



**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

20 February 2020, 6:00 PM
Hooker Conference Room, Showers City Hall

1. Call to order and quorum confirmation
2. Introductions
 - Present: Mike Litwin; David Parkhurst; Matt Caldie; Don Eggert; Andrea Webster; Suzannah Evans Comfort; Linda Thompson, liaison; Jesus Rivera, EC intern; Kate Corcoran, SPEA Fellow
 - Kristina Lindborg, representing the League of Women Voters of Bloomington-Monroe County; Becky Holtzman, Hopewell Group
 - Absent: Andrew Guenther, chair; Meredith Dickerson; Shelby Hoshaw
3. Approval of minutes
 - Mike moved to approve January minutes. Suzannah seconded. Unanimous voice vote in favor of approving January minutes. Minutes approved.
4. Public comment: Limit 5 minutes per person
 - Becky Holtzman, Hopewell Group: Hopewell is an organization advocating for ecological considerations at and around the old hospital site. It is composed of residents from several neighborhoods abutting the area. Becky originally spoke to the Tree Committee, where Dave directed her to EC. Hopewell residents feel there has been little public process and that their input has gone largely unconsidered. According to IU evaluations, there is approximately \$150,000 worth of environmental benefit in the area; Becky will forward the report to Mike so it may be considered by the EC as a whole. Hopewell hopes to receive an affirmation in support of preservation from the EC. Additionally, there might be historic significance for the trees as some have been planted in honor of donors and patients. The core hospital building is also being considered for historic preservation.
 - Maggie Sullivan, Friends of Lake Monroe (FOLM): A new effort to develop a watershed management plan has begun. It is largely funded by a Section 319 Grant; this originates from the 1987 amendments to the Clean Water Act and is being administered by IDEM. Development of the plan will take approximately two years, which will include a clear plan of action for achieving water quality goals. Input from FOLM, a steering committee, a watershed coordinator, and other stakeholders will be considered. A handful of government organizations have interests in Lake Monroe, so their feedback will also be crucial. There was much support for developing the plan on behalf of many parties. The project has the following components: a watershed inventory, quality monitoring, education and outreach, data analysis, and goal-setting. Lake Monroe's watershed is

largely in Brown County and atypical because it is largely forested. The watershed will be divided into 16 smaller segments; a lot of support in monitoring quality will come from the SPEA limnology lab. Two water quality blitz events will take place to collect samples; volunteers are needed and information is available through friendsoflakemonroe.org. Some classroom sessions will take place as part of the education component and the IU Media School will produce PSAs. IU is also developing a water fund to help with improvement projects in the watershed. Two public forums were held with collaboration from the League of Women Voters. As data have been collected from feedback, concerns are identified and problem statements are created. From there, models and estimates are produced. The biggest challenge for FOLM has been getting public buy-in; a watershed tour will take place in June.

Andrea: DNR is updating watershed boundaries for the state over the next two years. The National Institute of Applied Climate Science has an adaptation workbook worth reviewing.

5. Reports from TC, MoCo EC, BCOS, ERAC, MPO-CAC, & FOLM

- TC: Dave: Students proposed two new trails in the city; Dave will share the maps. TC will continue working with Urban Forester to learn what the role does in other cities and bring best practices to Bloomington. The new tree inventory which should provide some direction for Erin's work. Dave mentioned tree equity, which asserts that more tree coverage is present in urban spaces where houses are more valuable. Therefore, minorities suffer disproportionately. Dave proposed to evaluate this problem in December. He has partnered with peers at SPEA and it seems research will get underway soon by a post-doc fellow.
- MoCo EC: No update
- BCOS: No update. Don attended invasive plant species group; awareness needs to be improved.
- ERAC: Dave: ERAC discussed results of a program to cull deer with the help of volunteers near Griffey Lake. For an area of its size, the desirable number of deer is 10; there are currently between 50 and 70 (a rough estimate). Instead of sharpshooters, they coordinated a hunt with approximately 30 hunters that passed a marksmanship exam. The cull took place over three weekends, but two had inclement weather. About 26 deer were culled. There are reports of aquatic life dying in Leonard Springs; an assessment is underway to determine the causes of this. The Cascades trail will be ready soon; there was discussion about how to best use the road adjacent to the stream.
- MPO-CAC: No update
- FOLM: See notes above from report by Maggie Sullivan.

6. Discussion from Environmental Commission working groups: A **Cycle**

A Cycle

A. ECPC/Planning Commission

- Linda: Plan Commission agenda will be occupied in the coming weeks as the Fourth Street and Trades District garages are on the agenda. The plans for the Fourth Street garage will hopefully be presented to the EC soon. A Bloomington zoning conversion map is also on the agenda for the Plan Commission; more information to come. The Kiln is a proposed development just north of the Dimension Mill. The current structure has one story; the proposal calls for adding two more with a deck on the second floor. It is a co-op of local owners and the space is intended to house tech companies. There will likely be a maximum height variance, but the architect supports green projects. There was interest in making a green building but details have yet to be shared; emphasis was given to planting native species.

B. ~~Waste/Hazards~~

C. ~~Water~~

B Cycle

A. Outreach

B. ECPC/Planning Commission

~~C. Biodiversity~~

7. Old business

A. Update report on green infrastructure project

- Kate: Met with Samantha Hamlin to discuss state of the project. Their team appreciates work in mapping detention ponds. Much still needs to be done before they have all the necessary information and the project is complete. Kate also discussed green infrastructure grants for homeowners. Samantha's team was curious to know if Kate was researching projects not specifically requested by the commission.

B. Eco Heroes update

- Kate: Eco Heroes is progressing well. Outreach to public, private, and homeschool teachers is well underway. Fliers have been distributed across town and prospective donors have already been identified and contacted.
- Linda: We have already confirmed the Mayor will be in attendance.

8. New business

A. Green Ribbon Committee letter

- Andrea: There is concern over the timing of the letter. Specifically, it may be better to wait for the local income tax initiative to pass. The tax will likely be passed by June. Since the EC's role is to advise the Mayor, perhaps requesting a seat on the Green Ribbon committee might inadvertently express mistrust. Instead, it might be better to request the ability to advise and consent on the composition of the committee.
- Suzannah: It was unclear if it would be an EC commissioner that would sit in on Green Ribbon Committee meetings.
- Mike: Further consideration of the Green Ribbon Committee letter should take place next at next month's meeting.

B. 2019 annual report

- Linda: Will make arrangements with City Council to present the annual report.
- Commissioners will send revisions to Andrew. Letter will be reconsidered in March meeting.
- Andrea: Perhaps it would be possible to get a presentation on the review of Green Infrastructure at a future meeting.
- Kate: An update at a later meeting is definitely a possibility.

C. Outreach opportunities (Earth Day event, Farmers' Market, Garden Fair, Bug Fest, SNAYL Day)

- Linda: Placed these opportunities on the agenda because they require much planning ahead of time. Andrew suggested creating an outreach working group to achieve visibility at the Farmers Market.
- Don, Suzannah, and Matt volunteered to be on the outreach committee. Don further volunteered to begin organizing.
- Linda: In past years, EC tabled to spread awareness about native plantings, but there is no set agenda. It is generally just a good forum to spread information to the public and enhance awareness.
- Don: It would be helpful for the public to be more aware of the city's work on the environment and climate change. Bridging the gap between the EC and residents would be ideal.
- Mike: An outreach committee would be good public relations for the EC.
- Andrea: Andrea will take responsibility for reaching out to the Herald Times and develop a general outreach process.

- Don: It would be worth asking the Winter Market to get a head-start on tabling.
- D. Comments to CEQ regarding proposed changes to NEPA
- Mike: Proposes discussion on sending letter to CEQ.
 - David proposes motion to send letter to CEQ. Mike seconds. Unanimous voice vote in favor. The motion is approved.
 - Suzannah: If any commissioner sees another similar opportunity to conduct proactive outreach like the letter, they should seize it.

9. Commissioner announcements

- Don: Fires are finally extinguished in Australia. The rains that put them out have caused catastrophic flooding. Regrettably, much of this could have been mitigated. Don continues to do volunteer work with Parks and helps distribute kits designed to help curb the Asian honeysuckle, an invasive species.
- Kate: Taking an applied GIS course through SPEA. Kate is undertaking an update to the greenspace report. There may some challenges matching layers, but work has just begun. More information to follow.
- Linda: Meredith Dickerson and Shelby Hoshaw have been appointed as EC Commissioners by Common Council. Their terms expire January 2022.
- Matt: Read report on gas-powered blowers and curbing their usage. This creates a question because gas-powered blowers are broadly practical but environmentally unfriendly. Limiting personal home usage is very appealing, but doing the same for commercial applications may prove challenging. An exception may be needed if support for a ban gains traction. Perhaps meetings should begin with an approval of the agenda, so ad-hoc matters may be included.
- Mike: Began outreach to residents that might be interested in serving on EC. Received interest from a peer at Sycamore Land Trust. Prospective commissioner will reach out to Linda.

10. Adjournment at 7:37pm

Next EC meeting, 12 March 6:00 p.m., Hooker Room, City Hall