



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 MAY 2024 MEETING MINUTES

May 23, 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:

2. Introductions and Roll Call:

	<u>In person</u>	<u>Absent</u>	<u>Zoom</u>
Carrie Albright	X		
Megan Bankowski		X	
Matt Caldie	X		
Nadia Cain	X		
Shannon Gayk	X		
Mike Litwin	X		
Adam Martinez	X		
Megan Murphy	X		
Mitchell Owens	X		
David Parkhurst	X		
Gabby Robles	X		
Karena Tankersley	X		

Linda Thompson

3. Approval of April, 2024 minutes:*	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Abstain</u>
Carrie Albright	X		
Megan Bankowski			X
Matt Caldie	X		
Nadia Cain	X		
Shannon Gayk	X		
Mike Litwin	X		
Adam Martinez	X		
Megan Murphy	X		
Mitchell Owens			X
David Parkhurst	X		
Gabby Robles	X		
Karena Tankersley	X		

David motioned to approve minutes; Matt seconded. All present voted yes; Mitchell abstained.

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

Christopher Emge:

Christopher introduced himself and mentioned that he was with the Greater Bloomington Chamber of Commerce. He wanted to mention that they are putting forth proposal to expand public transportation with a micro transit project, and believes access to public transportation coincides with environmental and economic benefits. He said they were hoping to get the project moving forward this fall. Megan M asked about clarifying the term micro transit, and Christopher suggested that it is similar to a city-run rideshare or Uber project. Nadia asked what the biggest barrier to the project is. Chris answered that it would likely be capacity and funding.

Carrie proposed renaming the Eco Heroes Contest after Linda in honor of her retirement. Carrie moved to vote on renaming the EcoHeroes contest the "Linda P Thompson EcoHeroes Contest". Megan M seconded. All present voted yes.

5. Old business:

A. Urban farm letter of support*

B. Discussion and specific questions regarding the Climate Action Plan for Shawn Miya in June. Find at CAP webpage. <https://bloomington.in.gov/sustainability/2020-climate-action-plan>

A. Urban farm

Matt discussed the draft letter of support for the urban farm, Garden Quest. Matt suggested supporting a variance, and was not confident about proposing UDO changes. Megan M. agreed that supporting a variance, rather than a UDO change would be most appropriate and feasible.

Linda included that it was a very nice and tidy operation.

David motioned, Mike seconded.

All present voted yes on approving the letter of support.

B. CAP Questions

Energy and Built Environment

Matt -

- Section EB1 E1. Matt wanted to know if there has been progress or agreement to follow up on the goal of solar top 50. Are there city owned buildings that could add solar now?
- Section EB2 A2. This section requires city facilities to benchmark and report progress on a GHG inventory, and Matt wants to know if the city does this currently.
- Very next section. Matt wants to know if we conduct audits for sites as described in the section, and wants to know the city's best and worst buildings in terms of energy efficiency.

Carrie asked whether or not Bloomington can pursue more stringent building codes for energy efficiency. Linda answered that it would have to be the county to change this, but there has been resistance. The county currently follows IN law, and IN follows federal law. Linda finds it unlikely these things will change.

Carrie suggested attending webinar from INPS about how to work with Local Ordinances and HOA rules for working with native plants.

Matt -

- EB2 A5. Matt pointed out that this section has a good environmental justice opportunity and wants an update. Shannon was struck by the inclusion of equity language, and Carrie talked about wanting to see more action on equity rather than only an emphasis on equity studies.

Carrie welcomed folks to add questions via email over the next two weeks.

Nadia wanted to know more about how the city is planning to work with IU on these goals, due to extent of population and land ownership.

Waste and Wastewater

Matt -

- W2A1 and A3. Strengthening protection of wetlands and stream buffers. Matt points out that this directly relates to our discussions. Linda suggests that adding a clause that requires vegetation along stream buffers that do not have any may be more important than measurement of banks.

Mike asked what progress has been made on requiring conservation easements on new developments. Linda said that it is already in the UDO for large housing developments, and applies to streams or land parcels of certain sizes, but wouldn't apply to single family homes.

Mitchell –

- Mitchell suggested that no streams flow into Lake Monroe's watershed from within city limits, and was wondering how the city would work with Brown County and surrounding places that do have streams flowing into our watershed to protect our drinking water.
- Mitchell also wanted to know what will be done about the worsening of the algae problem, and suggested this needs to be considered even if it's not something that can be directly controlled.

Megan

- W4B. The section talks about using rain gardens, planting natives, green infrastructure, etc. Megan wanted to know how we will promote and measure these things. Shannon agreed that implementation is our biggest concern and wanted to know how people are planning to actually

make this happen.

Nadia asked about why there are more algae problems in recent years. Mitchell and David answered that it is generally due to more phosphorous and nutrients coming from septic, farm, and other non-point sources.

Transportation and Land Use

Adam -

- Some of the goals seemed very conservative – like increasing biking from 17 to 18% and expanding density by 3%. He wanted to know why they were so conservative and where the figures came from.
- He mentioned the CAP or climate dashboard claims the impact of installing EV chargers is greater than increasing walking and biking – which to his knowledge is not true.

Matt –

- TLI II. Policy to replace offroad and lawn equipment with electric ones at time of replacement. Encouraging IU to take on their own policy. Wants to know about progress on two stroke lawn equipment like leaf blowers, bc he had been advocating for immediate replacement of these tools.

Paul Russo from the public recommended emphasizing distinguishing sustainability features of much older technology from newer technology.

Adam –

- Adam emphasized that walking and bicycling infrastructure is a good opportunity to address equity concern.

Greenspace and Ecosystems

David -

- G3A2. The section is about developing an urban forest management plan. He mentioned that Canopy Bloomington is involved in this and that Haskell Smith has been speaking with them, but he wanted to know why the tree commission hasn't been briefed on this.

Shannon –

- Wanted to know if they have defined greenspace, because there are important differences. Mitchell read their definition, and Shannon, Megan, and Nadia agreed that it needs much better defined because from their definition a front yard would count.

Linda mentioned that when the EC first started making greenspace reports, it had to be at least an acre, and there was discussion about inclusion of land in town.

Shannon

- G1B3. Shannon emphasized the EC's potential involvement in the goal to improve greenspaces with pollinator habitat, etc.

Mike pointed out that greenspace, even with just grass, is still much better than pavement.

Matt –

- G2 B 1, 2, and 3. Matt wanted updates about progress on roadside native planting, creating no-mow areas, and promoting landscaping for absorption with moisture tolerant plants.

Megan responded that the city has some large low mow areas at Winslow, Switchyard, and others. Megan's students work in these areas.

Carrie –

- G1 B1. Carrie pointed out that goals on wildlife corridors, and habitat connectivity meshes very well with the EC's current work.

Megan pointed out that the EC is an arm of the city that is supposed to be implementing some of these things and wanted to know where else we should pitch in and points out that we should be communicated to about these efforts.

Matt -

- G4 B4. Matt emphasized that keeping natural areas cooler by including plants alongside stream buffers also fits well into the EC's current work.

Carrie -

- G2A1. Talks about requiring native plants in new developments and on city properties. She pointed out that maintenance is also very important.

Matt recommended that the city needs an enforcement mechanism outside of the EC.

- Russo, from the public, asked if urban wildlife populations are being monitored and suggested incorporating this into the CAP.
- Megan and Shannon suggest that inventories are done in certain parks and areas.
- Shannon pointed out that this could possibly be incorporated into our audit of the HCP. Carrie and Linda mentioned that it would be important to have a benchmark.

Linda asked if it makes sense to have different CAPs for the city and county, and David answered no. Carrie discussed having the city and county try to integrate CAP efforts, and Linda pointed out that they do not seem to be working together currently.

6. New business:

- A. Air quality monitoring volunteers for Economic and Sustainability Department
- B. Proposed special projects working group

Carrie

- A. Air Quality - Shawn Miya has put together a project on urban heat island study. The devices need power, do not need wifi, and cannot be by pollution like exhausts, etc. Locations need to be determined by July 1st. Matt's air policy report indicated we need a good distribution across the city.
 - a. Matt would be willing to host one and mentioned that finding sites is actually pretty tricky, because they need protected from both the public and the elements.
 - b. Shannon suggested dropping pins on a shared Google Map.
 - c. Matt, Mitchell, Nadia, and Shannon volunteered to help brainstorm locations.
 - d. Nadia mentioned there may be many good places on campus.
 - e. Matt suggested we should have at least one in each city council district.
 - f. Linda volunteered her property.

Carrie sent a flyer looking for HeatWatch campaign volunteers on July 26th and August 8th and asked the EC to spread the word, because Shawn asked if we could help amplify that.

- B. Special Projects Working Group – Carrie put out a call for interest in a Grant Writing and Management type group for special projects as needed, and suggested the treasurer be on that group.
 - a. Mitchell, Gabby and Karena (treasurer) volunteered to be on this group.

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).

Dave

- Tree Commission – The meeting included the urban forester’s report, which mentioned trees planted at Crestmont Park. The state chemist is doing an investigation around city trees. Someone had been spraying pesticides on windy days. City now has full staff of 3 certified arborists. Rewild IU had a tree planting demo on campus for Arbor Day.
- ERAC – No meeting to report on.
- FOLM – Unable to report as meeting conflicted with this month’s EC meeting.

Karena

- BCOS – unable to make it, no report.

Linda

- MCIRIS – organizing germinated seeds for native plant sale.

MCEC and MCMPOCAC – No updates.

8. Commissioner announcements:

Carrie – Planning and Transportation Dept head will sit in next month, as will Shawn, and the Cook 48 resolution will be discussed.

Karena – BDWG looking for input on who to gain support from for Bee City USA.

Shannon – Neighborhood plant swap was the following Monday, and is an initiative of Center for Sustainable Living

Adam – cannot make it to next month’s meeting as he will be birding in Mexico.

Gabby and Karena – will be here over zoom for next two months.

Shannon – gone completely for June and July.

Mike – won’t be here for June.

Mitchell – Plugged Bug Fest, which Megan M signed up the EC for already.

9. Adjournment: 7:43 pm

* Item to be voted on

Next EC meeting: June 20, 2024, 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.