

In the Buskirk-Chumley Theater, 114 East Kirkwood Avenue,
Bloomington, Indiana on Thursday, February 24, 2022, at 7:00pm
Council President Susan Sandberg presided over a Special Session of
the Common Council.

COMMON COUNCIL
SPECIAL SESSION
February 24, 2022

Council President Susan Sandberg welcomed everyone and called
the meeting to order. She noted that the meeting would be
considered adjourned when the Mayor's State of the City remarks
concluded. She then asked Deputy Clerk Susan Stoll to call the roll.

CALL TO ORDER [7:12pm]

Councilmembers present: Matt Flaherty, Isabel Piedmont-Smith,
Kate Rosenbarger, Susan Sandberg, Sue Sgambelluri
Councilmembers absent: Dave Rollo, Jim Sims, Ron Smith, Stephen
Volan

ROLL CALL [7:12pm]

Mayor John Hamilton presented the State of the City Remarks (text
provided by the Office of the Mayor), attached hereto.

STATE OF THE CITY REMARKS

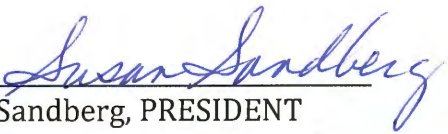
The meeting was adjourned at 8:12pm.

ADJOURNMENT [8:12pm]


APPROVED by the Common Council of the City of Bloomington, Monroe County, Indiana upon this
23rd day of March, 2022.

APPROVE:

ATTEST:



Susan Sandberg, PRESIDENT
Bloomington Common Council



Nicole Bolden, CLERK
City of Bloomington

I.

Friends, how good it is to be with you again. In three dimensions, as well as two dimensions. Welcome all, in person or on Zoom, Youtube, Facebook, or CATS. Thanks to all the entertainment and artists. To Deputy Clerk Stoll to City Council.

I've had the privilege of serving as your Mayor for six years now. Over those six years, we have addressed, as a community, some big things – opportunities to pursue and barriers to overcome. Together we have made great progress. In just a bit, we'll get into that and what's ahead of us.

But first, we have to lean into what we've all been through the past two years. Since March 11, 2020, for 716 days, we have been living together through an official, worldwide pandemic.

This has strained all of us, and certainly the city government, including our department heads and Mayor's staff, who have helped the city government navigate perilous and tumultuous waters. I'd like to introduce a few of our new department heads and Mayor's Office staff; Deputy Mayor Don Griffin, Corporation Counsel Beth Cate, BT Director John Connell, HAND director John Zody, BHA Director Kate Gazunis, Communications Director Andrew Krebbs, and Mayor's office Kaisa Goodman and Rose Smith. (Asked all department heads to stand and be recognized)

I also want to ask you to join me in thanking 850 employees who have borne the burden and persevered and served with such distinction and honor during very challenging times. (stand all employees) Police officers. Bus drivers. Sanitation workers. Water plant operators. Firefighters. Housing inspectors. Street pavers. IT workers. Account clerks. Lawyers. Park's maintainers and planters, and programmers. So many more. All these city workers have kept our city running for two extreme years.

They join nurses and school teachers, pharmacists assistants and delivery drivers, food servers and office cleaners, and so many others as essential workers helping us all get through this slow-motion disaster that has claimed a million American lives.

We look back at the cooperation that helped us get through. And it's worth mentioning: "exhaustion." Some physical. Much mental. We dealt with two years of crisis, divisions, and diversions, and it was exhausting. But our community, emphasizing listening to science, took steps: masking (with the only mandate in the state for a long time), vaccinating, keeping gatherings smaller. These made a big difference, we believe.

Our community had among the very best if not the best record in Indiana navigating this. Our health care system was stretched, but it never broke. Nor did our community. We did this together, with vaccinations and masks, resilience, and collaborations, and we saved lives and livelihoods.

We don't know the coming trajectory of the pandemic. It has fooled us before. But we will celebrate victories where we can. Tonight we are hopeful. And tonight, we will look beyond the pandemic.

II.

We know that much more happened in 2021 than just the pandemic. COVID changed our work and our world, but it did not derail our progress. To understand 2021's story, we need a little context.

Six years ago, we had some serious catching up to do. I'm very, very proud of the work so many in this community, in this room, have done to set the table for where we are today. You'll recall we tripled infrastructure investment in basic city government operations, and we tripled our investment in employee training. We established a \$15/hour minimum wage across the city government. We revamped our whole sanitation system and automated our entire water meter system. We are modernizing every one of our 200+ units of public housing, and we supported the construction of 5,000 more homes, including over 1,000 affordable units.

We quadrupled city solar energy production and doubled support for the arts. We built and opened the spectacular new Switchyard Park and activated a new downtown neighborhood: the Trades District booming with tech. We invested in the state's most progressive and innovative police and fire departments. We celebrated our Bicentennial with Trees and Trails. And together, we developed our city's long-overdue Comprehensive Plan, a Transportation Plan, a Sustainability Action Plan, and a Greenhouse Gas Inventory.

Our private-sector jobs grew as Cook expanded into the old GE plant. Catalent purchased Cook Pharmic at the old Thomson site. And in the old Showers Plant building, The Mill opened, now the fastest-growing co-work space in Indiana.

In that context, last year, 2021, progress accelerated. Catalent grew from its original 800 jobs to more than 3,000 and produced life-saving COVID-19 vaccines for the world. We attracted millions of dollars for a new companion building to The Mill and were named Indiana's "Rising Tech City." IU and IU Health opened the half-billion-dollar hospital and education complex to serve generations of future residents. Two weeks ago, our annual public safety report shared continued reductions in our crime rate, as well as an unprecedented fifth year in a row with no fire-related fatalities in our city. And listen closely - we now are the only city in Indiana, the only one, with a police department that has earned national CALEA accreditation and a fire department that has earned the top national rating of ISO class 1.

In 2021 we approved nineteen hundred units of housing, 280 of which will be long-term affordable (48 right next to Switchyard Park). And we began activating Hopewell, another new downtown neighborhood, at the former hospital site. Our gold-medal Parks Department got a perfect 100% score in their recent peer review, and our city scored, again, a perfect 100% in the Human Rights Campaign national review. Two green parking garages opened downtown, with solar, art, bike lockers, and public restrooms. And we celebrate two more national firsts: our pioneering CDFI Friendly Bloomington has attracted more than a million dollars in new mission investments. And we became part of the nation's 1st-ever domestic Sibling City pair, with Palo Alto, California, the heart of Silicon Valley. As we announced late last year, we also have pending a significant potential investment in city-wide broadband infrastructure.

I want specifically to thank you, City Council, for several major actions taken last year. You updated our zoning code with the Unified Development Ordinance, embraced our first-ever Climate Action Plan, and implemented our major "Recover Forward" investments and a critical recovery budget for this year. And you enacted historic Annexation ordinances to right-size our city after 20 years of inaction. I'll note that this process continues as the County Auditor released certain remonstrance numbers just yesterday, and they are under detailed city review even now.

Recover Forward, begun in 2020 and now supplemented with 22 million dollars of the federal American Rescue Plan funding, has truly rescued our community. It has protected businesses and families, our social safety net and nonprofits and arts organizations, city workers and school teachers, and more. These funds and programs were game-changers, helping us get through and out of the pandemic's devastating impacts. Right now, Recover Forward programs are making a difference. City Utility crews are seeking and identifying every lead water service line anywhere in our community, hundreds of them to be ready for replacement. We are helping people train for better jobs, in the life sciences sector with Ivy Tech, for example, and helping people formerly incarcerated or struggling with mental illness to get back into the workforce. We are supporting our local food growers and sellers (check out the new Farm Stop on West Kirkwood). We have doubled Jack Hopkins funding for our safety net and dramatically expanded local arts funding. We dedicated millions of dollars toward affordable housing, including the new Housing Security Coalition coordinated by the Community Foundation and United Way. We are sustaining essential city services, like public safety and our digital infrastructure. And we are helping lower our community's carbon footprint, solar panel by panel, and LED light by light.

All this is happening within a responsible city budget. The City Council and our administration purposefully used some of our cash reserves as a countercyclical response to the pandemic and recession, stepping in as the economy shrank. But with federal support and frugal management, I can report tonight that as of January 1 this year, our basic city financial reserves are still above our target of four months of operational expenses. I appreciate working together with Council to put Recover Forward into action.

Let me share two final indicators of progress from 2021. You know how important wage growth is, better pay. While the data is still somewhat preliminary, trends suggest that Bloomington wages have indeed started to accelerate over the past two to three years, surpassing comparable Indiana cities in several cases and finally tracking more in line with national wage growth trends.

Another sign of progress is direct investment, with the unprecedented 2.3 billion dollars invested by three players:

- Catalent's billion-dollar purchase of Cook Pharmica in 2017.
- IU and IU Health's half-billion-dollar investment in the Regional Academic Health Center on the east side.
- Indiana University's 800 million dollars in capital improvements over the past five years.

Beyond all that, the assessed value of all private property (which does not reflect all those big investments I just mentioned) in the past five years, our city assessed value has grown a very strong 29% and is accelerating. These are significant increases and include more than \$500 million in housing investments.

That's a lot of statistics and programs. But people stand behind every one.

Danielle Morris participated in ReBoot, a Recover-Forward-funded program at The Mill. In early recovery, New Leaf New Life pointed Danielle to the six-week program to help people formerly incarcerated identify new opportunities. Danielle has opened a viable portrait business with a mentor, guidance, training, and resources. Danielle calls the experience a "lifesaver" and is actively helping other women in recovery.

Two residents of our public housing units attended The Mill's Code School, a 10-week upskilling program to enhance their future income. Dozens of police-embedded social workers and colleagues from all around the country attended the groundbreaking conference that our Bloomington Police Department hosted last fall, exploring new frontiers in public safety with national experts. And dozens of people and family members got to move into Kinser Flats last year, 50 new apartments of permanently affordable supportive housing led by Centerstone for their clients, many of whom came from severe housing insecurity. What we do together matters to people.

So tonight, I can report that the state of the city is very strong. We are making it through this global pandemic and recession. We are resilient. We are committed to each other and to Bloomington's future. We are **READY** to go Forward Together.

III.

We should look ahead with confidence. We're building on decades of real progress, very real progress, advancing opportunities and justice for many in our community and across the United States - women, people of color, the LGBTQ+ community, people with disabilities. We've made very real progress in environmental quality and public education. We've seen major progress on poverty, health, and more across the globe.

But, also, we are keenly aware of today's very real disappointments and very real threats. Of shortfalls. Of people left behind, despite this progress - working families, organized labor, our middle class. And deeply troubling income and wealth disparities, health disparities, opportunity disparities. And racist legacies that poison communities. When your zip code can say more about your future than your character or talent.

And we are acutely aware of the existential threat of climate change.

The relentless accumulation of carbon in the atmosphere, changing weather, coastlines, agriculture, livelihoods. The depressing lack of urgency and responsiveness from so many in dealing with potential devastation and loss.

This is a scary combination – our next generations may be less well-off than current ones, and the planet they inherit may be seriously less livable.

And adding to the peril, our very democracy seems more fragile than we imagined, even teetering.

Perhaps it's related to this big combination of challenges raising fears and resentments and a lack of leadership / exploitative politics and media. Social media that feeds paranoias and conspiracy theories and confirmation biases.

Amid this mix of progress on the one hand but serious, even existential, threats on the other, what are we in Bloomington to do? These very serious challenges call for collective action. Nationally. Globally. In our state. And certainly in our city. We need to dig in and do our part. And how?

The pandemic threw us off our rhythms and patterns, distracted and detoured us. But it also taught us.

It taught us that we can go forward amid challenges. Indeed, we can change quickly, even radically, to respond to serious threats when we need to.

The pandemic also taught us how much we depend on each other. How inextricably bound together, we are. A virus showed us that clearly. Over and over. No hiding. No walls high enough. We chose mutual aid and mutual reliance. We only get through by working together in health care, education, commerce, and necessities. And we needed our governments to respond together.

The same is true with what we face now. We need to change and respond to major challenges, and we need to do it together.

For a moment, let us praise our federal government for its role over the past 14 months. After brilliant scientists developed vaccines (and many doses fabricated right here in our city), and after President Biden and the democratic Congress gained the levers of power, the federal government has taken dramatic critical steps to improve lives and move forward. Together. Government matters. [A moment of personal privilege here to say hello to and thank my wife, Dawn. Many of you know Dawn has been working in the upper reaches of the US Department of Justice since last January, helping our federal government do these many good things. I believe Dawn may be watching – I miss you, sweetheart, and we are all so proud of what you and your colleagues are doing on behalf of all of us. Thank you!]

The federal government gave us the CARES Act. And the American Rescue Plan - ARPA. And the Infrastructure Bill. (And we're hoping for Build Back Better.) These emergency measures, one-time interventions, have had a dramatic impact. They saved jobs. They saved lives. They kept communities afloat. And note it was extraordinary for the federal government to send some of that aid directly to cities (and counties) like ours. Not through the state. That's been a very powerful and different way to send transformative and essential support.

We sincerely appreciate those federal actions. And, and, if we want to move forward together, we are going to have to do our part too. We cannot rely solely on federal and state actions. We can't know when and how often the federal government will act. Or the state. Their direction and focus can change. We surely know the values activating our Indiana statehouse often don't align with ours. We have to assure our own future and step up to our part.

This is Black History Month. (I still cherish the moment when we dedicated the new Eagleson Ave with family members standing proud.) And last month, on MLK day, many of us heard stirring words from Rev. William Barber, leading a people's movement - a prophet for justice and progress. Rev Barber said very directly, we "Must know who we are." He calls us to know who we are. Who are we in Bloomington?

A mayor hears from a lot of people. A community full of people with dreams and hopes, fears and anxieties, yes prejudices or preconceptions too, sometimes anger or frustration. But mostly stories and families full of hope and ambition. That's what I hear. A community of ambitions. That aims high.

This small city in the hills of southern Indiana has long aimed high. We quarried from our hills some of the greatest limestone ever known to build iconic buildings all around the country. We felled nearby hardwoods and milled and designed affordable laminated furniture in the largest such factory in the world. We built the first color television sets in America, delighting millions with new entertainment. And of course, we've grown up with a great, great public university, with Nobel prize winners and world-class artists, athletes and innovators, and the energy of new students arriving every year.

Bloomington is a city of ambitious people that aims high. And that is caring, hopeful, inclusive. We have been and want to be a leader in the midwest. A great small city of America. A special place with unsurpassed quality of life.

As we listen, we hear several common threads. Bloomingtonians say that we should be a welcoming and safe community where everyone can thrive and know and feel they belong. That is, we should be inclusive, with a place for everyone. A place where, no matter your starting point, high or low, fast or slow, young or old, you can live a better life. You can feel safe. "Quality of life" for all. No one left behind.

Bloomingtonians say that we should be nurturing a strong and sustainable local economy, with jobs that pay fair and good wages and traveling a zero-carbon path to address the climate emergency. We want families to have a good income to support quality lives. We also want to live responsibly, with a lighter footprint on our beautiful planet and community. We want affordable, decent homes, more renewable energy, and more walkable, bikeable lifestyles. We want more local, healthy food and more local, live art. We want a beautiful community of parks, trees, paths, and wild spaces.

And Bloomingtonians want a city government that reflects these values and helps achieve such goals energetically and effectively. We know things don't happen automatically. We want and appreciate federal and state help, but we must also do all we can locally to steer this way.

President Obama said, "Our destiny is not written FOR us but BY us." He described coming to government, our government, the one that belongs to us, saying, "We did not come to FEAR the future. We came here to SHAPE it."

Our community has big and broad, and important goals. How do we face this future? Not fear it, but shape it? What does that look like? We're into the decade of the 2020s - it is REALLY important what position we are in by 2030 what progress we make by then. How are we prepared for it? What can the city government specifically do to advance us?

Action is fundamental. Talk is talk. Walk is walk. My friends, going forward together, we need to walk. We need actions, pragmatic actions, to get things done.

Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi has said about Democrats who want to get things done: "Diversity is our strength. Unity is our Power." Unity is born of diversity. We need to align and go Forward Together.

Tonight is not for all the details. That's probably a relief to hear at this point? We have time, weeks ahead of us, for that. But I want to close tonight with three things I believe will help us walk the walk, to act, forward, together.

First, to become a truly sustainable city, living responsibly and leaning into the future – we have in place an ambitious Climate Action Plan, a big set of actions to take. I believe we do need a mechanism to help our whole community advance. I call it a Green Ribbon Panel: a community-wide task force to develop specific action steps for us all together. The city government needs to do our part – more solar energy, more transportation changes, more city planning, supportive grants, and much more. And City Council may consider local ordinances (such as restricting 2-cycle engines or mandating building energy disclosures or organic composting, and more). But our Climate Action Plan makes clear that government is just one piece of a much bigger puzzle. We need private and nonprofit institutions at the table. Households. Faith communities. Working together. We can learn from other communities that have walked this walk, from Boston to Kansas City to Ann Arbor and more. I will be reaching out to assemble this panel by this summer. To lead this imperative community action, Forward Together.

And by the way, this Green Ribbon Panel could be instrumental in preparing us for 1.2 trillion dollars of critical federal infrastructure support coming soon: for transit, and electric charging stations, for broadband and water investments, and much more.

Second, to be a truly inclusive and welcoming community, we are advancing a DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) Coalition. It is a fundamental challenge to make our community work for everyone. To be truly inclusive. This, too, requires the whole community. IU and the city are already in the process of creating this DEI Coalition to reflect, strategize, and plan for the most innovative and creative solutions for creating an inclusive community. The coalition will work to discover the barriers and challenges for people from historically marginalized communities living in Bloomington. The group will be made up of individuals from the university, the City of Bloomington, and other institutions and alliances and members of our community. Those interested in serving should contact Deputy Mayor Don Griffin.

Third, we need to talk about resources for our community—new revenue. Recent federal support has been essential, but it's not ongoing. There is no way to pursue our ambitions and walk our walk without more local resources, without our progressive community putting our shoulder to the wheel ourselves.

Nobel Economist Joseph Stiglitz says the question is not "How much does it cost if we DO this. But how much does it cost if we do NOT do this?"

We know how essential it will be to have the revenue to carry forward basic city operations and the new energies needed to meet the moment, including continuing critical Recover Forward investments.

For example, we need major investments in public safety, ongoing revenue for adequate police salaries, as City Council directed last year and as our proposed four-year labor agreement has included. And for police and fire facilities and equipment, including some damaged from the major June flood. Indeed, broadly, we expect to see increased pressures on many of our city occupations and employees – from the Great Resignation, and private competition, and frankly the fact that have to be sure that we offer not just jobs in city government, but fulfilling careers for the people who are the heart and soul of city government.

We also need major ongoing investments to maintain all that we have, from physical facilities to IT infrastructure and cybersecurity, to our existing playgrounds and ballfields and nature preserves.

We need major investments in climate-related challenges, from more and better transit options to more renewable energy and greater energy efficiencies, to better manage our waste and better plan our housing patterns.

We need major ongoing investments to enhance our quality of life – more affordable housing – both rental and ownership – and help people get better jobs through training and apprenticeships, and skills coaching. We need a strong local food sector and viable local artists and art organizations.

We need and have already committed to Council members new bonding – \$10 million every five years, to accelerate our sustainable infrastructure, such as sidewalks and trails, curb ramps and bike lanes, and enhanced city parks.

We have a lot in front of us. To walk the walk. Challenging, yes. But also exciting! It's exciting to realize that, as we meet the challenges posed by climate and inclusion, we are absolutely walking toward a better and better community, in line with our values, creating a better and better place to live in on a daily basis.

On the issue of new revenue, I look forward to continuing to work closely with City Council in the coming weeks – discussions have already begun, both about the upcoming potential bonding and potential new revenue from our local income tax, really our only feasible options under state law. We will also continue engagements with the wider community about the sources and uses of new revenue. This includes discussions with our colleagues in other local governments – also already underway.

We, of course, must assess our capacity to make these critical investments, more discussions in the coming weeks. You heard tonight that our city fiscal position is strong due to federal support and great leadership among our department heads. And notably, Bloomington's relative position among Hoosier cities and counties is quite striking. Among the 20 largest Indiana cities, Bloomington ranks about 19th with lower property tax and income tax rates than virtually all others.

Considering local income tax rates among Indiana's 92 counties, our county is in the lowest quarter of all, lower than three-quarters of all the counties in this state. And among our immediate neighbors, all six adjoining counties have a higher income tax rate than we do; we're the lowest of all. On average, these neighboring counties have rates 60% higher than ours, which means that we have substantial capacity responsibly to generate additional revenue.

It is absolutely appropriate to ask about these potential plans for walking the walk investing in our future: "how much does it cost if we do this?" But we absolutely must also ask, "how much does it cost if we do not do this?" Failure to meet our challenges has drastic costs. Human costs. Community costs. Meeting them brings better days for all.

IV.

Despite the unique pressures of our last 716 days, tonight, we've talked mostly NOT about the pandemic but about our future. How prepared we are for its challenges. And how important it is to shape our future.

Bloomington has an exciting and bright future if we make good choices, with the ambition and energy that have been in Bloomington's best tradition.

Think about the young people who performed tonight. Remember their faces, their energy, their skills, their spirit! As they continue their educations, studying history and geography, physics and algebra, violin and poetry, what do we do today, and tomorrow, for their futures?

Our work ahead is complicated in some ways – deciding budgets and setting priorities, implementing policies and projects and programs, evaluating options and tradeoffs. But in some other ways, maybe it's really simple.

Maybe if we listen again to Rev Barber – to "know who we are" – maybe that makes things simpler. Maybe it's as simple as the old adage of planting trees under whose shade we shall never sit—doing the right things now to prepare Bloomington for the next generations of Bloomingtonians. Right now, we are sitting

in the beautiful shade provided by so many hard-working, justice-seeking, visionary Bloomingtonians who came before us – people like Bill and Gayle Cook, Viola and George Talliafero, Toby Strout, Herman Wells, Bob and Patsy Barker, and so many more. It's our turn to plant those trees. And I know together we can and shall.

The future is ours to shape. Ours to make. For our young friends and their future, and all the next generations waiting to join this beautiful city. The state of Bloomington is very strong. And our future is bright as we go forward together.

Thank you so much for your attention and for your care and vision for Bloomington. Travel safely, and good night.