



City of Bloomington Common Council

Legislative Packet – Addendum

Posted on Monday, 17 June 2024

Tuesday, 18 June 2024

Regular Session at 6:30 pm



**City of Bloomington
Office of the Common Council**

To: Mayor Kerry Thomson
From: Common Council
Date: June 18, 2024
Subj: Priorities for the 2025 City of Bloomington Budget

As you know, we have been discussing priorities for city spending in 2025 with a new effort to frame such priorities in the context of overall goals for our community. We have agreed on several general objectives, listed below in alphabetical order by category. We also list funding priorities to attain the objective(s) in each category.

We recognize that many of these ideas will take more than one year to implement. We are sending this memorandum to facilitate collaboration and help achieve alignment on your budget proposal when you bring it forward in the coming months. We hope this will be part of ongoing conversations about the budget as we work together for a better Bloomington.

We also recognize that there may be multiple ways to meet an objective, and we encourage deliberation on which actions or approaches—including those not listed here—might effectively achieve the stated objectives.

CLIMATE ACTION and ENVIRONMENT

Objective: To implement the city's Climate Action Plan and take other actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate climate change impacts.

Priorities:

1. Implement programs as outlined in the CAP at similar funding levels as 2024.
2. Maintain support for the Project 46 regional climate collaborative.
3. Collaborate with other government entities and non-profit organizations to protect and improve the water quality in Lake Monroe.

HOUSING

Objective: To increase safe housing options for all city residents, especially those in low-income households.

Priorities:

1. Identify and increase structural and financial support for housing for households earning 60-120% of AMI, which has been identified as a gap in housing affordability.
2. Develop concrete plans for more affordable housing in Hopewell and other developing neighborhoods using land trusts, cooperative housing, and other innovative strategies.
3. Explore and implement new ways to support the Bloomington Housing Authority.

PERSONNEL

Objectives:

- To improve employee morale, hiring outcomes, employee retention, and thus better achieve city priorities and goals
- To increase equity in pay among city employees

Priorities:

1. Finalize assessment and begin implementation of supported recommendations from the 2023 Classification and Compensation Study (Crowe LLP) with a focus on equity; employee retention; and rewarding competency, proficiency, and professional development. Augment the Crowe study as needed to fill gaps (e.g., race and gender pay equity assessment).
2. Benchmark (with other second-class cities) the salaries for city elected officials to help inform potential changes in the 2025 budget.
3. Conduct a salary study for city elected officials, comparing salaries with other second class cities in Indiana.
4. Increase the salary of the City Clerk and the City Council Attorney/Administrator to align with the salaries of other department heads, which all fall within a narrow band.
5. Explore strategies to implement a whole-of-government approach to equity in city operations, budgeting, policy development, and employment practices, including through the potential development of a cabinet-level Chief Equity Officer position.
6. Reconsider staffing structure to explore cost savings in this budget category.

PLANNING and ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Objectives:

- To support local businesses, especially those providing local food, per our Comprehensive Plan (Goals 3.8 and 4.2) and Climate Action Plan (Goals FA-1 and FA-3)
- To encourage mixed use and nodal development per our Comprehensive Plan (Urban Village Centers, pg. 88) and Climate Action Plan (Actions TL-1-B4 and TL-1-B6)

Priorities:

1. Identify and implement strategies, including new partnerships and the potential use of incentives, to develop grocery stores and/or other healthy food options in local food deserts.
2. Fund a plan (either in-house or through a consultant) for the development of additional neighborhood commercial nodes (like Hillside & Henderson), which would guide any infrastructure improvements and/or zoning changes and outline strategies to catalyze development.

POVERTY and HOMELESSNESS

Objective: To reduce homelessness and its causes while simultaneously addressing immediate needs of unhoused people in our community.

Priorities:

1. Fund one or more safe temporary housing options other than overnight shelters, such as safe parking area(s), designated camping area(s), or Single-Room Occupancy building(s), including any associated staffing needs.
2. Increase Jack Hopkins Social Service funding and explore integrating the funding application processes for the JHSSF with the CDBG process.
3. Expand the city's partnership with Centerstone for supportive employment.
4. Develop strategic, collaborative programs with county government and social service agencies to address mental health and substance use disorder challenges.
5. Continue support for the Heading Home program.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Objective: To improve the safety of community members and address disparities or inequities in existing public safety outcomes through a public safety system that includes social services, physical and mental health provision, emergency dispatch, the fire department, and the police department.

Priorities:

1. Identify and fund strategies to address hiring and retention challenges with police, fire, and Central Dispatch. This may include increasing salaries through established collective bargaining processes with the relevant unions.
2. Fund a study regarding the creation of a Department of Community Safety and Resilience, consistent with the recommendation of the Community Advisory on Public Safety (CAPS) commission.

TRANSPORTATION

Objectives:

- To improve the safety of current transportation options available to all users of the public right-of-way in line with the (forthcoming) Safe Streets for All Action Plan.
- To expand and improve safe transportation options that fulfill the city's sustainability and equity goals, prioritizing walking, bicycling, and other non-motorized modes consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, Transportation Plan, and Climate Action Plan.

Priorities:

1. Fund the development of a Sidewalk Master Plan to enable holistic and systematic improvements to pedestrian infrastructure and safety in areas according to highest need (including lighting, accessibility features, and equity considerations).
2. Increase funding for sidewalks, both new infrastructure and maintenance, starting with the highest priority investments identified by staff in support of the Council Sidewalk Committee and/or sidewalk projects identified in the Safe Streets for All Action Plan prior to completion of the Sidewalk Master Plan.
3. Work with Bloomington Transit on a potential downtown circulator bus, expanded late-night service (including on campus, with IU Campus Bus), and free tickets for unhoused people in need of transportation.

4. Ensure adequate funding for sustainable maintenance of existing streets, sidewalks, bicycle facilities, multiuse paths, and trails while prioritizing safety of facility users.
5. Fund the next stage of implementation for improvement projects outlined in the Transportation Plan: engineering designs for the College Ave / Walnut St. corridor improvements (Project CS-1); conceptual and engineering designs for the Kirkwood Ave shared street conversion (Project SS-1); and conceptual designs for the E Third St. / Atwater Ave. corridor study (Project CS-2).
6. Implement safety improvements where most needed to fulfill Vision Zero and Safe Streets for All goals.
7. Continue to improve management of e-scooters supplied by rental companies, especially e-scooter storage issues that negatively impact accessibility, through a holistic approach including enforcement of existing rules; paid for with increased fees and/or fines for e-scooter rental companies.

The Council considered this letter at its June 18, 2024 Regular Session. It was approved by a vote of ____ Ayes, ____ Nays, and ____ Abstentions.

Respectfully,

City of Bloomington Common Council

Isabel Piedmont-Smith, President
Bloomington Common Council



**City of Bloomington
Office of the Common Council**

June 18, 2024

Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor
115 W. Washington St., Suite 1500 South
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Re: Impact of Duke Energy Indiana's Proposed Rate Increase on Bloomington Residents

To Whom It May Concern:

We are writing on behalf of our constituents, the residents of Bloomington, regarding Duke Energy Indiana's proposed rate increase in Cause Number 46038. We urge the Office of Utility Consumer Counselor (OUCC) to strongly advocate for—and the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission (IURC) to order—a modified proposal and schedule of rates and charges that prioritizes customer affordability and more prudently addresses environmental sustainability as outlined below.

We believe the magnitude of the proposed change would increase [energy insecurity](#) and cause harm in our community. First, it would reduce residents' ability to pay their bills and lead to [tragic tradeoffs](#) like foregoing adequate food or medicine. Second, it would increase the rate of disconnection for nonpayment—a life threatening prospect for some, especially during extreme temperatures and only made worse by a [lack of protections](#) against shut-offs during extreme heat in Indiana. According to data compiled by the Indiana University Energy Justice Lab, Duke made [over 25,000 disconnections](#) in its Indiana service territory last year. Energy insecurity harms many Hoosiers, but especially low- and moderate-income households and, disproportionately, [Black and Hispanic households](#).

While we applaud Duke's efforts to increase the safety, resiliency, and stability of the electrical grid, if Duke cannot keep rates more affordable—and provide targeted relief to those who are most vulnerable—then the safety and stability of its *customers* will decrease. As such, we believe affordability must have a stronger emphasis in Duke's proposal, following the Indiana General Assembly's recently adopted "Five Pillar" framework in IC 8-1-2-0.6. In its [Petition](#), Duke states it "has structured its request . . . to support the first four of the Five Pillars—reliability, resiliency, stability, and environmental sustainability—while at the same time balancing and designing the Company's overall request with a view to the fifth pillar of affordability." While we agree Duke must balance these pillars, affordability seems to be a relatively low priority given the size of the requested rate increase, especially for residential customers.

Duke describes the projected monthly bill impact for a typical residential customer (using 1,000 kWh per month) as a 19% increase—or about \$28 per month and over \$300 per year. Notably, this increase is not in comparison to *current* rates and charges, but rather, in comparison to rates *projected* to be in effect in March 2025, the estimated time of approval of this rate case. While Duke is correct to state that only the \$28 per month figure will occur as a result of the rate case, it is also critical *not* to ignore other, near-term projected bill increases when analyzing the affordability pillar. Regardless of the source of increased bills, the reality that will be felt by our residents is a major bill increase in a less than two year span. Recognizing this, the nonprofit organization Citizens Action Coalition has pegged the [projected impact](#) of the proposed rates *and* other anticipated increases to *collectively* lead to an increase of \$42 per month or more than \$500 per year for the typical residential customer. This is an increase of nearly 33% compared to today's rates.

Additionally, we believe Duke's environmental sustainability efforts are too narrowly focused on mitigating the environmental and health harms of coal generation—lacking a broader and long-term sustainability approach. While we agree that existing coal ash must be more safely managed, continued reliance on this harmful and *cost-ineffective* resource only sets up customers to unnecessarily pay for future cleanups and related costs. Similarly, we do not see carbon capture and sequestration as a sound focus for environmental sustainability, because it is largely not cost effective and does not mitigate many of the environmental and health harms associated with the extraction, distribution, and combustion of fossil fuels.

Rather, we believe Duke should redirect investments into significantly more renewable energy deployment, customer-sited energy efficiency resources, and demand side management (including in holistic virtual power plant applications). These are [more cost effective and environmentally sustainable](#) strategies for grid management that can also reduce bills for customers—truly balancing the affordability and environmental sustainability pillars. These approaches are more consistent with the [climate and sustainability goals](#) of the City of Bloomington, the [2040 carbon neutrality goal](#) of Indiana University, the [commitments of the U.S. government](#) under the Paris Agreement, and even [Duke's own commitments](#) to eliminate climate pollution. Finally, these approaches [augment the reliability, resiliency, and stability pillars](#).

We are requesting and urging the following changes be ordered in Cause Number 46038:

- Replace the use of declining block rates for residential customers in favor of a flat rate, or ideally, increasing block rates, which are less regressive.
- Reduce the proposed return on equity to below 10.0%, more in line with other Indiana investor-owned utilities.
- Increase focus on programs that alleviate energy insecurity (e.g., percent-of-income payment plans, arrearage management programs, bill payment assistance, and direct install programs).
- Improve protections against disconnection for nonpayment and ease the ability to reconnect service, including through the elimination of punitive fees that energy burdened households are the least able to afford.

- Increase focus on renewable energy (including distributed renewable generation), customer-sited energy efficiency, and demand side management to lower costs and mitigate future risks associated with an overreliance on fossil fuel generation assets.
- Initiate programs to support and facilitate residents in maximizing and stacking the value of the many utility, state, and federal resources available to help lower home energy bills through efficiency, renewable energy, and electrification (e.g., rebates, tax credits, and forthcoming financing options through the Indiana Energy Independence Fund or Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund).

Our constituents—both residents and local businesses—depend on affordable energy for their health, safety, and economic vitality. We urge the consideration of these changes in Cause Number 46038.

Respectfully,

City of Bloomington Common Council

Isabel Piedmont-Smith, President
Bloomington Common Council