



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.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION MINUTES

16 December 2021, 6:00 PM

1. Call to order and quorum confirmation:

Call to order at 6:08 PM.

Matt Caldie Present
Sam Armstrong Present
Mathias Benko Present
Don Eggert Present
Mike Litwin Present
David Parkhurst Present
Scott Shackelford Present

2. Approval of minutes: *

Minutes were moved and seconded.

Matt Approved
Sam Approved
Mathias Approved
Don Approved
Mike Abstains
David Approved
Scott Approved

3. Public comment: Limit 5 minutes per person, 20 minutes total

Rahul Durai came to speak with the EC about the initiative, Confront the Climate Crisis (CCC). Rahul is a high school student from West Lafayette. CCC is an organization of high school students from across the state that have been working on climate legislation that state senator Ron Alting will introduce in the 2022 legislative session. Ron Alting will be the author of two pieces of legislation. These pieces of legislation will entail a concurrent resolution and a bill. The concurrent resolution is a statement on behalf of the general assembly about climate change. It will acknowledge that climate change is a problem and give background on scientific research about climate change. This will all be put on the record. The resolution will also address the economic development that Indiana can achieve through sustainability.

The bill that will be created will establish a statewide climate and environmental task force. The task force would consist of different experts in different environmentally related fields, and they would help develop a statewide action plan. The task force would consist of 17 members, four would be state legislators and the other 13 would be experts across Indiana in a variety of different fields. The task force would exist from May of 2022 until November of 2022. This would help create a statewide dialogue about climate change and create policy recommendations that Indiana will hopefully implement shortly after. CCC is trying to advocate for both the resolution and the bill by building a coalition of different organizations that support it. The google form for organizations to sign on, can be found at the following URL: <https://tinyurl.com/ClimateCoalitionForm>.

4. Reports from: Tree Commission (TC), Monroe County Environmental Commission (MCEC), Bloomington Commission on Sustainability (BCOS), Environmental Resource Advisory Council (ERAC), Metropolitan Planning Organizing-Citizens Advisory Council (MPOCAC), Friends of Lake Monroe (FOLM), & Monroe County-Identify and Reduce Invasive Species (MC-IRIS).

TC: The Urban Forestry report was sent by email. The end of year counts were about 220 trees (not including the engineering projects). 400 trees have been pruned, not including the ones that will be continued to be pruned until the end of the year. 214 trees were removed. The tree person at IU gave a brief report, which indicated that they didn't have any major storm problems recently. IU also planted a wide variety of trees near the geology building.

MCEC: Sam is happy to start going to the meetings. He will take over this responsibility starting next month.

BCOS: BCOS moved their townhall for helping the homeless to March. The town hall meeting involves help from a consultant from Oakland which is using \$1500 of city funds. BCOS is partnering with ESD to provide the funding. They are struggling to do outreach and would like to do this event in one of the library rooms. They are concerned that they may need to do this online. The chair will no longer be there because he is doing a semester in Sweden. There are currently 4 openings for the commission. Much of the meeting was about selecting officers for the next meeting. Their working groups are also not meeting.

ERAC: Griffy Lake Loop Trail construction is under way. Trees were cleared and a road was closed for a while. They have applied for \$50,000 from the state DNR. CHAP results were sent. 47 deer were removed. Biologists say that there should be only 10 deer allowed in the area. Results show that plant heights are slightly higher than last year after the hunt. A prescribed burn was supposed to happen this year but has been postponed because of bad weather. The intention is to promote oak and hickory. 270 students came to Leonard Springs and 260 came to Griffy Lake this past year. The county has 30 public programs. The hidden river pathway project is being carried out by Bloomington Utilities. A report has been sent by David about that.

5. Discussion from active working groups:

A. Environmental Commission Planning Committee (ECPC):

Linda will no longer be reviewing the development cases. No new petitions this month. Ridgefield has been continued, but it has a lot of issues. The commission is still unsure if they will review it come January.

B. Biodiversity:

i. Restart Connectivity Plan

On Sunday, December 12th the Biodiversity Working Group met to discuss the Habitat Connectivity Plan. This meeting was really just to re-establish the working group and to make sure the people on the committee were committed to the project. After not meeting since the summer, we laid out some key objectives that we might want to discuss after the new year. The first item on our list to discuss was outreach. Outreach had been a struggle in the past, so we wanted to brainstorm some ideas to get the word out there a little better. My favorite suggestion was inviting the neighborhood association leaders for each neighborhood around the areas we wanted to connect to a meeting. This way we could save some time on our end and delegate some of our tasks.

Another issue we discussed was privacy. Once we deploy the plan, we hope people will log on to our map and put a pin into the location where they are making improvements in the area. This may be considered intrusive by some. So, a solution was to just put a pin in the neighborhood that they live in. This way we can see the general location in which the work being done is happening, while also not giving away any sensitive information. Lastly, we discussed how to motivate and fund this project. The Small and Simple HAND Grants were mentioned as a solution. It was also mentioned to possibly petition to HAND and the Mayor's Office to increase the funds towards these grants. All of the topics discussed during this meeting are tabled for the new year to be discussed further. We will begin holding biweekly meetings on Sundays at 4 PM starting in January.

6. Old business:

A. Discussion regarding Plan Commission memos and the EC Plan Committee

Dedaimia Whitney and Mike Litwin hope to eventually go to the mayor to try and motivate him to keep Linda on to write Plan Commission memos. Mike wants to go with her because she knows the mayor. Mike hopes we can go to the Planning Director first before we go over his head to the mayor. In the past, The EC has done this task themselves. The Director is hoping to get certain issues that are brought up consistently with developments, put in the UDO. This way we don't need someone following these developments and saying certain issues could be prevented by doing xyz. Linda's task over the next few months will be to go through memos from the past two years to find the most common re-occurring suggestions so that we can eventually put them into the UDO. Linda thinks this could be an effective strategy. Matt still believes we still need memos because he believes developers will always go for the minimum and there will always be circumstances where they will want less of the canopy coverage or less of the permeable surfaces, etc. Splitting up the tasks of the memo could be an option.

B. Update on BEQI (Bloomington Environmental Quality Indicators)

Ben will send out a rough draft of the wildlife areas section. Look out for emails in regard to some information that Ben wasn't able to find. Other EC members might know where to find this information, or even know it themselves.

7. New business:

A. Confront the Climate Crisis group & sign letter of support*

Mike proposes that we sign a letter of support and David seconded.

Sam Approved
Mathias Approved
Mike Approved
David Approved
Matt Approved
Don Approved

The EC will sign the letter of support!

B. Letter of support for ban on polypropylene erosion/turf netting *

Please look at your email to see more information about the polypropylene netting. Linda would like to propose a change in the ordinance on polypropylene erosion netting. The main reasonings being that they can harm wildlife and that they eventually break apart into smaller pieces, which becomes plastic waste. Linda talked to the city attorney who said we can do something about. He said it would be good to have the EC write a letter about it. We hope to prevent everyone from using this turf netting and use more environmentally friendly products. We should include a specific type of alternative netting which can help this initiative go smoother. Linda will draft this letter and propose it at the next EC meeting! We should also look at the price difference between the biodegradable option and the ones currently in use.

C. Bucket list meeting format discussion

This will be conducted through zoom. We may be able to put the list of ideas on a whiteboard in the office.

D. Consider Chairmanship to EC. Vote in February

If you are interest in running for a position, please let the nomination committee know. Matt will create a nomination committee by reaching out to them by email. The people on the nomination committee can still run for any of the three positions. Voting will occur in February.

8. Commissioner announcements:

The report we were waiting on about the lead paint situation has come out. Unfortunately, few commissioners have read it. They found that there were not elevated levels of lead anywhere that was tested. They also did blood tests on everyone in the vicinity and found they all came back negative. We do not know of any other groups writing about this event to the city or IDEM. The EC thought it would be better to support the Fire Chief in the actions that he hopes to begin on the state level. This would be a more effective measure. Linda will reach out to the Fire Chief.

Sam will email the EC about his GIS report.

Mathias will also send his report about native tree ordinances across Indiana. Mathias also will be going away for a while, so he will have to resign from the commission. Thanks for attending EC meetings for the past year! Safe Travels.

Dedaimia's last meeting will be in January.

Don't rake leaves into the street!

Happy Holidays!

9. Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned at 7:46 PM

* Item to be voted on

Next EC meeting: January 20, 2022, 6:00 p.m., TBD