

In the Council Chambers of the Showers City Hall, Bloomington, Indiana on Wednesday, April 11, 2018 at 6:00pm with Council President Dorothy Granger presiding over the Special Session of the Common Council.

COMMON COUNCIL
SPECIAL SESSION
April 11, 2018

Roll Call: Ruff, Sturbaum, Chopra, Piedmont-Smith, Granger, Volan, Sandberg, Sims, Rollo
Members Absent: None

ROLL CALL [6:04pm]

Council President Dorothy Granger gave a summary of the agenda.

AGENDA SUMMATION [6:04pm]

Councilmember Steve Volan gave a brief summary of the history of Bloomington, attached hereto.

RESOLUTION [6:37pm]

Volan moved and it was seconded that Resolution 18-07 be introduced. The motion was approved by voice vote.

Resolution 18-07- To Recognize the Bicentennial of the City of Bloomington, Indiana.

Volan read the legislation by title and synopsis and urged the Council to support the resolution.

Councilmember Allison Chopra thanked Volan for his presentation and hard work.

Council Comment:

Evelyn Powers spoke in support of the resolution and reminded the Council that there were at least six other towns in the United States named Bloomington.

Public Comment:

Elizabeth Ann "Betty" Bridgwaters spoke about the history of Bloomington.

Councilmember Isabel Piedmont-Smith clarified that the building in the slideshow was Franklin Hall.

Council Comment:

Volan thanked Ms. Bridgwaters for her comments and spoke more about the history of the city. He thanked everyone who came that evening.

Councilmember Chris Sturbaum said that the past smelled bad, and explained a bit about how the square was structured.

Councilmember Jim Sims spoke about the importance of knowing the city's history in order to provide context for where it would go in the future. He spoke about the importance of social justice and equity.

Vauhxx Booker spoke in favor of the resolution and said there were still issues to be addressed. He noted that he and members of the group Black Lives Matter were ready to disrupt every City Council meeting until the issue of a recent police vehicle purchase was resolved.

Additional Public Comment:

Piedmont-Smith spoke about her personal history in Bloomington and said that there was some way to go but that the city had made good progress.

Additional Council Comment:

The motion to adopt Resolution 18-07 received a roll call vote of Ayes: 9, Nays: 0, Abstain: 0.

Vote on Resolution 18-07 [6:35pm]

Mayor Hamilton made brief remarks and presented the Bicentennial Proclamation to the Council.

PROCLAMATION BY MAYOR JOHN HAMILTON

There were no changes to the council schedule.

COUNCIL SCHEDULE [6:40pm]

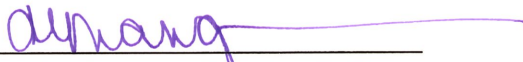
The meeting was adjourned at 6:40pm.

ADJOURNMENT

APPROVED by the Common Council of the City of Bloomington, Monroe County, Indiana upon this
18th day of April, 2018.

APPROVE:

ATTEST:



Dorothy Granger, PRESIDENT
Bloomington Common Council



Nicole Bolden, CLERK
City of Bloomington

Bicentennial Speech by Councilmember Steve Volan

Introduction

- The objective of this ceremony is to briefly observe the history of this city. Therefore, what you are about to hear is a brief, 10-minute presentation of Bloomington only as an incorporated place. It comes from a record that is incomplete in both continuity and in equity.
- We gain a second sight from hindsight. We see the huge blind spots our predecessors had. There is no clear record of African-Americans present at the founding of the city, and of women, almost none. We know there were already settlers, mostly of European descent, in close quarters in this area. Those men formed a government, because only men, of a certain color, could vote or hold office. And before that there were the original inhabitants, the only true native people of this land, who were either fought against, negotiated with, or forced out of, this place. Those who recorded the events of that time, did not think to acknowledge everyone. For reasons that you know.
- I want to take the opportunity of this day to acknowledge all those who came before us, not just those who were officially recorded. We have been forced to work with what we have, but let these records which have come to us not be the only history told of this place.

1818: Bloomington's establishment

- Bloomington was founded on this day two centuries ago. It was a Saturday on which met, for the second time, the newly formed Board of Commissioners of Monroe County.
- Their first meeting was the day before, at the house of one Abner Blair. On their first day, they barely began the task of governing. First, they noted which commissioners got the most votes in the first commissioner election. Bartlett Woodward, Michael Buskirk, and James Parks received, in order of votes earned, a 3-year-, 2-year, and 1-year term, respectively.
- The first commissioners then named three people to offices, which were not yet elected: the first county clerk, William Lowe. Second, "On motion the Court ordered that Captain James Bigger be appointed Lister," whom we today would call the first "assessor," "for the year 1818 for the County of Monroe...." And third, "On motion the court ordered that Roderick Rollings be appointed treasurer." Because they did not yet have a justice system, or judges, the minutes of the Commissioners from that day refer to themselves as "the Court." "On motion the Court adjourn[ed]" to the next morning.
- This is how a government is created from scratch. Yesterday, the county had a party at the Courthouse to observe the anniversary of that first meeting.
- The next day, Saturday, April 11, the Commissioners made seven more motions before finally, with their twelfth-ever act, recording on page two of their Record Book A in florid cursive handwriting: "On motion the court ordered that the seat of justice for Monroe County be known and distinguished by the name of Bloomington."
- At the third meeting, Monday, April 13, "the board ordered the Town of Bloomington be laid off by the Agent of this County." They then ordered the county agent "to advertise the lots (in the town of Bloomington) for sale on Monday the 22nd day of June" in papers around southern Indiana.
- At the fourth meeting, Tuesday, April 14, "On motion of Bartlett Woodward, ordered that the Agent of this county procure one barril of whiskie and have it at the sale of town lots in Bloomington." The money from the sale of that land funded county government for many years. As much as Monroe County created Bloomington, the reverse is true.
- The County ran its county seat at first. Bloomington did not have its own government -- separate from the County -- until later. Before that came IU.

1820: IU

- IU did not start with Bloomington. The state constitution did not allow it to begin before 1820. IU has been celebrating its bicentennial for some years now; I'm sure in two years they'll have a big bash. But students weren't attending classes at IU until 1825 for sure. IU would not have its first graduation until 1830, and then for only four students, who were aged 18, 19, 23 and 28, respectively.

1827: First incorporation

- The first referendum on making Bloomington an incorporated town was held March 5, 1827. Eighteen voted for it and three against. We know there were at least 500 people in town at the time, so it's safe to say that even then, voter turnout was low. Five trustees were elected, "...but for lack of unison and general interest in the new incorporation the municipality soon died out."

1845: Second incorporation

- An act incorporating Bloomington would not take effect until 1845, when one was approved by the governor. By March 1847, when the first town election was held, the city's population was around 1200, and IU had about 70 students. John Lawrence was the first mayor; Robert Acuff, recorder; Asher Labertew, who was signatory to the 1827 incorporation, treasurer; David B. Judah, marshal; W.M. Smith, Samuel Kirk, J. M. Howe, John Graham and Joseph G. McPheeters, councilmen.
- First council meeting March 6, 1847: appointed a committee to draft ordinances and ordered record books. At the next meeting, sixteen ordinances were passed, one of which effectively taxed dogs. It was so unpopular it was repealed five months later. The first town tax was passed the next January, of ten cents on each hundred dollars for town purposes. That was never repealed.

1853: Railroad

- The railway came to town in 1853 — the Louisville, New Albany & Chicago, or the LNA&C. Supposedly it stood for the "Long, Narrow, Awkward & Crooked." Nevertheless, it was one of the most important events in the city's history, improving transportation in and out of town and changing the way, and the places, where everyone lived and did business.

1858: Dissolution and Reincorporation

- After a decade of mostly street building and other town improvements, some people had had enough. On January 10, 1858, there was an election to determine, "Shall the corporation be dissolved?" The vote was: For keeping the corporation, 101, Against, 115. a 55-45 margin. "[Some of] The property of the defunct town government was... turned over to the county auditor for some future municipality, while other amounts were paid back in way of taxes already paid in." (1914, p. 387)
- Although it isn't clear how from the record, Bloomington reincorporated the next year and stayed incorporated.

1866: First attempt to convert to city

- A referendum on whether the town should become a city was first held in 1866. The vote was overwhelmingly for: 178-93. But the town had 513 eligible voters, For some reason — maybe because it was not a majority of all eligible voters — the outcome was considered insufficient to make the change.

1867: The streets of Bloomington: changed no later than this date

- Sometime around this same time, the town changed the names of its streets, Council minutes between 1864 and 1867 have been lost, but we have maps and records of what the streets of Bloomington used to be called.
- The square's four sides were North, West, South and East Main Street, respectively.
- One block north of the Square was Water Street. One block south was Washington.
- West of the Square were Poplar, Cherry, and Spring. And East were Walnut, Blue and Buck. This latter street is not a proud moment in our history; It was one of the least developed parts of town, and the area where African-Americans, who were about 5% of the population, were forced to live.

1876: City

- Finally, at the time of the nation's centennial, in July 1876, 217 citizens signed a petition to once again become a city. The population had increased to 2404, the enrollment at IU to 132. The referendum prevailed by only 184 to 169, but apparently no longer was a majority of all voters required to approve, because Bloomington has been a city ever since. The first mayor of the city was C.W. Henderson. The first city council meeting was held Sept. 13.

Since 1876

- Bloomington has grown steadily, every decade, since 1818. It's now the seventh largest city in Indiana. IU burned and moved from the south to the east side. Its enrollment is at 43,000 and since WWII has been at least half the population of the city. The train track is a bike trail now; cars are everywhere, and the city is at least an order of magnitude bigger than it was when the first plots were sold off to people with shots of whiskey. (We'll be celebrating that event June 22.)
- But we have been late to diversify. We've had 25 city mayors. Only two have been women: the first, Mary Alice Dunlap in 1962.
- Twenty-six clerks have served since 1876. The first woman to be elected city clerk was Vanna Thrasher in 1935. The first African-American city clerk is the 26th and most recent, the current clerk, Nicole Bolden.

- The city council swung wildly between five members and eleven, between 1-year terms and 5-year, finally settling on nine members and four-year terms in 1971. We've had 207 city councilmembers since 1876. Only 17 have been women, the first, Agnes Woolery in 1948. Only two have been African-American, the first Paul Swain in 1992. The other, Jim Sims, is also our 207th member.

Conclusion

- Mayor Hamilton, my fellow Councilmembers, we are 200 today. This is one bare-bones history of how local government evolved, which does so much more now than it did, but because there is so much more to do. May we find that by our tricentennial, the histories told of Bloomington be ever broader, and tell of a city that is as inclusive as it is prosperous. Thank you.