



**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

1. Call to order and quorum confirmation

December 2020 meeting was called to order by Andrew Guenther.

Call to Order:

Bailey Andison
Matt Caldie
Suzannah Evans Comfort
Don Eggert
Andrew Guenther
Shelby Jade Hoshaw
Mike Litwin
Dave Parkhurst

A quorum was confirmed

3. Approval of minutes

Dave moved to accept the minutes and Don seconded it.

Bailey Andison: Approved
Matt Caldie: Approved
Suzannah: Evans Comfort Approved
Don Eggert: Approved
Andrew Guenther: Approved
Shelby Jade Hoshaw: Approved
Mike Litwin: Approved
Dave Parkhurst: Approved

Approved unanimously

4. Public comment: Limit 5 minutes per person

Scott Robinson, the new Director of Planning and Transportation wanted to say hello and introduce himself. He said if the EC had any questions about anything to reach out to him or his staff.

5. Presentation: Lauren Travis, Assist. Dir. of Sustainability COB

The Hoosier resiliency index was developed by Indiana University. It's a tool for local governments to help determine how prepared they are for the effects of climate change. The video that had technical difficulties was meant to illustrate the difficulties of many local governments ability to deal with increased and more extreme weather events. In the video they were explaining that they are not prepared for what is to come. The index is trying to help show local governments where to focus. One part of the index is to identify vulnerabilities. For example, people that are in higher need of general amenities because of poverty reasons. Maybe an event like a flood will affect them more then someone who is well off and has the proper insurance and funds.

Part 2 of the index was they gave out a questionnaire to local governments. To try and find out how ready they are for the effects of climate change (the readiness assessment). Currently heat and precipitation are the main impacts of climate change in Indiana. We could expect high heat days to triple by the 2050s. High heat nights will also dramatically go up which is bad because it doesn't allow for our body temperatures to go back to normal. Extreme precipitation days will increase by 3 or 4 days a year by the 2050s. People that helped out with the readiness assessment were from all sections of the government. The Bloomington city completed the assessment very similarly to the other 10 Indiana communities that completed the assessment. While we are ready to some extent for the effects of climate change, there are still a lot of things that we can do to be more prepared. The natural resources and the built environment sections of the assessment we did very well in. They are currently working on an action plan on how to reduce emissions. This is still in draft form. Comments are being requested now. After January there will be a public forum and hopefully an acceptance by the city council in 2021.

Lauren Travis is the staff liaison to the commission on sustainability. She is happy to coordinate with our commission on a variety of issues. She will send the links to us. The FEMA flood-plains are likely to increase with climate change in width and elevation. Don asked if these factors are being calculated into the projections. The response was: green infrastructure is being invested in to try and mitigate some of these affects. Flooding has the most damaging effect to infrastructure in the US. Extreme weather events will come in more frequency and last a lot longer with climate change.

6. Reports from TC, MoCo EC, BCOS, ERAC, MPO-CAC, & FOLM

Tree Commission: They first received the urban foresters report. After that they received a report from a member of IU. This member informed the tree commission that they had planted over 100 trees around campus. They also are changing their tree donor program. In the past they have allowed people to donate a specific tree and then they would put a plack near it. Unfortunately, the plaques kept disappearing. Now people that want to give money for trees will be given areas not trees. Eliminating the plaques. Every meeting the tree commission asks for a report about the Environmental Commission. Dave mentioned that we discussed the EJ statement at the last meeting and what we are planning to do today. Land has been given to the library that has a lot of trees and we will find out what they want to do with that in the next few months.

Monroe County EC: Mostly had a meeting to go over their schedule for next year. They also had a presentation from Lauren Travis about the Bloomington Climate action plan. No notable comments that should be mentioned.

Bloomington Commission on Sustainability: They did not have a quorum. We should work together more with the sustainability commission because of our similarity in work. MC-IRIS meeting was posted by Don.

ERAC met a week ago, but unfortunately Dave was unable to make it. He will send the minutes to us when they come out with them.

MPO advisory committee did not meet.

Friends of Lake Monroe will meet in January.

7. Discussion from Environmental Commission working groups:

A Cycle

ECPC/Plan Commission

Nothing new. In January they will have a couple cases that we have already discussed that will be continued with further discussion.

Working groups will be discussed during our meeting in January on how to move forward with them on Zoom.

8. Old business

A. "Plexes" and City zoning discussion

A letter was drafted for the guest column in the HT by Matt and Suzannah. Matt summarized the proposed rezoning. A few of the spaces are not controversial because they are green space or student housing. The R4 zones are the areas with the most debate. Small scale lots have great access to public services. The city government identified any lots that are less than 5,000 square feet to find good areas for the R4 zoning. They created a buffer around these properties to try and see if there are any clusters. They took the clusters and formed an area. That's part of how they identified these desirable R4 home locations. They wanted to make these areas more accessible to more people. They have projections that the city is going to grow, and this will help it in its development. All areas that were previously R3 will be moved to R4 urban zoning. R4 zoning is concentrated downtown. An example would be Elm Heights. There's a map on the city website under the Planning and Transportation section that shows the current zoning districts versus the proposed zoning districts. DuPlexes and triplexes would be allowed in all current residential neighborhoods, but the quad plexes would be only allowed in the R4 zoned areas. Before it wasn't that people couldn't get a duplex or triplex proposed for, but that they had to go through the process of rezoning and possibly getting denied. The rezoning is eliminating that check. Duplexes would be permitted in all neighborhood zones; triplexes would be allowed in all R4 zoning. Quadplexes have conditional use in R3 and will be permitted in R4. Again, there is a map on the city's website to help understand the proposal. The map has been on the website for a while.

To comment on the actual plan does not seem to be under the purview of the EC. The letter is meant to reflect on the broader environmental impact of planning. There is an environment angle that has been ignored. The letter doesn't say that we should adopt this, but just adds it to the conversation. Some feedback was incorporated. The letter would be a column. A number of years ago this was a big issue too because people were afraid of developers buying up housing and converting them to student housing. This would eventually lower property value. This might be a continued concern. It is good that the column points out the environmental advantages of greater density without making specific recommendations of what should be done. It would decrease vehicle travel by 8% and a few other things that go under the climate action plan. Increased growth density will occur by 3%. Eventually the predictions indicate a wage increase and a carbon emission decrease. It's a good faith effort from the city to promote sustainability and equity. Matt believes this isn't just an attempt to make as much money as they can and blow up the neighborhood. They are keeping the city's best interest in mind. Don believes this can be a social justice issue as well, by lowering some of the housing costs. Some people can't afford to live in the city or the county, so they have to drive in. It is difficult to say how this will affect housing costs though.

Dave moves that the letter be sent. Don seconded. Dave called to question.

Bailey Andison: Approved

Matt Caldie: Approved

Suzannah Evans: Comfort Approved

Don Eggert: Approved

Andrew Guenther: Approved

Shelby Jade Hoshaw: Approved
Mike Litwin: Approved
Dave Parkhurst: Approved

Approved unanimously

9. New business

A. Draft Climate Action Plan discussion

This discussion is not meant for specific policy amendments. Dave believes we should take up this topic. In the Climate Action Plan there should be a lot more editing. On page 12-3 there is a statement that doesn't include the EC. Dave thinks the EC should be mentioned by name. In the section "Green Space" the Habitat Connectivity Plan should be mentioned. Andrew wish's that the EC and the commission on sustainability were consulted during the creating of the document. When the document states that we should engage boards and commissions, but have not actually done so, when making the document, it doesn't make much sense. A little contradictory. They should have specifically in the document when to discuss with the EC about certain topics. Dave also objects to the white text with the yellow background in the document. It is very difficult to read. This is an important topic for the EC to give input on. Andrew believes most of the topics within the Climate action plan should be addressed by the EC. They all fall under the jurisdiction. The first round of comments have past unfortunately. It was a December 11th deadline. They are currently incorporating the comments. Should we wait until the new comments are published in January? Or just submit our comments now? Simple editing comments should be sent out at will. They are fairly respondent with getting back Matt says. Any technical amendments should be sent separately, because it takes longer for them to get approved. Dave believes the planning is not very specific. It says what we need to do, but not how to do it. Consultants that wrote this, have already written this for some other city. This is a common practice with consultants, however. Andrew envisions that individual commissioners read through the report and then they present to the commission the revisions that they think are necessary. For example, they can be adding the EC with certain groups to work with, or we want to increase tree density to 15% instead of 10%. We can then figure out which amendments are worth pursuing and trimming down. Essentially trying to figure out which comments will likely be accepted. The ones that we deem the most important can then be submitted to city planning and the city council. This is very similar to the UDO, but this is a much smaller project. With certain statements that are being made by this document, Linda believes someone needs to check what the BEAP, Comp plan, etc say inside them. We want to make sure it is consistent with the other plans. There are a lot of reduction goals, so someone needs to check to see if they are the same. Dave thinks he should write to the tree commission about this to way in. Maybe give input on number of trees, etc. Don will suggest to MC-Iris to look into the plan as well for any additional input.

Andrew entertains a motion to start working on the Climate Action Plan. This will be a priority for the next couple months. Scott Robinson said comments on this version are asked for as soon as possible, but another draft will be released in late January. They will then follow more engagement from economic and sustainable development for more feedback. There is time. Don entertained the motion and Mike seconded it.

Bailey Andison: Approved
Matt Caldie: Approved
Suzannah Evans Comfort: Approved
Don Eggert: Approved
Andrew Guenther: Approved
Shelby Jade Hoshaw: Approved
Mike Litwin: Approved
Dave Parkhurst: Approved

Approved unanimously

An email will be sent by Andrew explaining how the EC will go about editing the document. The document can be split up as soon as possible.

B. Facebook discussion

Ben believes it would be a good idea for the EC to start an EC Facebook page. It would be a great way to interact with more people and to update the public on the EC's projects. It can help us publicize various topics of environmental interest.

Andrew entertained a motion to approve a Facebook page for the EC. Suzannah motioned to approve and it was seconded by Matt.

Bailey Andison: Approved
Matt Caldie: Approved
Suzannah Evans Comfort: Approved
Don Eggert: Approved
Andrew Guenther: Approved
Shelby Jade Hoshaw: Approved
Mike Litwin: Approved
Dave Parkhurst: Denied

Dave doesn't like how Facebook manages people's data.

C. Social media policy

Andrew had previously sent out a drafted social media policy. This is about how the EC doesn't appreciate individual commissioners posting things that go outside of what Bloomington's Human rights commission deems discriminatory behavior. This policy has been withdrawn from advice from city legal. The policy needs to be looked into further and it could have caused problems for the city. The current amendment now without what the legal team said to hold off on, discussed conflict of interest in a bit more detail. The second amendment specifically establishes a social media policy for our specific social media pages or whatever we eventually adopt. Andrew read out the amendments. Essentially, if someone has a conflict of interest, they should notify the rest of the commission and then it should be voted on whether or not it is enough of a conflict of interest for them not to participate in the planning process. Linda believes this should be a universal policy (between all boards and commissions in Bloomington) and we should not go against other groups. It should be the same as the city council and the plan commission. It is not wise for each individual commission to come up with their own individual policy when we technically work for the city. The city also has a conflict-of-interest policy. Andrews amendment goes off the city council policy. Linda believes we should hold off and see what the city legal policy says. The city doesn't have a policy on this. It only says that we should avoid conflicts of interest. It doesn't actually state how to maneuver this policy. Andrew withdrew the amendment because we don't have the cities policy in front of us to compare.

The second amendment is to amend the miscellaneous section of our handbook. It adds in section B, social media policy. It was then read allowed by Andrew. Social media doesn't include email. It outlines what is and isn't allowed on our social media page. It also establishes a chain of command if something is posted and needs to be removed, it can be removed by Linda, Andrew, or a designee. Mike brought up that we want to make sure we don't eliminate 1st amendment rights. Linda proposes that we hold off. This was sent to Mike Rooker. It only applies to commission social media pages, not individual people's pages. Linda doesn't want every commission to have different policies. The human rights commission advised Andrew to be the one to work on this type of policy. Andrew worked on this policy through the lens of other commissions adopting it as well. Andrew also doesn't believe other commissions have a social media policy either. Linda would feel more comfortable if it went through legal instead. Don believes that we should vote on it with a caveat that it is submitted to city legal and it does get their support.

Mike moved the motion and Don Seconded it.

Bailey Andison: Approved
Matt Caldie: Approved
Suzannah Evans Comfort: Approved
Don Eggert: Approved
Andrew Guenther: Approved

Shelby Jade Hoshaw: Approved

Mike Litwin: Approved

Dave Parkhurst: approved

Motion passed unanimously.

10. Commissioner announcements

Matt wanted to remind everyone terms are expiring in January 2021. If you want to remain on the commission, you need to fill out the form and that you can ask Linda questions that you may have. Dave thinks if we are putting time on the climate plan, we should hold off on the bucket meeting. Andrew thinks elections and the bucket list meeting can be done in the same meeting in February. Elections do not take very long. The climate action plan for comments is very time sensitive so it should be done in January.

11. Adjournment

Happy Holidays and meeting adjourned.

Next EC meeting 21 January, 2021 6:00 p.m., ZOOM