

BLOOMINGTON COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCE

MINUTES

BLOOMINGTON COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCE

McCloskey Conference Room (Room 135), City Hall
401 N Morton St, Bloomington, IN 47404

Regular Meeting, Tuesday, September 8, 2026

APPROVED OCTOBER 13, 2026

Commissioners Present In-Person: Tara Dunderdale, Justin Vasel, Rebecca Payne, Zach Ammerman, Maria Aarstad, Diana Ogrodowski, Ross Carlson

Commissioners Present Virtually: Dave Rollo, Alex Jorck

Commissioners Absent: Christopher Miles

Staff Present: Shawn Miya

Guest Presenter: Meredith Katz, CEO and Co-founder, Retrocycle

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Justin Vasel called the meeting to order at 6:03 PM. At roll call, a quorum of 8 of 10 commissioners was present. Commissioner Jorck was attending virtually but was not recognized until after the vote on the agenda. Commissioner Miles was absent.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chair Vasel proposed moving Item 6a, Retrocycle Introduction, to follow Approval of Minutes and precede Public Comment, out of respect for the guest presenter's time. No other changes were offered.

ACTION: Commissioner Vasel moved to approve the agenda as amended. Commissioner Ammerman seconded. The motion passed by roll call vote, 8–0.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

No corrections were offered to the minutes of the July 14, 2026, regular meeting.

ACTION: Commissioner Ammerman moved to approve the minutes of the July 14, 2026, regular meeting. Commissioner Carlson seconded. The motion passed by roll call vote, 9–0.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

- **Jordan Connor** spoke in support of the Commission's letter to the Office of the Mayor regarding Flock. He expressed concern that Flock cameras remain installed with no indication of whether they are recording, noted that officials in Dayton, Ohio, and Evanston, Illinois, covered their cameras pending removal, and asked the Commission to add language to the letter proposing an immediate measure to address the cameras still in place.

- **Jami Scholl** (virtual), a former commissioner, asked the Commission to draft a resolution recommending that the City fund a food systems manager or similar position, and to encourage the Common Council to prioritize the chicken flock ordinance modification this Commission previously recommended to increase allowed flock sizes. Shawn Miya clarified that the City's previous food systems coordinator position was funded by a grant and ended when the grant was expended.
- **Ryan Webster**, chair of the Community Defense Committee, spoke about the impact of mass surveillance on the community and expressed support for the Commission's letter to the Office of the Mayor and for Mr. Connor's proposed addition. He asked that Flock not be replaced by a similar product from another vendor.
- **Thomas Westgard**, a Monroe County resident, supported the Commission's letter and spoke about the impact of mass surveillance, including documented misuse by law enforcement. He raised concerns that collected data is sent out of state and not deleted, and about a lack of notice, disclosure, accountability, and opportunity for residents to contest the use of these systems. He asked the Commission to press for greater accountability, transparency, and disclosure.

5. REPORT FROM COMMISSIONERS

a. Chair's Report (Justin Vasel)

The joint meeting with the Environmental Commission on the dark sky resolution, postponed when the Environmental Commission lacked a quorum, has been rescheduled for Tuesday, September 15, 2026, at 6:00 PM in Council Chambers. The Environmental Commission has since amended how its bylaws count quorum. Commissioners who cannot attend, or who must attend virtually, should notify the Chair. The agenda and packet will be essentially the same as for the original meeting.

The 2025 annual report is nearly complete and will be circulated to commissioners within the next week for review using a comment matrix. Proposed changes will be discussed at the next meeting.

b. Council Ex-Officio (Dave Rollo)

Council Member Rollo expressed support for removing the Flock cameras and said he believes there is broad support for removal on the Council. The Council will hold a deliberative session and community conversation on public safety on Wednesday, September 9, where surveillance cameras are expected to be discussed.

The food systems coordinator position came up during budget deliberations. Although the previous position was grant-funded, several council members support making it a permanent City position and may send a memo to the Mayor to that effect.

During review of the Animal Care and Control budget, the Council discussed deer density in the city. An aerial survey estimated an average of about 90 deer per square mile, which raises public health concerns related to ticks and tick-borne illness and makes it harder for residents to grow food.

In June, the Council adopted a resolution calling for a moratorium on artificial general intelligence and artificial superintelligence. Council Member Rollo is working with other groups to encourage other communities to adopt similar measures.

6. DISCUSSION OF TOPICS NOT THE SUBJECT OF RESOLUTIONS

a. Retrocycle Introduction (Meredith Katz, Retrocycle)

This item was heard after Approval of Minutes, per the amended agenda.

Chair Vasel introduced Meredith Katz, CEO and Co-founder of Retrocycle, which is interested in making Bloomington the starting point for an Indiana rollout. He noted that the program could be a good fit for a working group grant project and an opportunity to collaborate with the Environmental Commission, the Arts Commission, the Monroe County Solid Waste Management District, Monroe County, and Indiana University. No decisions were needed at this meeting.

Ms. Katz, an IU alumna, described Retrocycle as a Colorado-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit that creates circular systems to replace disposable ones. Its first program, the Colorado Cup, is a statewide borrow-and-return system for reusable to-go cups that launched about three months ago in Breckenridge and has expanded to Frisco and Dillon. Customers pay a \$2.50 deposit, can swap a used cup for a clean one with each new drink at any participating cafe, and receive a \$2.50 discount when they return it. Cafes wash and restock the cups, and the program adds three buttons to each cafe's point-of-sale system: borrow, return, and swap. The cup-tracking map was built by students at IU's Luddy School.

- **Results to date:** About 2% of to-go drink orders at participating cafes use a reusable cup, with goals of 5% by the end of the year and 20% long term. The return rate is about 40%, compared with an expected 10%, and exceeds 75% at Breckenridge resorts. The program has eliminated more than 750 single-use cups.
- **Municipal role:** Retrocycle asks the municipality to purchase the starting case of cups for each participating cafe. Ms. Katz identified about 13 eligible cafes in Bloomington; her budget estimate covers about 10, since the program aims for at least 50% participation to create a network effect.
- **Costs:** Cups are \$2 each and lids \$0.50 each. A case of cold cups is about \$180 and a case of hot cups about \$70, with two cases of hot cups and one case of cold cups recommended per cafe. Hot lids are \$72 per case of 144, and cold lids are about \$90. Participating cafes also pay a \$45 monthly subscription that covers shipping and shared marketing.
- **Materials:** Cups are made of #5 polypropylene, rated for 1,000 uses, and ridged so no sleeve is needed. The material was chosen mainly for cost and matches that used by ReCup, a German system with about 20,000 cafes. Retrocycle is researching reusable materials; a life-cycle study with CU Boulder was inconclusive, and a stainless steel option may be considered later.

Commissioners and staff suggested contacting the Bloomington Urban Enterprise Association about funding and the IU Office of Sustainability about a materials research partnership. Commissioner Jorck expressed interest in using available grant funding to support the program and suggested "Hoosier Cup" as a name. Chair Vasel will circulate Retrocycle's cost estimates for Bloomington, and the Commission will discuss the program further at a future meeting. Ms. Katz left a sample cup with the Commission.

b. Letter to the Office of the Mayor: Update on Flock (Justin Vasel)

Chair Vasel explained that the letter follows up on Resolution 2026-02, adopted in March, which recommended that the City disable deployed cameras; disclose camera locations and data-sharing agreements; account for how collected data has been used; and provide notice to boards and commissions and an opportunity for public comment before any future surveillance technology procurement. The letter asks six questions covering the status of equipment, the status of a specific agreement, the relationship between agreements, agreements currently in effect (including for Condor pan-tilt-zoom cameras), access to the Flock Safety platform, and data disposition and replacement technology.

ACTION: Commissioner Vasel moved to approve the content and transmittal of the letter. Commissioner Ammerman seconded.

Commissioners proposed the following changes:

- In Question 1, ask what the City's plans are to cover or otherwise block the functionality of any remaining equipment until it is removed, in response to public comment.
- In Question 6, ask whether the City plans to enter into, or has entered into or begun negotiating, an agreement with another vendor for similar technology.
- Note that the questions are informed by public comment received at this meeting and by contract documents the City has released.
- Update the requested response date to October 9, 2026, so responses can be included in the packet for the October 13 meeting.

Commissioners also discussed requesting an independent third-party audit of how Flock data was accessed and used, and agreed this may be better addressed in a separate resolution after the City responds.

ACTION: Commissioner Vasel moved to amend the letter as shown on screen. Commissioner Dunderdale seconded. The motion passed by roll call vote, 9–0.

ACTION: The motion to approve the letter as amended and transmit it to the Office of the Mayor passed by roll call vote, 9–0.

c. Letter to Council: Proposed Changes to UDO re: Tree and Forest Preservation (Zach Ammerman)

Commissioner Ammerman explained that one of the proposed changes to the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), added by City staff during Plan Commission review, would exempt lots of 5,000 square feet or less in the R3 and R4 districts from all tree protection requirements. The letter asks the Council to remove this exemption, notes that the code already allows the Planning and Transportation Department to modify canopy retention requirements on small lots, and recommends that, if an exemption is retained, it apply only to canopy retention on a case-by-case basis rather than to other protections, such as protecting existing trees during construction.

ACTION: Commissioner Ammerman moved to approve the letter as written. Commissioner Aarstad seconded.

In response to questions, Commissioner Ammerman clarified that the Planning and Transportation Department already has this discretion, and that the letter would make clear that it applies to canopy retention requirements. Council Member Rollo said the Council may vote on the UDO changes within the next two meetings and that the Council may amend the Plan Commission's recommendations. No amendments were offered.

ACTION: The motion passed by roll call vote, 9–0. Chair Vasel will transmit the letter promptly given the Council's timeline.

d. Capstone Project Proposal: Social Housing Scenario Study for Bloomington/Monroe County (Zach Ammerman)

This item was an introduction only. Commissioners were asked to read the proposal before the next meeting, where the faculty member leading the project will attend as a guest. No action was taken.

7. RESOLUTIONS FOR FIRST READING

a. Resolution 2026-07: Enhancing the City's Protection of Significant and Heritage Trees (Zach Ammerman)

Commissioner Ammerman introduced the resolution, which recommends changes to the UDO and the Bloomington Municipal Code to define and protect heritage and significant trees, which the code currently mentions but does not define or protect. The packet includes a detailed memorandum with maps and the proposed code changes in context. He reviewed the resolution with the City's Urban Forester over several rounds; the Tree Commission voted unanimously to support it, and its letter of support is included in the packet. The Planning and Transportation Department was offered an opportunity to comment and declined. Council Member Rollo expressed support, citing developments where tree preservation conditions of approval were later reversed.

ACTION: Commissioner Ammerman moved to advance Resolution 2026-07 to a second reading. Commissioner Payne seconded. The motion passed by roll call vote, 9–0.

8. RESOLUTIONS FOR SECOND READING

There were no resolutions for second reading.

9. REPORT FROM STAFF LIAISON

- **Commissioner training:** An additional session will be held Wednesday, September 30, 2026, from 5:30 to 7:00 PM in Council Chambers. Commissioners who have not yet attended should plan to do so; details will be sent by email.
- **Project 46 (Southern Indiana Regional Climate Alliance):** The alliance held its first retreat and set four focus areas, each with a subcommittee: energy efficiency and renewable energy, flood and hazard mitigation, waste reduction, and electric vehicle adoption. A climate resilience hubs subcommittee will be led by Bill Brown. Project 46 received a \$35,000 capacity-building grant from the Indianapolis Foundation, and the Indiana Energy Independence Fund joined its advisory committee.

- **Solar grants:** The City's solar grant program for income-qualified homeowners launches September 28, 2026. Owner-occupied single-family homes within city limits with household income below 80% of area median income qualify for a 5-kilowatt installation at no cost to the homeowner.

10. MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The Monroe County Public Library is partnering with the City, as a Bee City USA community, on a native pollinator scavenger hunt running through early November, with activities and a field guide.
- The Trades District Block Party will be held Saturday, September 26, 2026, from 4:00 to 7:00 PM. The free event will showcase planned improvements in the Trades District, including gateway and public art projects, and invite community feedback.
- Commissioners, including Commissioner Ogrodowski, are participating in the 2026 Bloomington Residents Academy cohort and recommended the 11-week program.

11. NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business.

12. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 PM.

NEXT MEETING:

Tuesday, October 13, 2026, 6:00 PM