



**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

21 May 2020, 6:00 PM
ZOOM meeting

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Meeting ID: 955 5836 5406

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1. Call to order and quorum confirmation

- Present: Andrew Guenther, chair; Meredith Dickerson; Shelby Hoshaw, Mike Litwin; David Parkhurst; Matt Caldie; Don Eggert; Andrea Webster; Daniel Olsson, Linda Thompson, liaison; Jesus Rivera, EC intern; Kate Corcoran, EC intern
- Absent: Suzannah Evans Comfort

2. Presentation: Tom Coleman, new library site at Batchelor Middle School

The school board has agreed to sell a parcel of the Batchelor Middle School property for a branch of the library. The property contains 5.9 acres of forest that was planted by Monroe County kids back over an 11 year period between 1999-2010. Kids planted over 5,000-6,000 seedlings. The library wants to use an area 2/3 of this site (or 4,000 trees) on that site. There is another site on the property they could use for this building and other amenities without cutting down any trees. Many local figures are worried about this development. Mr. Coleman is asking for our help in convincing the school board and library to pick a different site. Trees will be cut down to construct an environmental learning area in addition to the main library building.

- Mike: The TC minutes said the library didn't know about forest before purchasing the land. What about now?
- Tom: No one from the library visited site before purchase. Tom attended the meeting where the purchase was made and was allowed to speak after the purchase was made.
- Mia Williams: I was involved in some of the plantings back in 1999-2010. I was on site. My thoughts are exactly in alignment with yours. The investment of time that comes with planting trees is an important part of building a forest. Herman B Wells called the unnecessary taking of a tree an act of treason. Those before us invested in planting to build the urban forest we have, so when decisions like this are made without visiting the site, they should be revisited.

- Dave: I invited Tom hoping that we would at least write a letter to the county commissioners, library board, and school board. Maybe we could also write an HT letter?
- Tom: We used to meet with someone who is no longer at HT. We would like to meet with someone else at HT.
- Mike: Have you checked with county EC as well?
- Tom: Not yet. I am in touch with some folks at the county that seem supportive but nothing official.
- Linda: The new Monroe County EC chair is named Nolan Hendon. If you want I can pass along his email address. Also, another question: How do you know that nobody looked at the site beforehand?
- Tom: I asked people at the meeting, and no one said they had seen the site, including the architect.
- Randy Paul: I served on the library board for 4 years and am not surprised about what I'm hearing. Where are we in the process? Can it be stopped? I have seen the library board reverse decisions in the past. What can we do to help?
- Tom: At the meeting where they made purchase, I was told it could not be reversed.
- Linda: Their plans have not been approved yet though.
- Randy: I find that very alarming. I also think the editor of the Beacon, Dave Askins, would be interested in covering this and has a following, especially from some in government who would be interested to know about this.
- Tom: If you think of anything else at all let me know.

3. Introductions

- Andrew: Chair of EC, recent SPEA grad with a BS in Sustainable Development. In September of 2018 joined the EC. Served on the Monroe County EC for 3 years & served as VP there. Loves how in Bloomington there are so many opportunities to be green, sustainable, and love the environment
- Linda: Sr Environmental Planner at P&T and liaison coordinator for EC. Has been in position for 16 years. Degree in Geology and previously worked for Dept of Nat Resources. EC is a main focus for her because it has been so successful. If any new members have questions or concerns, let Linda know.
- Dave: Grad work in plant ecology from the University of Wisconsin. Came to Bloomington in 1973 and joined EC in 1974, and recently rejoined the EC after being away for a while. Represents EC on TC and is on ERAC. Taught at SPEA 1973 to 2006 and retired 14 years ago. Likes all the gardens around Bloomington.
- Mike: Fishery biologist background. Worked for US F&WS in Bloomington, retired 7 years ago. Grad work at University of TX. Decided to move to Bloomington 40 years ago. Small town with a lot to offer and a lot of nature. Many years on EC.
- Andrea: Masters in Public Administration and MSES from Syracuse University. Worked for city of Louisville sustainability for 4 years. Now works at IU ERI. Works around the state with local governments to prepare them for climate change. Bloomington very easy to live in, walkable and feels very lucky to be here.
- Jesus: Intern. Just completed MPA. Worked with P&T past two years starting in bike/ped and moving on to EC last year. From Florida where there is no topography, but likes Bloomington hills.
- Matt: Over 3 years as a commissioner. Came to Bloomington for IU and majored in political science. Works for IU athletics facilities. Broad environmental interests but no one specialty. Once he moved here, didn't want to leave.
- Daniel Olsen: Born and raised here in Bloomington. Graduated with masters last May in information science. Works for IU tech support. Worked for Serve IT helping with E-waste management projects. Really interested in public transportation. Family lives here in Bloomington, which is something he likes.
- Meredith: Second year law student going into third year. Grew up not far from here, right by Brown County State Park. Went to Ball State for undergrad. Loves Indiana and hopes to go into energy or some type of environmental law. Excited to work with the commission.

- Regan: Graduated from IU last spring with a political science degree. Has stuck around for a year as wife finishes IU degree in Ballet. Some background studies in environmental policy and interested in how policy shapes environment in local communities. Likes the concentration on arts in Bloomington, in large part because of Jacobs School of Music.
- Shelby: Undergrad in nonprofit management. In Tanzania did some work in waste management and became interested in environmental law. On FOLM board and interested in learning more about the technical side of environmental work such as water testing, etc. Likes the outdoors options in Bloomington. Is in walking proximity of three parks. Lots of hiking.
- Jim Shelton: Was on EC 2001-2004. Now retired physicist. Liaison to county government. Here to see what this organization is doing now.
- Dedaimia: Alum of the EC as well. Here to support Tom Coleman.

4. Approval of agenda

- Dave moved to approve the agenda, Andrea seconded. Unanimous voice vote to approve agenda as written. Agenda approved.

5. Approval of minutes

- Jesus will forward February minutes and we can vote to approve at next meeting.

6. Public comment: Limit 5 minutes per person

- Dedaimia: Very worthy effort on Tom Coleman's part. Project was conceived without input from community or environmental groups and without thought to what the trees represent. Thinks it would be very helpful for the EC to write letters to the county and others.
- Randy Paul: First time I have been able to see one of your meetings. Cannot physically attend meetings in person. Others like him who would like to be informed and engaged. Restarted green party in the fall. Did not know about issue at the library. Would love for meetings to be made available remotely. History in politics and wants to put muscle back into environmental issues and climate change. Needs access to do this, and for those in disability community that means making meets more accessible like this. The library issue is one that most of the public is unaware of.
- Jim: Would like to agree with Randy. Watches lots of meetings on CATS. At county meetings there aren't a lot of people in the audience, but when they meet by Zoom there are well over 20 people involved. Better for folks with disabilities but also to increase participation all around. On Zoom people can participate, on CATS they can only watch. Would like this to continue after pandemic.

7. Reports from TC, MoCo EC, BCOS, ERAC (2/12), MPO-CAC, & FOLM

- TC, Dave: Nothing new we haven't already talked about
- MoCo EC, Andrew: Elected new chair, Nolan Hendon. Have joined as a plaintiff for Hooser National Forest lawsuit suing on behalf of Monroe county to stop the project as it impacts our drinking water. B-square Beacon covered the story. We (the EC) were asked if we were going to join as a plaintiff, and at the time Linda and I determined that it is a county issue that we have not been invited to participate in and it is best to let them handle it as plaintiffs. Excited to see further developments.
- BCOS: No update from Don
- ERAC, Dave: Sends minutes so we can all keep updated with those. The road through Cascades Park is now closed so stream can become more natural. They will also be planting some trees.
- MPO-CAC, Andrew: Updating bylaws and routine editing right now, especially as they are addressing the pandemic they are changing some policies and how they do things. Working on 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan, planning surveys for that. Replacing bridges over several creeks along 37, which may be a county issue but might be worth notifying Monroe County EC. Also doing ADA sidewalk ramp construction at 3rd street and College Mall road. May 27th is next meeting, will be held on Zoom.

- FOLM: Maggie Sullivan continuing work of coordinating 3 year research project with grant. Met on Monday and discussed how in April they were supposed to go out and look at sites all over watershed, but the event was cancelled and that study will have to be done either this fall or next year. Dave is on monitoring breakout group and they discussed how to adjust plans. 30 people on FOLM, many people on that Zoom meetings.

8. Discussion from Environmental Commission working groups: A Cycle

A Cycle

A. ECPC/Plan Commission

Nothing new this month. PC meeting for this month was cancelled because there was no new business to discuss.

B. Outreach

- HT column: Andrea published an article in March, Mike in April, and Matt today. Don will publish one in June, and then Savannah in July. The approval process Andrea drafted was sent today. Column is 600 words (letter to the editor 200 words) so we have been doing columns. The process goes: Writer sends article to EC. EC has 5 days to provide feedback. Then author has 2 days to make more changes. Then brings final version of article to EC meeting for final approval. Vote for final approval not necessary because the letter is not from EC, but from a member of EC so not representing EC views, but it is nice to be coordinated and we all have a chance to provide feedback. As an EC if there was a letter no one agreed to, the letter could still be submitted but as an individual and not as an EC member.
- Linda: A vote should be taken on the final letter if the EC is going to be mentioned at all.
- Andrea: I believe this approach is in line with the bylaws without a final vote, because again the articles are not from an EC they are from an individual.
- Linda: The articles will imply they are from the EC by mentioning the EC at all. When the EC sends something out to the public, the EC voting majority has to agree on it.
- Andrea: Carol Kugler, who coordinates columns for HT, could be contacted as a failsafe to prevent an article from being published.
- Matt: The way it has worked so far has been fine without a vote. This may be because no past articles have had any edits requested. I understand the need for a vote in general because I see how having member of the EC implies that it is from the whole EC.
- Andrew: Afraid of being in a situation where we assume consent of the group and publish something without full consent of the group. Wish we could make this process faster but I think we do have to be a little bit cautious to avoid making any missteps.
- Andrea: I need to hand this task off of coordinating the HT articles to another EC member.
- Andrew: I will do it, but I want to leave the opportunity open to others that are interested in helping out before I take it up.
- Andrea: Suzannah may also be interested, although she isn't here tonight.
- Andrew: Don as well. I will send out an email to see if anyone else is interested.
- Andrea: Hasn't been much work, maybe 15 minutes a week.
- Meredith: I can write the article for August. Thank you Andrea for all your work on this, it is a cool introduction to what the EC does. The articles are educational right?
- Andrea: Yes, the way we've written it articles should be related to environmental protection. Education and advocacy are both open content, related to the protection of Bloomington's natural environment.
- Matt: Also keeping it timely and relevant to something currently happening in Bloomington will make it more likely to be published. Current events help our cause.

- Randy Paul: If your articles haven't been controversial before, they may be some time in the future and you will want the whole commission behind it. For example, publishing something about the library cutting down 4,000 trees.

C. ~~Water~~

~~B. Cycle~~

~~A. Outreach~~

~~B. ECPC/Plan Commission~~

~~C. Biodiversity~~

9. Old business

10. New business

A. Letter regarding library site and tree coverage

- Andrew: Curious as to how this being county business impacts what we can and should do.
- Linda: We can send a letter. Neighbors write letters all the time and there is no reason we couldn't write a letter to the Plan Commission stating our point of view. We need some more information and we need to look at the development plan.
- Dave: The letter we write should go to county commission, library board, and school board.
- Linda: I assume the group that will make the decision is the county plan commission, and our letter would be in their packet for their monthly meeting.
- Dave: I would like to write this letter, with Tom's help.
- Linda: In the meantime, we will work on gathering more information on the actual plan. We want to see how the plan is set and who is the deciding factor. I can contact someone from the Monroe County planning department to find out more.
- Matt: I also have a lot of questions. Going through the library website I can see a tentative schedule including a purchase of a site on the Batchelor property, without more information about the plans or size of that purchase.
- Randy: I believe both the city and county will have a say on this, might want to double check on this.
- Andrew: Would be a good ECPC project for whoever wants to chip in to help find more background information. I will work with Linda and anyone else to make some phone calls and emails to see what we can find. We need to do this prior to submitting a letter. For example, I want to know if they have done an environmental impact assessment and if so what that says. I would love to submit a letter in early June, so we need to start gathering information now so we can source information in our letter.

11. Commissioner announcements

- Andrew: What I covered in MoCo EC report with their lawsuit. In the 3 years I served, we were never able to do anything as exciting as that. Glad they are participating in that process.
- Mike: Has sent a couple emails to the EC recently, nothing beyond that.
- Andrea: I have really enjoyed working on this group and I have learned a lot and felt I have been able to contribute. It's been fun and I wish you all the best.
- David: It was fun going for two hives worth of bees today. We ended up with a dozen bees flying around in the car. It was an interesting afternoon.
- Jesus: I sent new members a copy of EC book.
- Meredith: Nice to meet you. Andrea good luck in NC and David good luck with the bees.

- Matt: MC IRIS reached out to him to say not to hesitate in contacting them to collaborate in the future because of the HT article. SNAIL day will be in webinar form this Saturday morning 10-11:30, May 23rd.

12. Adjournment at 7:42pm

Next EC meeting: June 18, 6:00 p.m., location to be determined