

In the Council Chambers of the Showers City Hall, Bloomington, Indiana on Wednesday, September 04, 2024 at 6:30pm, Council President Isabel Piedmont-Smith presided over a Regular Session of the Common Council.	COMMON COUNCIL REGULAR SESSION SEPTEMBER 04, 2024
Councilmembers present: Isak Nti Asare, Courtney Daily, Matt Flaherty, Isabel Piedmont-Smith, Dave Rollo, Hopi Stosberg, Sydney Zulich Councilmembers present via Zoom: Matt Flaherty, Kate Rosenbarger Councilmembers absent: Andrew (Andy) Ruff	ROLL CALL [6:30pm]
Council President Isabel Piedmont-Smith gave a land and labor acknowledgment and summarized the agenda.	AGENDA SUMMATION [6:31pm]
Stosberg moved and Zulich seconded to amend the agenda to include a discussion of the mayor’s budget proposal. The motion received a roll call vote of Ayes: 8, Nays: 0, Abstain: 0.	Vote to amend agenda [6:34pm]
Stosberg moved and Zulich seconded to approve the minutes of February 28, 2024. The motion received a roll call vote of Ayes: 8, Nays: 0, Abstain: 0.	APPROVAL OF MINUTES [6:36pm] February 28, 2024 (Regular Session)
Daily wished to bring attention to the fact that September was National Suicide Prevention Month and provided the public with the telephone number for the Suicide Crisis Helpline.	REPORTS • COUNCIL MEMBERS [6:37pm]
Zulich stated that on September 12, 2024, she would be hosting a constituent meeting over Zoom focused on the progress of the construction of the convention center.	
Piedmont-Smith explained that she was on the steering committee of the Community Foundation to address homelessness and presented a section of their grant proposal seeking a letter of support from the council. Rollo asked why the homelessness numbers in Region 10, Monroe County for the years of 2019 to 2024 appeared low on the provided documentation. Piedmont-Smith explained that she was not involved in the creation of the proposal and did not know the reason.	
Zulich moved and Rollo seconded to issue a letter of support for a grant through the Lilly Foundation’s Giving Indiana Funds for Tomorrow, for the Community Foundation to address homelessness. The motion received a roll call vote of Ayes: 8, Nays: 0, Abstain: 0.	Vote to issue letter of support [6:42pm]
Doug Bruce, Representative to the Capital Improvement Board (CIB), gave a report on the progress of the convention center’s design, the project’s goals, progress since July, key dates, bid opportunities, expansion location, collaborator workshops, conceptual building plan, design concepts, and next steps. He encouraged the public to attend the upcoming Community Input meeting on the September 16, 2024.	• The MAYOR AND CITY OFFICES [6:43pm]
Rollo asked if the CIB had considered the way hoteliers involved in the project treated their employees. He noted the need to raise the wage floor in Bloomington. Bruce explained that the topic did not arise in the discussions, and agreed to the need for Bloomington residents to make a living wage. He asked that the council provide him with a list of recommendations to prospective hoteliers.	

Flaherty asked whether the CIB had decided to ignore the Council’s guidance not to include skywalks in the center’s design.

Bruce emphasized that the designs were not final, that everyone involved agreed to the importance of street-level traffic, but that a skywalk between centers may be necessary for logistical reasons.

Eric Spoonmore, Treasurer of the Monroe County Capital Improvement Board, noted the council’s resolution to prevent pedestrian fatalities, and expressed the belief that a skywalk was the only guaranteed way to accomplish this.

Rosenbarger said that Spoonmore’s comments were not backed up by facts, and emphasized the need for street-level pedestrian safety to take precedence.

There were no council committee reports.

Taylor Brown introduced himself as the newly hired Legislative Affairs Specialist for the mayor’s office and stated that he looked forward to working with the council.

James Bernard spoke about his experience as a camp leader for the homeless community in the city, and emphasized the need for more resources and support.

Sidarth Dahs spoke about his work as part of an organization that supported the unhoused and nomadic population, and expressed frustration at the frequent incidents of forced relocation and the lack of long-term solutions.

Kyle Feldcamp commented that after listening to the discussions regarding the convention center and the homelessness situation, he believed it was clear that the city’s priorities lay towards the former.

Mo Murphy spoke about legislation that prohibited the unhoused from camping on public property, stating that it was unacceptable.

Anna Sowka stated that the homeless community needed an immediate solution to the city’s displacement policy.

Jessica Mills said that there should not be as much of a separation between housed and unhoused people as currently existed.

Brandon Jones spoke about his experience in the city’s nomadic community, and expressed the wish to communicate with the mayor’s office in order to improve coexistence.

Diana Traas commented that the unhoused considered Bloomington their home, and that they should not be pushed out of it.

Piedmont-Smith clarified that the legislation referenced in comments was a county ordinance, and not the city’s.

There were no appointments to boards or commissions.

- The MAYOR AND CITY OFFICES (*cont’d*)

Council Discussion:

- COUNCIL COMMITTEES [7:02pm]
- PUBLIC [7:03pm]

APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS [7:25pm]

LEGISLATION FOR FIRST
READING [7:26pm]

Stosberg moved and Rollo seconded that Ordinance 2024-17 be read by title and synopsis only. The motion received a roll call vote of Ayes: 7, Nays: 0, Abstain: 0. (Zulich out of the room). Clerk Nicole Bolden read the legislation by title and synopsis.

Ordinance 2024-17–To Amend Title 20 of the Bloomington Municipal Code Re: Amendment and updates related to grading permit and alignment with Title 13 and BMC 20.04 related to steep slopes [7:26pm]

Stosberg moved and Rollo seconded that Appropriation Ordinance 2024-03 be read by title and synopsis only. The motion received a roll call vote of Ayes: 7, Nays: 0, Abstain: 0. (Zulich out of the room). Bolden read the legislation by title and synopsis.

Appropriation Ordinance 2024-03–To Additionally Appropriate From the Public Works General Fund for Personnel [7:28pm]

Stosberg moved and Rollo seconded that Appropriation Ordinance 2024-04 be read by title and synopsis only. The motion received a roll call vote of Ayes: 7, Nays: 0, Abstain: 0. (Zulich out of the room). Bolden read the legislation by title and synopsis.

Appropriation Ordinance 2024-04–To Additionally Appropriate From the Public Works General Fund for Debris Removal [7:29pm]

LEGISLATION FOR SECOND
READING AND RESOLUTIONS
[7:30pm]

Stosberg moved and Rollo seconded that Resolution 2024-17 be introduced and read by title and synopsis only. The motion received a roll call vote of Ayes: 7, Nays: 0, Abstain: 0. (Zulich out of the room). Bolden read the legislation by title and synopsis.

Resolution 2024-17–
REQUESTING THE FOOD AND
BEVERAGE TAX ADVISORY
COMMISSION TO
MAKE A RECOMMENDATION
FOR EXPENDITURE OF FOOD
AND BEVERAGE
TAX REVENUES[7:30pm]

Stosberg moved and Rollo seconded to adopt Resolution 2024-17.

Eric Spoonmore, CIB Treasurer, presented the legislation. The legislation sought to approve the 2025 budget that was presented at an earlier date.

Jeff Underwood, CIB Controller and Assistant Treasurer, stated that the total budget request was \$899,400 and detailed the costs.

Council questions:

Stosberg asked why the budget listed for the website was \$1,000 while Jeff Underwood had stated that it was \$2,000.

Underwood confirmed it should be \$2000.

Piedmont-Smith asked why the amount budgeted for a part-time controller was \$71,500, noting that the cost seemed high.

Spoonmore said that the cost was an estimate, and a competitive rate compared to his previous experience.

Stosberg asked if the current budget was likely to change in 2025.

Spoonmore said the CIB would not need to make further appropriations.

Underwood added that there would be one more appropriation when the bonds were sold, but it should not require an amendment to the operating budget.

Piedmont-Smith asked when the appropriation for the bonds would come forward.

Underwood said it would be at the end of January or beginning of February, 2025, and would close on the bonds in March 2025.

Resolution 2024-17 (cont'd)

Council questions:

Piedmont-Smith asked for details on the agreement between the CIB and the city.

Public comment:

Spoonmore explained that a building corporation would need to be established in order to operate the convention center.

Council comments:

There was no public comment.

Flaherty commented that he would be voting no on Resolution 2024-17 as well as future votes if the CIB continued to ignore council's recommendation. He expressed uncertainty in the project's direction and financial future, and said that the money being spent on the center could go towards more tangible benefits to the community.

Rosenbarger commented that she would also be voting no on the legislation and that a solution for the city's unhoused community, and pedestrian safety should take priority.

Rollo appreciated the answers provided by the CIB and said that the center would serve the needs of many of Bloomington's residents. He acknowledged the differences in opinion among Councilmembers and noted that he planned to support the resolution.

Piedmont-Smith expressed the belief that council should receive more requests for collaboration and information from the CIB. She noted that she plans to support the resolution, but that council should be more involved than the general public.

Vote to adopt Resolution 2024-17 [7:51pm]

The motion received a roll call vote of Ayes: 6, Nays: 2 (Flaherty, Rosenbarger), Abstain: 0.

Christopher Emge, Greater Bloomington Chamber of Commerce, expressed concerns with the 2025 city budget, acknowledging a breakdown in communication between the mayor's office and council. He urged the council to audit city personnel numbers and reprioritize items in the budget with an eye for fiscal responsibility.

ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENT [7:52pm]

Wes Martin, a member of Firefighter Union Local 586, supported the city's 2025 budget proposal, noting that his union's contract was unanimously approved for the first time. He emphasized the importance of retaining experienced firefighters. The proposed budget was a positive move for Bloomington's labor movement.

Ash Kulak, Deputy Attorney, read a comment submitted via Zoom chat from Sam Dove inviting the public to an upcoming information session on September 16, 2024, about the convention center project.

Stosberg moved and Zulich seconded to suspend the rules with respect to the structure of debate, questions, and comment periods with opening statements up to three minutes per Councilmember, followed by a period of question, answer, and discussion starting with the Mayor, to be followed by public comment limited to two minutes per speaker, followed by additional questions or comments by Council or the Mayor. The motion received a roll call vote of Ayes: 8, Nays: 0, Abstain: 0.

2025 CITY BUDGET DISCUSSION [8:00pm]

Vote to suspend rules [8:04pm]

Zulich noted that the Council line item on food security was vague and recommended that they incorporate monthly budget meetings with the mayor's office starting in January 2025. She then presented a list of proposals to be included in the budget.

2025 CITY BUDGET DISCUSSION
(cont'd)

Stosberg categorized public safety, infrastructure, and engineering upgrades as requirements for the 2025 budget. She also proposed a higher stipend for the council president from \$1,000 to \$1,500. Flaherty acknowledged improvements in the budget but noted there were major gaps that would preclude his support. The budget's contributions towards pedestrian safety initiatives were less than in previous budgets, and needed to be prioritized given the high number of fatalities and injuries.

Rosenbarger stated that working with Law Enforcement Action Partnership (LEAP) on emergency call analysis presented a valuable opportunity with low financial impact for Bloomington.

Rollo said that the budget would meet the fundamental needs of the city, highlighting the ways that it would remediate the compensation deficiencies for public employees. He requested that the Jack Hopkins Social Services Fund be used to address the needs of the community.

Daily reiterated her support for the budget, noting that she firmly supported repairs of the city's streets and sidewalks.

Asare reiterated his satisfaction with the budget but looked forward to conversations regarding alternative possible funding streams.

Piedmont-Smith spoke about public safety concerns of city residents, noting that a comprehensive plan needed to be created that would include provisions for the unhoused, those suffering from mental illness, and pedestrian welfare. Hiring more police officers alone would do little to increase Bloomington's safety. She expressed her support for engaging LEAP for an emergency call analysis.

Mayor Kerry Thomson said that the 2025 budget marked an improvement in collaboration between the two branches of city governance. The budget was deficit-based and the acceptance of a General Obligation (GO) bond would include additional priorities that were not in the operating budget. The high turnover rate in public sector workers was costing the city money, and competitive salary increases would ultimately be financially beneficial in the long term.

Zulich asked whether there was documentation on the multi-year plan that the council could review.

Thomson stated that the controller had committed to a five-year financial plan that would forecast what the city needed.

Piedmont-Smith asked whether council's plans for transportation improvements would be part of the GO bond's funding.

Thomson confirmed that capital projects such as transportation and sidewalk improvements would be funded out of the bond.

Piedmont-Smith asked whether the mayor's office was willing to commit to using the GO bond for the improvements.

Thomson gave a verbal commitment but explained that she was unable to commit in writing without going through the bond process. She emphasized the need for the collaboration on determining the details of the bond.

Flaherty noted that the timeline on the transportation project had been delayed and asked whether the funds towards the project had been reverted in 2024.

Thomson agreed to investigate the funding plan for Indiana Avenue and whether it had been reverted.

Jessica McClellan, Controller, agreed to follow up with the council on the status of the funds.

2025 CITY BUDGET DISCUSSION
(cont'd)

Stosberg asked that the mayor's office schedule a meeting with the council within the next week to explain the bond process to them. She also asked whether the money would be available in 2025.

Thomson confirmed that it would be available by 2025.

McClellan agreed to schedule a meeting for the week of September 16, 2025.

Asare asked if the bonds would have an immediate impact on tax rates in Bloomington.

McClellan explained that rates would not increase.

Asare asked if the city could bond reasonably to meet all the needs they wished to meet for infrastructure funding and about items that were over-budgeted.

McClellan confirmed that they could. Over-budgeted items accounted for about 5% of the budget, and most of the excess budget was due to unfilled salary positions.

Asare asked if the placeholder items could be made more specific.

McClellan stated that there were no items she would consider placeholder, but that there were line items that were estimated without an exact cost.

Asare asked why the city did not go further into a deficit to complete projects.

McClellan explained that a higher deficit would lead to a shrinking budget in future years.

Rollo stated his reservations about increasing debt and debt service. He asked if the administration had considered a possibility where property values fell as they did in 2008.

McClellan stated that they considered property taxes to be a stable source of income, and that even if values fell the city would be able to raise the same amount of money as the previous year but that taxes would be raised.

Rosenbarger asked what else in the budget could be bonded for and if it could be further modified, highlighting the fact that transportation funding had been removed.

McClellan explained that there was a list of transportation items that were not in the budget that would be included in the bond. She said that the budget would be advertised high.

Thomson confirmed that she was present to discuss changes to the 2025 budget with council, and to present them with other options for funding.

Daily asked about possible downsides for doing the GO bond.

McClellan explained that it used up some of the city's debt capacity, but that the bonding limit was set to one-third of 2% of assessed value by statute, which prevented over-commitment.

Stosberg was concerned with funding transportation projects entirely through a GO bond and expressed the hope that some could be funded through the budget.

Thomson stated that public works projects had been committed to verbally for six years without funding.

Flaherty asked for details regarding new funding and changed spending. He noted that the \$268,810 in the alternative transportation fund was going towards parking services, in addition to most of the \$1,000,000 in the parking meter fund.

2025 CITY BUDGET DISCUSSION
(cont'd)

McClellan explained that the money in the parking meter fund was being allocated towards curb, roads, and sidewalk maintenance. The alternative transportation fund was being used for the salaries and supplies for the people who collect the revenue from the meters.

Flaherty asked if active TIF district revenue that was unaccounted for could be allocated towards infrastructure.

McClellan confirmed that both TIF and bonds could be leveraged to fund City infrastructure projects.

Piedmont-Smith asked how the 2024 salary increases would have an impact if there was a deficit budget that year.

McClellan explained that future increases would represent a smaller proportion of the budget and that the increase in property tax revenues would cover the cost.

Rollo asked for the balance of the Community Revitalization Enhancement District (CRED) fund.

McClellan estimated there was \$8 million to spend by the end of the year.

Rollo asked whether the balance in the CRED fund would be used to fund police infrastructure.

McClellan and Thomson explained that they had not yet made a decision regarding the funding.

Stosberg noted that cost of living increases were not equitable and said the city should find an alternative to a flat percentage salary increase.

Piedmont-Smith asked whether the mayor's office would be willing to commit to funding the LEAP study for a community responder program and emergency call analysis at a cost of \$10,000.

Thomson agreed to the funding of the study, but that specific vendors were not included in the budget.

Asare asked if councilmembers had any specific modifications to the budget.

Stosberg reiterated her hope for a line item regarding public safety dispatch analysis, and that some transportation projects would not be part of the GO bond.

Zulich asked why the administration was conducting elected officials' salary study when the council was responsible for salary appropriations.

Thomson clarified that the mayor's office was not conducting the study; Human Resources (HR) was.

Zulich asked that the council be involved in the discussion of who would conduct the study.

Thomson explained that the elected officials' study was a small addition to Crowe LLP's larger salary study.

Piedmont-Smith asked why there was \$15,000 towards the HR website overhaul when the city's entire website needed to be improved.

Thomson explained that the budget included a complete restructure to HR department's intranet, including a modernization of the benefits system.

Piedmont-Smith noted that \$5,000 towards rebranding seemed excessive and asked whether those funds could be reallocated towards other line items.

Asare noted the small size of the line item and expressed doubt that it required discussion.

2025 CITY BUDGET DISCUSSION
(cont'd)

Piedmont-Smith said that she brought up the cost in support of Stosberg.
Stosberg noted that in state code, council was responsible for setting elected official salaries and that new ordinances should be drafted.

Thomson noted that the Crowe study would be completed in time to inform the council of salary increases for the 2025 budget.

Flaherty noted concerns over multi-year bonding, and requested that sidewalk funding be part of the budget rather than relying on the GO bond alone.

Thomson agreed that she would be willing to alter the budget to include capital projects, understanding that it was a priority for the council, but could commit to a firm number

Piedmont-Smith asked for confirmation that the city had to advertise the 2025 budget to the State by September 10, 2024.

Thomson confirmed the deadline and explained that they planned to advertise a slightly higher number than estimated.

Piedmont-Smith asked what level of detail needed to be posted by the deadline.

McClellan explained that the posted budget had to include every category, revenue, and source of revenue per department. Advertising high allowed some amount of leeway.

Stosberg commented that the entire process should be easier.

Flaherty asked the administration to share a spreadsheet of each department's fund with the council.

McClellan confirmed that she could, but requested that councilmembers select specific funds that they wished to access.

Piedmont-Smith noted the upcoming Consensus Building Activity on September 11, 2024.

COUNCIL SCHEDULE [9:45pm]

Piedmont-Smith moved and it was seconded to adjourn. The motion was approved by voice vote.

ADJOURNMENT [9:46pm]


APPROVED by the Common Council of the City of Bloomington, Monroe County, Indiana upon this
05 day of February, 2025.

APPROVE:

ATTEST:



Hopi Stosberg, PRESIDENT
Bloomington Common Council



Nicole Bolden, CLERK
City of Bloomington