



**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.

MINUTES

18 July 2019, 6:00 PM
City Hall—Hooker Conference Room 245, North Morton Street

1. Call to order and quorum confirmation
2. Introductions
 - Present: Erica Walker, Andrea Webster, Ryan Clemens, Lindsey Hummel, Matt Caldie, David Parkhurst, Don Eggert, Kate Corcoran (intern), Linda Thompson (liaison) Lauren Travis, representing the Bloomington Commission on Sustainability (BCOS) Heather Reynolds and Erin Hatch, representing the Environmental Resilience Institute (ERI) Kristina Lindborg, representing the League of Women Voters of Bloomington-Monroe County
 - Absent: Andrew Guenther, Mike Litwin, Chris Ericson
3. Approval of minutes
 - David moved to approve April and June minutes simultaneously, Andrea seconded. Unanimous voice vote in favor of approving April and June minutes. Minutes approved.
4. Public comment: Limit 5 minutes per person
 - David Parkhurst made a comment on behalf of Richard Durisen, who was a guest speaker with the Citizen's Climate Lobby at the EC meeting in February. Richard would like to know if we sent the letter about the climate carbon fee & dividend bill to city council and Linda confirms that we have. Richard would like to know if we have heard anything back from city council. Linda says we haven't heard back, but she will check back on it herself.
5. Presentation: Heather Reynolds, Green Infrastructure Inventory project
 - Summary of the project: The Urban Green Infrastructure Inventory & Analysis working group for the city of Bloomington has been formed by the Environmental Resilience Institute (ERI), with the rationale to preserve the resilience of communities and their abilities to function in the face of disturbances and shocks. Green infrastructure has great capability to do this. Urban green infrastructure is defined by this project as greenspace managed for ecosystem services. The project will catalog urban green infrastructure in six categories: urban forest, food gardens, green drainage, greenways and trails, parks, and green roofs. The goal is to create a greenspace to green

infrastructure inventory. The output will be a GIS based data platform with different layers for different forms of green infrastructure (urban forest, food gardens, green drainage, greenways and trails, parks, and green roofs) and data layers including layers with climate change data, high heat data, impermeable surfaces data, etc., and social layers as well, such as income, to map equity issues. ERI will work with many partners in creating the green infrastructure inventory, including the Environmental Commission, COB Utilities, Planning & Transportation, and Parks & Recreation. Some things that the project will include are already digitized, but other data needs to be collected in the field with GPS. Ultimately, ERI would like to make this project something that citizens can upload to in the future, crowdsourcing for new features and additions.

- Questions:
 - o David: Is Davey's tree survey including private lands? That would be useful for area cover and canopy cover. Heather: No, but it is cataloging all street trees and trees in parks.
 - o Don: Are there any green walls in Bloomington? Heather: there are parking garages that are trying this, but not a lot more that we know of.
 - o Erica: Will this research lead to recommendations? Heather: Yes, this will be published on a public platform for researchers and planners and the general public, and would be useful in strategizing about where green infrastructure placement would be most useful.
 - o David: With regards to private gardens, Bloomington Food Policy Council data from previous years might be helpful. Erin says they are aware of the map and dataset but it is somewhat incomplete. Lauren says Bloomington Sustainability Department will be gathering data for a map of private gardens as well.
 - o Andrea: What counts as a greenway? What about something like the B-line? Heather: Greenway is a broad term, including linear greenspace or land that is intentionally preserved to connect. B-line counts, even though it is mostly paved downtown, because of the green features around it.
 - o Andrea: How does Bloomington handle vacant lots? Do they become city property, and would they be included? Linda: we don't have many vacant lots here. Heather: It's good to keep the vacant lots on the radar and think of how they fit in and if they could be used strategically. Baltimore's vacant lot program serves as a good example.
 - o Heather: What do you all think of the minimum lot size? Ryan: It might not be a size issue, but maybe based on how much water the area or feature can potentially drain.
 - o David: Do lawns count as greenspace? Heather: yes, if they're grass.
 - o Andrea: What about the lawn patches around the courthouse in town square, for example? Heather: yes. These are like pocket parks.
 - o Ryan: Is a lawn "green infrastructure"? Because a lawn is not purposefully put in explicitly to mitigate stormwater, even though it does. Heather: as it provides the service, it is.
 - o Andrea: Schools are included as part of public? Heather: yes.
 - o Andrea: Green downtown mini-planters should be counted because they do help, if not so much with stormwater drainage rather with heat island effect mitigation, and it would help if there were more of them. Heather: Downtown might have it's own sliding scale to count more of these.

- o Erica: Thank you, keep us informed so we can help and support you.

6. Reports from TC, MoCo EC, BCOS, ERAC, & MPO

- TC, Lindsey: UDO consultants are wrapping up their round of edits, and TC looked at the UDO selection of approved natives and non-natives and discussed ways in the future to make it easier for people to amend those species lists. Davey inventory will finish around the end of the month. Bloomington's Urban Forester, Lee, is leaving and his job has been posted on the city website. Lee is excited because the new forester will have new funds to use in their job. Lindsey sent out the TC meeting minutes if commissioners would like to read more.
- MoCo: On recess.
- BCOS, Don: BCOS had two meetings since we last had ours. Discussion of bettering cooperation and communication between commissions. Discussion that was parallel to some of our own discussions about outreach. Voted for new officers last week to fill spots of those that are leaving.
 - o Lauren: New chair is Chris Reinhart. There are four vacancies, and some applications have come in. BCOS is looking for more diversity. If you have anyone in mind encourage them to apply. Lacking are those in business and private sector. The Indiana Climate Summit is going on in September in Goshen, IN and BCOS is putting together a delegation to attend, would like an EC commissioner to join.
- ERAC, David: forgot to say from last meeting that Elizabeth Thompkins is retiring and he doesn't yet know who will replace her, will report in next meeting.
- MPO, Ryan: Citizens Advisory Committee: Only update at the moment is that Bloomington transit has completed it's route optimization study. Within the next couple of months we can expect opportunities for public comment on the route optimization study. Routes will be less circuitous, and instead will go from one destination to another in a way that results in less emissions. The study is also looking at demand and ridership. Ridership has increased until almost last year, and has begun to decrease, which prompted the study. The MPO advisory committee is on summer recess and will not meet next month.

7. Discussion from Environmental Commission working groups **B Cycle**

~~A Cycle~~

~~A. ECPC/Planning Commission~~

~~B. Waste/Hazards~~

~~C. Water~~

B Cycle

A. Outreach : nothing to report

B. ECPC/Planning Commission

1. Parking garage: we have not seen the revisions for that yet.
2. Variance to allow a change of use in the medical district, on 1st street right by the hospital. Had been a medical office but now owner want to lease it to "Advancing Eco-agriculture", a mail order business that mails out agricultural products. Not a warehouse, but people on the phone. ECPC probably will not write a memo because there is no environmental element. The building will remain an office building.
3. Moores Pike Apartments: We have seen this site many times but there has been a change. It is located on Moores Pike, east of College Mall road and east of the long term care facility Redbud Hills and the theater.

It is a long, narrow lot. The back of the lot abuts the strip mall with Hobby Lobby. It is a wooded lot in back and it is a conservation area. They will put a path through the wooded lot for people from Redbud hills to access strip mall. It will be 80 units, 4 stories, 48 two bedroom units and 32 one bedroom units.

4. Hilltop Meadow/Hilltop Court Apartments: Located on Allen St. behind Best Beers. They want to change from a PUD back to Residential High Density zone. 11 apt buildings with 48 efficiency units, 24 one bedroom units, 32 two bedroom units, and 10 three bedroom units. Plans are to include community gardens as well as solar panels and green roofs. They will have walking path around the whole complex so tenants will have access to a half mile walking trail. It is being developed by the same developer that built Park South, which has solar panels and green roofing.
Don: What sort of rent structure will this have? How will this effect affordable housing?
5. Hayes Market: On 6th street by Bloomingfoods, the building that says Curry Brothers. Want to remodel it to have office space on the first floor and apartments on the top floors, and then another new building of apartments for a parking lot that is on the site, with a private courtyard in between.



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C. Biodiversity: nothing to report



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8. Old business

A. Update on green infrastructure project, Kate

- Heather covered the project thoroughly in her presentation. Right now, we are trying to finalize a letter to send to property owners requesting their permission to enter their property and collect data and GIS coordinates of green infrastructure features for mapping.

9. New business

A. Discussion of leaf blowers

- Linda: There is a citizen that wants to do something about how noisy and polluting leaf blowers are. There are no definitive plans yet. In other towns they are regulated, which is something to consider. Leaf blowers are often used to blow grass cuttings into the street and into drains, which isn't good.
- Lauren: Indianapolis is looking into using solar powered leaf blowers, so when one needs to be replaced it's something to look into.
- Ryan: Leaf blowers also blow lots of particulate matter into the air, which is an air quality issue. Our current noise pollution regulations are only applicable at night.
- Andrea: can we get lawnmowers into this too? Linda: other cities haven't gone after those because there aren't good alternatives - electric lawnmowers exist but aren't reasonable for use by the city. Something to look into.
- Erica: Has the EC ever written a memo to a city department about this? Public works, parks, and utilities all may use leaf blowers. Linda: nothing comes to mind but nothing would prohibit us from doing that. Green team could do that too. Lauren: I can bring it up at Green Team which has representation of all departments.
- Andrea: the city of Louisville air control district has incentives that encourage homeowners to turn in their old gas powered blowers and lawnmowers, it might be something to look into too.

10. Commissioner announcements

- Matt: my dad recently purchased an electric mower, and when he told the store owner that he was looking for an electric mower the store owner was surprised and told him he was the first to ask for that. Dad told them to prepare because more people will be coming in to purchase them.
- David: Would like to add to the agenda for August that I will write a letter to the city council to ask if they are doing anything with regards to the Climate Lobby letter we sent before, to follow up. Will write it to Dave. (Linda will check first to see if he got the original letter, it might have been sent at a time when Dave was occasionally unavailable.)

- Don: Curious to find out more about green walls and will look into it if people are interested.
- Lindsey: If you know an urban forester who would like a job, encourage them to apply to the city.
- Andrea: there is a monthly webinar series the second Monday of every month on topics relevant to cities preparing for climate change. She will send that around to the commission.
- Lauren: lots going on. Greenhouse gas inventory is finishing up and a lot of data will be coming in. We want to come back with how to communicate with the public and share findings and communicate progress. Also working on getting a local food film screening in September at Buskirk Chumley. Andrea: can we get a presentation between BCOS and EC on the greenhouse gas inventory? Lauren: Yes.
- Ryan: green drinks at Upland's event space (in back of parking lot) is a monthly event and they are meetings next Wednesday (July 24th) from 5:30-7:30 talking about redistricting reform in Indiana and how it relates to green issues, would be interesting for our group to go have representation there. Think it is usually the 4th Wednesday of the month. Ryan will be there only if it raining.
- Linda: The planning staff received the new version of the UDO last Thursday afternoon, and staff has until next Tuesday to finish editing it. It is 485 pages. Linda has been consumed by this work. Sometime in the first part of August there should be a public draft called the "Adoption draft".
- Kate: I tracked our UDO comments to see if they resulted in any changes to this draft, and I will share when the public version comes out.
- Erica: nothing

11. Adjournment at 7:55pm

Next EC meeting, 15 August, 6:00 p.m., Hooker Room, City Hall