



CITY OF BLOOMINGTON COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABILITY

Minutes

Tuesday, March 11, 2025, 6:00 p.m.

McCloskey Conference Room — City Hall

1. **Call to Order:** Justin Vasel called the meeting to order at 6:08 PM.
2. **Roll Call**
Members present: Justin Vasel, Zero Rose, Tara Dunderdale, Dave Rollo, Jami Scholl, Matt Austin, Chenghuai Xu
Members absent: Hunter Hawley, Evan Nix, Quentin Gilly, Jon Eldon
City staff present: Shawn Miya, Jolie Perry
3. **Approval of Agenda**
ACTION: Matt Austin moved, and Tara Dunderdale seconded to approve the agenda. The agenda was approved by voice vote.
4. **Approval of Minutes:**
December 10, 2024: ACTION: Zero Rose moved, and Dave Rollo seconded to approve the agenda. The agenda was approved by voice vote.

February 11, 2025: ACTION: Dave Rollo moved, and Matt Austin seconded to approve the agenda. The agenda was approved by voice vote.
5. **Public Comment**
None.
6. **Report from Commissioners**
 - a. **Chair Report** (Justin Vasel)
Upcoming Calendar: Justin reviewed the tentative calendar showing regular meetings and work sessions through October 2025, noting today's officer elections.

Organization Chart: Updated chart shows Tara Dunderdale and Justin Vasel were reappointed as commissioners. Three vacancies remain: two mayoral appointments and one Monroe County ex-officio position.

Chair Priorities Update: Justin presented progress on 2024-2025 priorities across three categories: People (commissioner recruitment/engagement), Outcomes (goals, initiatives, reports), and Governance (bylaws, working groups). Most items have progressed or been started.

Upcoming Events:
March 12 City Council meeting: Greenhouse gas report presentation; second readings of Resolutions 2025-05 and 2025-06 for UDO amendment process
April 3 State of the City Address at Waldron Arts Center

April 19 (corrected from April 22) Earth Day event at Switchyard Park

General Updates:

Two commissioner reappointments completed

Recent City Council interactions: Justin provided public comment supporting BMC 2.12.100 code changes and emphasized importance of council oversight on climate resilience issues during Climate Resilience Committee dissolution discussion

2024 Annual Report drafting mostly complete, awaiting finalization of 2025 priorities

Bylaw reform process outlined: Justin will identify needed changes, bring to commission for discussion, draft new language, and bring final version for vote

February 25 work session was productive brainstorming session for 2025 commission work

b. **Waste Management Working Group** (Matt Austin)

Caldwells Inc. Tour: Tomorrow morning tour of Caldwell's facilities in Shelbyville, meeting at Waste Reduction District at 7:15 a.m. Caldwell's has pilot program accepting five-gallon buckets of food waste from Shelby County residents. Matt plans to pitch Bokashi composting to help them produce fertilizer.

Community Partnerships: Met with Josh (one-eyed farmer) and Gavin Everett of Community Culture Inc., a nonprofit that uses donated garden space from property owners no longer gardening. Volunteers work the spaces with small percentage going to property owners, some to volunteers, and majority to food banks and nonprofits. Currently has 7,500 square feet of available space with 1,400 square foot plots.

Faith Community Outreach: Contacted EarthCare, representing seven faith communities focused on environmental action. Planning to present Bokashi introduction at their March 24 Zoom meeting and connect them with Community Culture Inc. and Back to Earth program (Joseph Winnieff's composting systems at apartment complexes).

Stakeholder Development: Continued efforts to connect various food waste and urban agriculture initiatives to build momentum. Tour participants include Waste Reduction District staff, Environmental Commission member, CAC member, totaling about seven people.

c. **Ad-Hoc Committee: Sustainability Assessment Report** (Tara Dunderdale)

Process Update: Due to Open Door Law constraints on collaborative document work, Tara and Evan Nix split the report in half, working independently on separate sections that will be combined for final draft.

Budget Analysis Section: Tara's section includes budget analysis using open finance data, inflation-adjusted to show real investment trends. Analyzed Parks and Recreation, Economic and Sustainable Development (ESD), and planning to include Housing budgets. Used approved budget figures rather than actual spending to highlight city priorities.

Key Findings:

- (1) Parks and Recreation shows sustained investment with notable increases
- (2) Urban Green Spaces budget tripled from 2018-2024 (inflation-adjusted)
- (3) ESD department shows significant budget increases reflecting city commitment to sustainability

Additional Sections: Working on "Other City Actions" section, planning to coordinate with Shawn and Jolie on programs and projects not fully captured on website.

Commission Input Requested: Feedback on additional budget line items to analyze and other areas of interest. Discussion included adding 2025 budget data and breaking down ESD budget to separate sustainability-specific items.

d. **Council Ex-Officio** (Dave Rollo)

Climate Action Resilience Committee Dissolution: Committee established around 2019 was dissolved after completing its main charges: supporting Climate Action Plan development (completed 2021) and establishing tracking mechanisms (Climate Action Dashboard now operational). Decision reflects availability of other mechanisms including city climate action team, Project 46 regional alliance, Transportation Commission, new fiscal committee, and this commission.

UDO Amendment Resolutions: Two resolutions (2025-05 and 2025-06) scheduled for tomorrow's council meeting would direct Planning Commission to prepare amendments allowing duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes citywide while removing design standards. Dave expressed concern about blanket citywide approach potentially incentivizing conversion of owner-occupied homes to rentals, preferring directed densification. Process would take months with Planning Commission development and 90-day council review period.

Public Input Process: CM Rollo advocated for deliberative sessions to gather community input on UDO amendments, citing controversial nature and need for broader discussion beyond standard Planning Commission hearings.

7. Discussion of Topics Not the Subject of Resolutions

a. **Commission Priorities for 2025**

Jami Scholl requested to present information relevant to priorities discussion.

ACTION: Matt Austin moved to amend agenda to include Jami's item. Zero Rose seconded. Motion approved by voice vote.

Urban Agriculture Discussion (Jami Scholl): Proposed creating urban agriculture zones, supporting tax incentives for vacant lot conversion to urban farms, and implementing policies integrating agriculture into developments. Emphasized food sovereignty needs given potential food system disruptions, noting Bloomington needs approximately 40 acres in production for 120,000 population. Expressed concern that blanket density zoning could eliminate potential agricultural land.

Zero Rose suggested a new working group focused on resilience beyond sustainability, addressing supply chain disruptions and climate change effects. Emphasized need for front-end policy allowing urban agriculture rather than after-the-fact approaches.

Tara Dunderdale supported the education and outreach priority with emphasis on coalition building and collaboration with existing organizations doing sustainability work.

Noted commission limitations due to meeting constraints and positioned commission to provide funding, resources, and access to community groups already active in this work.

Earth Day Participation: Commission signed up for Earth Day table. Discussion of materials needed, possible Bokashi demonstrations, invasive plant identification activities for children, and potential farmer's market presence.

Final Priorities Adopted: Commission reached consensus on two priority areas:
(1) Housing & Zoning Policy: Including UDO and PUD developments, native planting, and garden/food production space
(2) Education & Outreach: Including Bokashi tutorials, workshops and events, social media presence, and coalition building.

8. Resolutions for Second Reading and Discussion: None

9. Resolutions for First Reading and Discussion: None

10. Report from Staff Liaison (Shawn Miya)

Current Projects:

- a. Signed contract received from Indiana Office of Energy Development for Buskirk Chumley Theater project (\$500,000 grant with 20% match for solar, battery storage, and HVAC upgrades)
- b. City Hall LED lighting project started, saving 67% on lighting costs
- c. Strong momentum building for Project 46 regional climate alliance

Grant Programs (Jolie Perry):

- d. SEAL Program: Solar Energy Efficiency and Lighting Program for nonprofits and small businesses reopened, adding battery energy storage systems for nonprofits to maintain essential services during outages
- e. Bloomington Green Home Improvement Program (BGHIP): Revamped with increased rebates, seeing strong early applications. Includes higher rebates for low-income homeowners and coordination with federal Homes in Here program offering up to 100% cost coverage for low-income residents
- f. Outreach Needs: Seeking collaboration opportunities for low-income outreach and promotional materials

Earth Day Event: Large event planned with capacity vendor participation, IU and high school students in recycled material costumes representing energy systems and "chasing away" greenhouse gas character.

11. Member Announcements

- a. **Jami Scholl:** No additional announcements beyond priority discussion.

12. New Business

a. Officer Elections

Elections conducted for four positions with nominations from the floor:

Chairperson: Justin Vasel nominated and accepted. Roll call vote 7-0-0.

Vice Chairperson: Tara Dunderdale nominated and accepted. Roll call vote 7-0-0.

Secretary: Zero Rose nominated and accepted. Roll call vote 7-0-0.

Treasurer: Matt Austin nominated and accepted. Roll call vote 7-0-0.

13. Adjournment:

ACTION: Dave Rollo moved, and Matt Austin seconded to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 7:27 pm.

NEXT MEETING:
APRIL 8, 2025 6PM