go over the amendments that PC still had questions about.
Andy: None.
Nick: Plan Commission is going well from an environmental standpoint.

Meeting times

A. Environmental Commission: 21 September, 7:00 p.m., McCloskey Room, City Hall
B. Planning Committee: 31 August, and 20 September, 4:00 p.m., Lemon Room, City Hall
C. Tree Commission: 20 September, 9:30 a.m., Bryan Park
D. BCOS meeting: 12 September, 6:00 p.m., McCloskey Room
E. MCEC Com.: 13 September, 5:30 p.m., Nat U Hill Room, Courthouse
F. ERAC: 11 October, 4:30 p.m., Rev. Butler
G. MPO CAC: 27 September, 6:30 p.m., McCloskey
H. MCSWMD Board: 14 September, 4:00 p.m., Nat Hill III Room, Courthouse