



CITY OF BLOOMINGTON

COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABILITY

Minutes

Tuesday, November 12, 2024, 6:00 p.m.

McCloskey Conference Room — City Hall

1. **Call to Order:** Justin Vasel called the meeting to order at 6:06 PM

2. **Roll Call**

Members present: Justin Vasel, Matt Austin, Zero Rose, Tara Dunderdale, Dave Rollo, Jamie Scholl, Evan Nix (virtual), David Maener (virtual), Andrew Guenther, Quentin Gilly, John Eldon

Members absent: Hunter Hawley

City staff present: Shawn Miya, Jolie Perry

3. **Approval of Agenda**

MOTION: Andrew Guenther moved, and Matt Austin seconded to approve the agenda.

ACTION: The motion was approved by voice vote.

4. **Approval of Minutes: September 10, 2024**

MOTION: Andrew Guenther moved, and Matt Austin seconded to approve the minutes from September 10, 2024.

ACTION: The motion was approved by voice vote.

5. **Public Comment**

Ellee Spier, a resident and a prior recipient of the Neighborhood Sustainability Grant, addressed the Commission. Ellee sought clarification on the reapplication process for the grant, specifically regarding its appropriateness given the pilot nature of her project.

She also inquired about the City's recommendations for a financial agent for her neighborhood association, and Shawn agreed that reaching out to Council of Neighborhood Associations (CONA) was a good approach. Shawn also suggested that Ellee's reapplication would likely be approved given its pilot project status and the lack of competition for the grant funding.

Ellee expects to submit the application for BCOS approval at the December meeting.

6. **Reports from Commissioners**

a. **Chair Report** (Justin Vasel)

BCOS Document Repository: Communication with the city's IT and legal departments continues regarding establishing a Google Workspace for managing BCOS documents. The possibility of creating a read-only version for Commission members was discussed if a shared workspace isn't feasible in the near term.

Grants: CanopyBloomington's working group grant proposal is nearing completion and is expected to be discussed later in the meeting. A proposal for a new pollinator garden project under the Neighborhood Sustainability Grant is also anticipated for discussion.

Shawn Miya informed the Commission that starting in January 2025, Neighborhood Sustainability Grants will no longer require BCOS approval and will be managed directly by the Economic and Sustainable Development (ESD) department.

Following this announcement, a discussion ensued regarding the removal of BCOS approval for the grants. Commissioners expressed concerns about the precedent set by bypassing BCOS, the potential loss of valuable feedback from Commissioners, and the limited data supporting the decision. Shawn clarified that ESD, the funding source for both BCOS working group grants and these grants, initiated the change. She believes removing the BCOS approval step will streamline the process and that ESD is capable of evaluating the proposals' alignment with sustainability goals.

Commissioners advocated for continued BCOS involvement, suggesting alternative solutions like a feedback system or smaller committees to review proposals. They emphasized the importance of BCOS's role in public education and community engagement, particularly regarding sustainability initiatives. The discussion also highlighted the ethical considerations of Commissioners both assisting with grant writing and voting on those proposals.

MOTION: Andrew Guenther moved to advance to the next agenda item.

ACTION: Andrew Guenther withdrew the motion.

b. **Waste Management Working Group** (Matt Austin)

Matt reported on the progress of the Bokashi composting initiative and the potential for a food waste program.

Ten households have committed to the Bokashi composting program at the Community Orchard. Efforts are underway to expand the program to other organizations, such as faith-based groups and First United Methodist Church.

Matt met with Caldwells Inc., a company managing Shelby County's recycling centers and operating a food waste program. He is exploring the feasibility of a similar program in Bloomington, potentially involving Caldwells and the Waste Reduction District of Monroe County (WRDMC).

c. **Ad-Hoc Committee: Sustainability Assessment Report** (Tara Dunderdale)

Tara presented the results of a survey conducted to prioritize climate action goals for the sustainability assessment report.

Energy and the built environment received the highest priority, followed by *green space and ecosystems*, and *local food and agriculture*. *Transportation* and *land use* were close contenders.

The ad-hoc committee will develop a framework and report on at least one of the prioritized goals by the next meeting or the first meeting of 2025.

Tara clarified that the language in the proposed BMC changes sets a minimum standard

for annual reporting across all advisory councils and would not restrict the Commission from exceeding those requirements and conducting an assessment like this.

d. **Council Ex-Officio** (Dave Rollo)

Councilmember Rollo informed the Commission about an upcoming City Council meeting regarding proposed changes to the Bloomington Municipal Code (BMC). The meeting will discuss merging the Traffic Commission, Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Commission, and the Parking Commission into a single entity. The proposal aligns with the recommendations from the Novak report from 2022. The meeting will take place on November 13, 2024, at 6:30pm in Council chambers. Public input is encouraged.

A January 2025 meeting of the Council will address the full slate of proposed amendments to BMC Title 2.

7. Discussion of Topics Not the Subject of Resolutions

a. **WG Grant Proposal: CanopyBloomington** (Andrew Guenther)

CanopyBloomington proposes to plant 16 replacement trees in locations where previously-planted trees did not survive. The trees will be native to Indiana, resilient to climate change, and planted in areas identified by the city as high need.

The proposal requests \$4,000 from the BCOS working group grant funds. All other expenses, including labor, materials, and equipment, will be covered by other grants or in-kind contributions. CanopyBloomington is securing signed letters of intent from partner organizations committing to tree maintenance for at least three years, half of which have already been secured.

Shawn confirmed that a purchase order can be made to encumber 2024 funds for this project while awaiting the final letters ahead of a BCOS vote.

Commissioners inquired about the specific tree species, the inclusion of fruit and nut trees for food production, and CanopyBloomington's approach to tree selection and planting locations. Andrew noted that CanopyBloomington focuses primarily on expanding tree canopy, particularly in low-income and underrepresented areas, and prioritizes native species over cultivars.

b. **Sustainable Neighborhood Grant Proposal: New Pollinator Gardens**

Tara provided information on the proposal which requests \$1,000 to purchase pre-made pollinator garden kits for installation in a neighborhood. The kits include flats of native plant plugs and educational materials. The project aims to increase pollinator population within the neighborhood and promote the use of native plants.

Commissioners discussed the native status of the plants in the kits, the warranty or guarantee provided, the organization of planting efforts, and the availability of metrics to assess the impact on the pollinator population. Shawn and Tara provided insights into the project's specifics, highlighting its emphasis on accessibility for residents with varying gardening experience and the inclusion of practices like turf removal and the use of cages.

Justin clarified that the BCOS Bylaws require a first and second reading only for

resolutions. Given that a vote on whether to approve a grant application is not a resolution, the voting process would only require a simple roll call vote.

MOTION: Jami Scholl moved, and Andrew Guenther seconded to approve the Sustainable Neighborhood Grant proposal for New Pollinator Gardens.

ACTION: The motion to approve the grant received a roll call vote of Ayes: 11, Nays: 0, Abstain: 0. The motion passed.

c. Proposed Changes to BMC §2.12.100

The Commission reviewed the proposed changes to BMC §2.12.100, which outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Commission. Justin explained that the changes reflect the Commission's input gathered during discussions about the Novak report recommendations. The changes aim to clarify the Commission's purpose, powers, and duties.

Commissioners raised concerns about replacing "City Administration" with "Mayor" in the §2.12.100(8)(B) outlining the Commission's advisory role. They argued that this change could limit access to relevant city staff and hinder the Commission's effectiveness.

The discussion also touched upon incorporating resilience into the Commission's work. The suggestion was made to explicitly include "resilience" in the language, potentially by adding "and resilience" after "sustainability" in relevant sections.

The Commission agreed to have Justin draft a resolution incorporating the discussed feedback and present it for a vote at the December meeting.

MOTION: Andrew Guenther moved, and Tara Dunderdale seconded to extend the meeting time by 10 minutes.

ACTION: The motion was approved by voice vote.

8. Resolutions for Second Reading and Discussion: None

9. Resolutions for First Reading and Discussion: None

10. Report from Staff Liaison (Shawn Miya)

Shawn reminded Commissioners of the upcoming board and commission appreciation event on Friday, December 6, 2024, at 5:30pm at the Waldron Arts Center.

Shawn also announced the purchase of six new bus shelters equipped with solar lights. The shelters will prioritize locations in low-income neighborhoods lacking shade.

ESD received a grant for the Buskirk Chumley theatre to install a solar backup battery system and upgrade its HVAC system.

The Bloomington Green Home Improvement Program will relaunch by the end of 2024 with increased rebate amounts for residents undertaking energy efficiency projects like solar installation and HVAC upgrades.

Shawn announced the upcoming replacement of all LED lights in City Hall, a project funded through the Energy Efficiency Community Block Grant.

11. Member Announcements

Matt announced an upcoming Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) meeting on Thursday, November 14, at 5:30pm. He encouraged attendees to voice their support for permitting in-home and on-property gardening instruction

12. New Business

Councilmember Rollo raised concerns regarding the lack of enforcement of native planting requirements for new developments. He cited the prevalence of non-native invasive species, contradicting the City's Sustainability Action Plan. He urged the Commission to address the issue, potentially through collaboration with relevant City Departments.

13. Adjournment:

MOTION: Andrew Guenther moved, and Matt Austin seconded to adjourn.

ACTION: The motion was approved by voice vote.

The meeting adjourned at 7:40 pm

NEXT MEETING:
DECEMBER 10, 2024 6PM