



CITY OF BLOOMINGTON

COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABILITY

BLOOMINGTON COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABILITY MINUTES — REGULAR MEETING

Wednesday, May 22, 2024

McCloskey Conference Room and via Zoom

BCOS Members Attending: Justin Vasel (performing duties of Secretary), Matt Austin, Jon Eldon (Zoom), Dave Rollo (Zoom), Jami Scholl, KateLyn Edwards, David Maenner (Acting Chair), Andrew Guenther

BCOS Members Absent: Alex Hakes, Jessica Davis, Hannah Gregory, Dennis Vera

Staff Attending: Shawn Miya

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by David Maenner at 7:18pm.

Roll Call and Quorum Confirmation: A quorum is present.

Approval of Agenda

MOTION by David Maenner to change the order of the agenda by holding officer elections after the approval of minutes. SECONDED by Andrew Guenther and Matt Austin. APPROVED by general consent.

Approval of Minutes for the meeting on February 13, 2024: APPROVED by general consent.

Officer Elections

Election of the Chair

Justin Vasel nominated himself, and there were no other nominations.

MOTION by Justin Vasel to elect Justin Vasel as Chair. SECONDED by David Maenner.

Roll call vote: 7 YEA, 0 NAY, 0 ABSTAIN. The motion PASSED.

Election of the Vice Chair

Andrew Guenther nominated himself, and there were no other nominations.

MOTION by Andrew Guenther to elect Andrew Guenther as Vice Chair. SECONDED by Matt Austin.

Roll call vote: 7 YEA, 0 NAY, 0 ABSTAIN. The motion PASSED.

Election of the Secretary

No nominations were made.

MOTION by David Maenner to postpone the Election of the Secretary until the next regular meeting. The motion PASSED by voice vote.

Election of the Treasurer

No nominations were made.

MOTION by David Maenner to postpone the Election of the Treasurer until the next regular meeting. SECONDED by Andrew Guenther and Matt Austin. The motion PASSED by voice vote.

Report from the Acting Chair (David Maenner)

New member welcome & introductions

The Commission welcomed two new members and invited them to introduce themselves and their background/interest in sustainability issues.

Andrew Guenther is chair of the Monroe County Environmental Commission and previously served as chair of the Bloomington Environmental Commission. Currently, He is an MPA and law student at IU's O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs and Maurer Law Schools, with a focus on environmental and administrative law.

Jami Scholl is currently a health and wellness coach focused on culinary medicine. She has a long history of urban agriculture in the city, working to pass the first urban agriculture amendment and chicken ordinance. She is also a founding member of Community Orchard and the Food Policy Council.

MOTION by David Maenner to amend the agenda to move the report from Staff Liaison to after "discussions not resolutions" in the interest of time. SECONDED by Jami Scholl. The motion PASSED by voice vote.

Report from Council Ex-Officio (Dave Rollo)

Councilmember Rollo asked the Commission to weigh in on urban beekeeping. Several areas of the city have beehives, which in some cases are close to homes and prevent people from fully using their yards. He is planning to draft code to address this issue in a balanced way that supports residents and pollinators alike. He is seeking input from the City Administration, Council Attorney, and exploring similar ordinance in other cities. Once drafted, he would like BCOS to review before bringing it before City Council.

Councilmember Rollo also reiterated the importance of tracking the City's progress executing the Sustainability Action Plan, and encouraged the Commission to engage with the Council to help prioritize efforts to that end.

Report from Commissioners

Strategic Engagement and Outreach (Justin)

Nothing to report for this meeting..

Waste Management (Matt Austin)

Matt reported that the Climate Action and Resilience Committee is considering allowing Garden Quest to provide educational training sessions on Bokashi—a method for managing food waste on a small, hyper-local scale by composting organic food waste—in a residential zone. The decision is happening next Tuesday, so Matt will report back at the next meeting.

Matt also mentioned that Garden Quest has used their BCOS grant to purchase roughly 10 TerraCycle recycling boxes, which have been getting filled up by neighbors. They took advantage of a generous sale on Earth Day to maximize impact, and have been also hosting educational sessions.

Just Transition Working Group (KateLyn Edwards)

KateLyn introduced the working group to new members. It is concerned with the socio-economic aspect of sustainability and focuses on transitioning to a sustainable city model in a way that is socially equitable. She noted that she is currently the only active member (one member's term was not renewed and another is non-communicative).

Their recent work includes meeting with the Indiana Geological Survey to learn more about fossil fuels and fuel storage in the area, inviting the Community Land Trust to talk about local sustainable housing, and connecting with Ecologic, who was planning a study on the presence of human waste products like E. Coli in Switchyard Park water. Just Transition was working to support the Ecologic study with a BCOS grant, but the Commission's inability to meet in recent months has delayed those efforts.

Councilmember Rollo asked about the source of contamination, which is suspected to be a lack of latrines, but KateLyn emphasized that a proper analysis is necessary to definitively identify the cause and potential solutions for mitigation. Future maintenance requirements for any proposed solutions would also need to be analyzed. This is a big study, so a BCOS grant would be very helpful.

Shawn Miya provided a recap on working group funds: There is \$10,000 available annually for the full Commission. Working groups or individual Commissioners are encouraged to identify initiatives that need funding. The money rolls over every year, so needs to be encumbered before Dec 31. To apply, Commissioners must complete a grant proposal, have a grant agreement in place, and get approval from ES&D and BCOS (reminder: BCOS approval requires two readings). Shawn will share the procedures with Commissioners and answer any questions.

Katelyn encouraged any interested Commissioners to consider joining the working group. She suggested brainstorming how to make the group's name more inclusive and descriptive. She also said she was excited to hear about beekeeping policymaking, and encouraged the other working groups to bring their ideas to the next meeting.

She concluded by announcing she would be moving to Indianapolis, and leaving the Commission, later in the summer. Her last meeting will be August 2024. She hopes to work with the Commission in her new capacity in the future, and expressed her appreciation for the Commission and the work that its members put in.

Discussions Not Resolutions

Sustainability Assessment Working Group proposal (Jon Eldon)

Jon is developing a new course at IU called "Sustainability Assessment". The students will learn how to assess the sustainability of organizations, and this could be a great way to give them practical experience by working through some case studies in support of the BCOS mission. Focus areas might be energy efficiency, water use efficiency, food waste management, etc. The idea would be to have BCOS be a point of contact for more than just the one class.

He said he was open to ideas and encouraged the Commission to weigh in. Another example he gave would be to identify tax benefits for homeowners making sustainable choices, (e.g., electricity use, beekeeping, chickens, reducing waste, etc.). Shawn mentioned the Zero In Bloomington dashboard which allows groups to enter all of their climate actions and compete with other households or groups. This could be a good incentive to become more sustainable.

Jon asked about the procedure for creating a working group. No official procedure at the moment, especially due to a potential reorganization of the Commission, but in the meantime, Jon is encouraged to proceed with planning the initiative. This produced some general discussion about the purpose and nature of working groups.

Sustainability Opportunities in the Sudbury Development (Jami Scholl)

Jami has been interested in the Sudbury development, and how the Commission could provide input to make it more sustainable. For example, BCOS could develop recommendations and criteria related to allocating land for a farm stop, community gardens, etc. There could be recommendations about rooftop greenspaces or extended balconies to encourage food sovereignty and security.

Another suggestion Jami made is that we could provide our own boilerplate HOA policies that allow homeowners to grow gardens, edible landscaping, etc. Existing boilerplate HOA language often excludes this.

Report from Staff Liaison (Shawn Miya)

Shawn announced the City had just launched the Climate Action Dashboard, which is an information-rich resource for residents to understand how Bloomington is implementing its

Climate Action Plan. The dashboard also contains recommendations about how individuals can become more sustainable. She encouraged everyone to visit the webpage, and to spread the word.

On the topic of the NOAA Urban Heat Island mapping campaign this summer, ES&D is seeking volunteers to drive routes throughout the city to collect temperature data. The campaign will take place between July 26 and August 8. She provided QR codes for Commissioners to hand out to anyone who is interested. Here is that link for anyone interested in participating: <https://bloomington.in.gov/news/2024/04/23/5912>.

The Report from Staff Liaison ended at this point due to lack of remaining meeting time.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:01pm.

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, June 11, 2024 at 6pm