



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

Meeting Minutes

January 18, 2024, 6:00 PM
Hooker Meeting Room # 245
Hybrid meeting

Join Zoom Meeting here:

[https://bloomington.zoom.us/j/6359441221?
pwd=bXRYTnNJV2xMbTRLLeE00QW9XWnRjQT09](https://bloomington.zoom.us/j/6359441221?pwd=bXRYTnNJV2xMbTRLLeE00QW9XWnRjQT09)

Meeting ID: 635 944 1221

Passcode: COBPT

or on Community Access Television Service (CATS): <https://catstv.net/government.php>.
Auxiliary aids are available upon request with adequate notice.

1. Call to order and quorum confirmation: **6:00 pm**

2. Introductions and Roll Call:	<u>In person</u>	<u>Absent</u>	<u>Zoom</u>
Carrie Albright	X		
Megan Bankowski	X		
Matt Caldie	X		
Don Eggert	X		
Shannon Gayk	X		
Mike Litwin	X		
Megan Murphy	X		
Mitchell Owens	X		
David Parkhurst	X		
Karena Tankersley	X		
Conner Wright	X		
Alauna Keeley	X		
Linda Thompson	X		

3. Approval of December , 2023 minutes:*	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
<u>Abstain</u>		
Carrie Albright	X	
Megan Bankowski	X	
Matt Caldie	X	
Don Eggert	X	
Shannon Gayk	X	
Mike Litwin	X	
Megan Murphy	X	
Mitchell Owens	X	
David Parkhurst	X	
Karena Tankersley	X	
Conner Wright	X	

Matt moved to vote, and Megan seconded. The EC unanimously voted to approve December meeting minutes.

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

Justin Vasel

- Justin is a member of BCOS, and wanted to introduce himself. BCOS has been working on reaching out to other boards and commission. They are interested in opening up more dialogue and collaboration moving forward.

Jeff Palmer

- Jeff is a 35-year resident of Bloomington, and is currently in his last month on the Tree Commission. Jeff proposed was concerned about the environmental impacts of a development project in Bloomington. It was noted that the last comments submitted to the Plan Commission by the EC were from last July (2023). Jeff asked if the EC plans to follow up on the project with additional comments or if the EC had toured the property. It was noted that several EC members have toured the property. Jeff asked if the EC plans to develop a report between now and the next Plan Commission’s meeting about the environmental aspects of the development project. Linda confirmed, yes.

5. Old business: none

6. New business:

A. Eco Hero’s topic, title, & if we should partner with Parks & Recreation*

Alauna confirmed that the current Eco Heroes theme is tentatively stormwater and mentioned that she has been looking at educational materials for younger students. She has been working on creating a character called CBU Sam (City of Bloomington Utilities). The proposed title is “Drops to Drain. Eco Hero’s shielding from storm water strain”. Other EC members gave positive feedback, especially on the shortened version of the title, “Drops to Drain”. Alauna plans to reach out to Kristie Lindberg and CBU about the proposed idea.

Shannon asked for more context about the Eco Heroes contest. Alauna responds that the intention is to educate around a theme, and last year’s theme included trees. Goals for the Eco Heroes contest include working with teachers and ultimately culminates in a ceremony for winners of the art contest.

Don mentions that it’s a way to increase participation from the community and get people thinking globally, while acting locally.

Carrie emphasized it represents opportunities to bring in more partners.

Linda discusses the history between the EC and Parks and Rec Department discussing the potential to combine the Eco Heroes (EH) contest with their large Earth Day celebration. It had been suggested that EH be reduced to just a poster contest, or possibly replace a speaker slot. Usually, the EH ceremony is an hour long and Linda voiced concern about squeezing it into 30 minutes. The 2024 Earth Day celebration event will be at Switchyard Pavilion. Uncertainty was expressed about the chairs vs. standing situation.

Matt responded that he thinks the EC could squeeze the ceremony into 30 minutes, but raised concerns about not being able to have an independent EC-chosen theme. Linda responded that this would not be an issue.

Matt and Shannon support combining the events and gaining extra visibility.

Megan M. suggests the EH ceremony should be at the beginning or end of the celebration, so that parents can come without sitting through the rest of the event.

Megan M motions to vote, Dave seconds. The EC made a unanimous vote of YES on the proposed Eco Hero's title and theme

B. 2024 priority project (Bucket List) discussion*

Don suggested the broad issues of Water and Biodiversity should be central to the EC's efforts in 2024, citing that there is a lot of potential support from city departments, commissions, and county government.

Karena elaborates on potential EC goals related to biodiversity and the biodiversity working group. The resulting discussion, including other EC members, resulted in the following list of possible priorities and projects.

- Habitat connectivity
 - o Communicating the EC's habitat connectivity plan
- Pollinators and native plants
 - o Pursuing Bee City and Bee Campus USA designations
- Education and outreach component
 - o Compilation of related resources from EC and outside of EC for educational purposes
 - o Relation to yard care, wildlife, lawns
 - o Collaboration with universities, other commissions, city departments, bee club, and more
 - o Don added emphasizing native plants as adaptation for climate change

David and Mitchell are involved in the water quality working group, and mention the following priorities.

- Collecting local data
- Collab with CBU
- Green Infrastructure

Matt pushes for emphasizing communication and outreach with the Habitat Connectivity map and plan. Carrie suggests presenting about the Habitat Connectivity Plan at schools as part of partnership with MCCSC, etc. Don suggests collaborating with neighborhood associations.

Mike wants to focus on riparian habitat, buffers, and biodiversity and recalls recent concerns about stream buffer requirements. He wants to revisit ordinance requirements and take the issue to the city council. Linda adds that it would be beneficial to put a requirement in the ordinance about having plants within the first 25 ft of riparian buffer. Linda expresses that she is not optimistic.

Connor mentions enjoyment of the Weed Wrangle in 2023, suggesting the EC should do more of these. Linda comments that Parks and Rec is taking habitat connectivity seriously in their approach to weed wrangles. Matt confirms that a goal would be at least one weed wrangle for the EC in 2024.

Shannon emphasizes having more public communication and presence in the local media (newspaper op eds, etc.).

- Matt has done a guest column in the newspaper each of the last three years.
- Shannon suspects local newspapers need more content.

Matt suggests working group membership can be sorted over email between Jan and Feb.

Shannon suggests priorities can be sorted out within the working groups themselves, as there was consensus by the group that cuts were not necessary.

Don points out the relationship between water and invasive species.

Shannon emphasizes that public communication and outreach should be its own working group and prioritize it with its own dedicated strategies. Mitchell agrees that it would be important for a dedicated person to identify and contacts with possible collaborating organizations/ groups.

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

David

Tree Commission

- The Tree Commission met one week early. The urban forester's report was short and mentioned that the Tree City designation will be updated and that they planted 816 trees this year. The TC also elected Neil Tong as their new chair. There are also 2 upcoming vacancies on the tree commission, and they hope to have a trained arborist join.

ERAC

- No meeting to report.

FOLM

- No news from FOLM.

Don

BCOS

- BCOS is looking for EC to support fossil fuels phasing out. There are not any actions or items to be voted on currently. BCOS also emphasized grants.

MCIRIS

- MCIRIS discussed the September plant sale, jumping worm invasive problem, weather disruptions for weed wrangles, and supporting native plantings at an MCCSC elementary school. Linda added that on MLK Jr. Day, MCIRIS hosted a class about how to plant seeds in milk jugs.

MCEC and MCMPOCAC

- The EC does not have a reporter for either of these meetings. Matt will be able to report on MCEC in the near future.

8. Commissioner announcements:

Carrie suggests voting on the EC steering committee in Feb.

Matt reminded the EC of upcoming term expirations for current EC members.

David mentioned that BFIU and WTU have a daily news summary, which reported that the state legislature is trying to supersede county slope building restrictions, which could threaten Monroe County's water supply at Lake Monroe.

Don will be leaving the Commission and reflected fondly on the past five years with the EC. Don expresses that he needs to cut back and that it is time to pass the torch.

Conner announces that he will also be leaving the EC.

Shannon requests help facilitating connections to benefit a grant being written about waste and environmental justice. Partners with relation to ecosystem repair, rewilding, and brownfields are of great interest.

Carrie announces that March 15 is the deadline for the EC to sign up for a table at the Master Gardener's Fair. The actual event is to be held April 4th.

9. Adjournment: 7:49 pm

* Item to be voted on

Next EC meeting: February 15, 2023, 6:00 p.m., Hooker Room, Zoom, and CATS

-The City is committed to providing equal access to information. However, despite our efforts, at times, portions of our board and commission packets are not accessible for some individuals. If you encounter difficulties accessing material in this packet, please contact Melissa Hirtzel at hirtzelm@bloomington.in.gov and provide your name, contact information, and a link to or description of the document or web page you are having problems with.

-As a quorum of the Commission or its committees may be present, this gathering constitutes a meeting under the Indiana Open Door Law (I.C. § 5-14-1.5). For that reason, this statement provides notice that this meeting will occur and is open for the public to attend, observe, and record what transpires.

-The Bloomington Environmental Commission (EC) wishes to acknowledge and honor the indigenous

communities native to this region, and recognize that the City of Bloomington, Indiana was built on indigenous homelands and resources.

