



CITY OF BLOOMINGTON COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABILITY

Minutes

Tuesday, February 11, 2025, 6:00 p.m.
McCloskey Conference Room — City Hall

1. **Call to Order:** Justin Vasel called the meeting to order at 6:04 PM.
2. **Roll Call**
Members present: Justin Vasel, Zero Rose (virtual), Tara Dunderdale (virtual), Dave Rollo, Jamie Scholl, Evan Nix, Quentin Gilly, Matt Austin, Jon Eldon, Chenghuai Xu (virtual)
Members absent: Hunter Hawley
City staff present: Shawn Miya
3. **Approval of Agenda**
ACTION: Matt Austin moved, and Dave Rollo seconded to approve the agenda. The agenda was approved by voice vote.
4. **Approval of Minutes: September 10, 2024**
The minutes for September 10, 2024 were not yet ready for approval.
5. **Public Comment**
None.
6. **Report from Commissioners**
 - a. **Chair Report** (Justin Vasel)
Welcomes and Farewells: Chenghuai Xu (Mayoral Appointment) was welcomed. Farewells and thanks were extended to outgoing commissioners David Maenner (Mayoral Appointment) and Andrew Guenther (Monroe County Commissioners), with specific acknowledgement of their contributions and service.

General Updates: BMC Title 2 Code Changes & Resolution 2024-01: Changes incorporating the concept of resiliency into the definition of sustainability and coordinating with the city administration generally (instead of specifically the mayor) were successfully included in the version of Title 2 changes that went before the City Council for the first reading the previous week and are expected for a second reading in the following weeks. Justin appreciated the collaborative process involved in developing the final version.

BCOS Officer Elections Next Month: Elections for chairperson, vice chairperson, secretary, and treasurer will occur at the March meeting. Justin outlined the current informal process of nominations on the spot but suggested potentially collecting nominations beforehand via a Google form with brief statements of intent. He welcomed suggestions on the election process. He clarified the roles of each officer, noting the treasurer position currently has minimal specific responsibilities but could become more active with external funding. Justin indicated he does not plan to run for chairperson

again to encourage fresh leadership.

2024 Annual Report: Drafting of the 2024 annual report, summarizing past year activities and looking ahead, has begun. This is separate from the sustainability assessment report. Language in the new Title 2 code changes also specifies an annual report, and standardization efforts are underway at the council and city clerk levels. Justin hopes to present a draft at the next meeting and encouraged discussion on future plans to incorporate.

BCOS 20-year Anniversary: 2025 marks the 20th anniversary of the commission's first meeting in October 2005, presenting an opportunity for reflection and future planning.

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

The Waste Reduction District approved the RFP with Rumpke, with an anticipated switchover in June or July. This will allow residents to take all types of cartons to the Waste Reduction District for recycling, as Republic (the current service provider for Bloomington residents) does not accept them in their curbside program. Matt intends to continue highlighting this to promote increased recycling and reduce landfill waste.

Matt expressed interest in the Commission making a statement of support for the city signing a new RFP with Rumpke, arguing Rumpke offers more comprehensive services than Republic, particularly regarding methane sequestration (which Republic currently does not do) and broader recycling capabilities (including glass). He noted the lack of transparency in the city's RFP process with Republic, which occurs every one to two years, and that the City Council does not have direct decision-making power on this. Justin Vassel suggested drafting a resolution for a future meeting if there is sufficient interest and a presentation outlining the case.

The working group is organizing a tour of Callswell Inc. in Shelbyville (Shelby County) within the first two weeks of March to explore food waste solutions on a larger scale (they service Kroger and other large corporations). Matt is seeking additional stakeholders like IU, IU Health, and Cook to participate to potentially coordinate hauling and reduce costs. A survey regarding availability will be sent out.

Quentin Gilly mentioned IU is piloting a food dehydrator in a dining hall to reduce the weight of food waste by removing water, making transportation easier, and is looking for potential partnerships for disposal. Matt expressed interest in discussing potential collaborations.

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

Tara Dunderdale presented a rough outline for the Sustainability Assessment Report, focusing on Climate Action Plan goals for Energy and the Built Environment. She solicited feedback and recommendations for additional data or factors hindering progress towards CAP goals.

Tara also raised concerns about the process of creating the report in light of the City Attorney's email regarding document access and the Open Door Law, which restricts collaborative work on documents outside of publicly noticed meetings. The initial plan involved a subcommittee (herself, Evan Nix, and the now-departed Andrew Guenther) conducting working sessions, which has been hampered by illness and the inability to co-work on a document. She sought guidance on the best way forward to produce a

report for the next meeting, including whether to replace Andrew on the subcommittee or if she should draft something for Evan Nix to review before presenting to the full commission.

Jami Scholl thanked Tara for her efforts and suggested exploring workflows given the constraints and the significant scope of the assessment with limited meeting time and commission capacity due to vacancies.

Jon Eldon questioned if the content focuses on the city's actions rather than the commission's activities, which Tara confirmed. The report aims to assess the city's progress towards sustainability goals and recommend policy changes, budget priorities, etc..

Staff Liaison Shawn Miya noted that while the Climate Action Dashboard contains much information on completed metrics, it does not show ongoing projects and offered to meet with Tara to provide updates and fill in gaps.

Zero Rose referenced a recent amendment to the Open Door Law regarding subcommittee structures, as informed by Ash Kulak (liaison for the CAPS commission), which might offer more flexibility for document work. He suggested discussing this with Mr. Kulak.

Shawn Miya clarified that subcommittees of commissions serving like City Council members must adhere to Open Door Law, requiring noticed meetings and inclusion of working documents in the notice.

Justin Vassel and Staff Liaison Shawn Miya discussed the City Attorney's guidance, emphasizing that members meeting to work on documents requires public notice and document inclusion in the packet.

Due to the tight timeline, the suggestion of one person (Tara Dunderdale) drafting an initial version to bring to the March meeting for review was considered a viable short-term solution. Alternatively, dividing the report into sections with individual commissioners working on separate documents that are then compiled by staff for meeting notice was also proposed. Asynchronous collaboration with only one person editing a document at a time was discussed but deemed potentially problematic based on the City Attorney's interpretation.

Tara Dunderdale agreed to proceed with drafting and reporting back next month, coordinating with Evan Nix if possible within the constraints. She inquired about the best way for other commissioners to provide recommendations for additional data – likely at the next meeting or potentially via individual emails to her (not group emails). A working session in two weeks was proposed for further input.

Jami Scholl inquired about the timeline of the last sustainability assessment report to understand the typical process, and Tara believed the most recent was from 2017, highlighting the challenges of asynchronous work.

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

Council took action to reform transportation advisory bodies, merging the Bike and Ped Safety Commission, Traffic Commission, and Parking Commission into a single

Transportation Commission, addressing infrastructure, traffic calming, bike lanes, stop signs, and parking meter rates. Councilmember Rollo voted against this, citing ambiguity in the commission's role and the administration's interpretation of its sole power in implementation. He clarified that the new Transportation Commission is advisory only.

Councilmember Rollo announced a Sustainability and Resilience Conference hosted by the Environmental Resilience Institute (ERI) at IU on February 28th (Friday), from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., covering topics such as clean energy funding, climate action planning, resilient food systems, and agrovoltatics. There is a registration fee of \$75 (\$25 for students).

Councilmember Rollo inquired about the possibility of commissioners being reimbursed for attending and noted he had registered. Quentin Gilly suggested exploring funding through IU Sustainability given the IU association, but with the conference being so close and legal considerations, a quick answer may not be possible. Councilmember Rollo offered to investigate potential funding options.

Councilmember Rollo noted that the city's Sustainability Action Plan, adopted in 2018 as a 5-year plan, is now overdue for revision and suggested BCOS would be well-positioned to explore topics for the updated plan

7. Discussion of Topics Not the Subject of Resolutions

a. Email from City Attorney Larry Allen re: BCOS Document Access

Justin Vasel introduced the topic, noting the prior discussion during the Sustainability Assessment Report. The issue arose from the loss of access to the shared City Google Drive due to city policies and Open Door Law concerns regarding collaborative document work in a shared space.

A temporary workaround involved a read-only Google Drive folder created by Justin containing past documents. Justin acknowledged City Attorney Allen's point that this is not the official city repository. The goal is to provide commissioners, especially new ones, with access to the commission's institutional history beyond what is currently available on OnBoard. Justin noted that many older documents, including meeting minutes and presentations, and reference documents like a spreadsheet tracking other commissions, are not yet on OnBoard. While specific documents can be requested, knowing what exists is a challenge.

Commissioner Scholl suggested exploring options for a public-facing section on the city's website for BCOS, potentially with a password-protected portal for commissioners, similar to WordPress capabilities. She felt this could increase public awareness of BCOS activities. Staff Liaison Miya stated that the website is maintained by ESD and offered to add more description. Documents created by BCOS must be uploaded to OnBoard, but links to select documents could potentially be added to the front page.

Evan Nix reiterated the difficulty of knowing what documents to request without prior knowledge of their existence in the city's Google Drive. Staff Liaison Miya clarified that she had reviewed the Google Drive content and an intern had uploaded all relevant documents to OnBoard, excluding extraneous notes. She encouraged commissioners to email her any documents they find missing for upload.

b. Commission Priorities for 2025

Justin Vasel suggested that a deep dive discussion on commission priorities for 2025 would require more time and could be a focus of an upcoming work session. He referenced the Environmental Commission's practice of a brainstorming session at the beginning of the year to identify potential focus areas and match them with enthusiastic members. He proposed a similar approach or other ideas for today's general discussion.

Justin suggested a greater emphasis on policy advising through resolutions based on the commission's opinion and involvement in broader city developments, such as housing. He opened the floor for ideas on approaching the 2025 priorities.

Zero Rose suggested forming another work session before the next meeting agenda. Quentin Gilly emphasized the need for information to guide priority setting, such as city sustainability goals and upcoming residential development or infrastructure projects. Coordination with the CAPS commission's reviving housing committee was also mentioned.

Evan Nix expressed excitement for a unified commission goal for the year, focusing on policy advisement, and supported a brainstorming session with task assignment based on impact.

Jami Scholl echoed support for the brainstorming session using Post-it notes and categorizing ideas. Quentin Gilly suggested using an impact versus effort matrix to prioritize achievable high-impact initiatives, aligning with the commission's guiding documents.

Shawn Miya advised considering commissioners' term limits and ensuring at least three committed members for any project to ensure continuity.

Jami Scholl also referenced the 2022 Climate and Sustainability Progress Report, noting areas with many "not started" goals, particularly in food and agriculture, as potential priorities. She inquired about the timeline for filling mayoral appointments.

Tara Dunderdale emphasized the importance of aggressively planning for the utilization of grant funds for the year and focusing on priorities requiring funding early to encumber those funds, learning from the previous year. She inquired about the status of the Canopy Bloomington project sponsorship, which Staff Liaison Miya clarified is a contract between ESD and Canopy Bloomington, requiring a report back to BCOS but not necessarily a replacement sponsoring commissioner.

Shawn Miya stressed the December 1st deadline for grant proposals to allow sufficient review time.

Jon Eldon agreed on prioritizing the use of available resources and aiming for an earlier deadline for grant proposals (e.g., August 1st). He suggested public education around sustainable neighborhoods as a potential grant-funded priority.

A work session was tentatively scheduled for two weeks from the meeting date.

8. Resolutions for Second Reading and Discussion: None

9. Resolutions for First Reading and Discussion: None

10. Report from Staff Liaison (Shawn Miya)

Staff Liaison Miya highlighted the Sustainable Bloomington newsletter created by Jolie Perry and available on the dashboard and website.

An upcoming presentation to City Council on the greenhouse gas inventory was mentioned.

The Spring into Sustainability Challenge was promoted, encouraging organizations to register on the Zero in Bloomington platform and log climate actions by their members between March 1st and March 31st to win cash prizes. Winners will be announced at the Earth Day celebration on April 19th at Switchyard Park from noon to 4:00 p.m.

BCOS was encouraged to have a table at the event to promote sustainable neighborhoods, working group funding, and partnerships. Busman's Holiday will perform, and food trucks and various organizations, including potentially the Bloomington Environmental Commission with their Eco Heroes art contest, will be present.

Project 46, the regional climate alliance, is a sponsor of the IU ERI conference. Commissioners were asked to help spread the word about available funding programs: The Solar Energy Efficiency and Lighting Program is relaunching with an RFP for 2025, providing \$25,000 for nonprofits and small businesses for solar installations and \$20,000 for battery energy storage systems for nonprofits to increase climate resilience.

The Bloomington Green Home Improvement Program is also being revamped to substantially increase rebates for homeowners for solar installations, battery systems, electric panel upgrades, EV chargers, weatherization, windows and doors, and heat pump HVAC systems. Rebates will be 25% up to \$5,000 for the general population and 40% up to \$10,000 for low-income residents for certain projects. Clarification was provided that the rebates apply to specific components of projects.

Resources for electric coach training on heat pump HVAC systems are available.

A new Instagram account for Sustainable Bloomington is active.

An application for a Coalition for Green Capital Grant is due March 5th, requesting BCOS to be a community partner. The grant would fund a marketing firm, an energy navigator program (with potential volunteer roles for BCOS members), and technical assistance for developers, businesses, and nonprofits in renewable energy and energy efficiency projects. Staff Liaison Miya asked for BCOS's willingness to be a partner to help promote the project. Sending out a website link for more information was planned. A vote on formal partnership could occur at the work session if a quorum is present.

Tara Dunderdale suggested that she could help staff a BCOS Earth Day table. Zero Rose also confirmed that Blue Bee would have a table at the event.

MOTION: Justin Vasel moved, and [INAUDIBLE] seconded, to extend the meeting by 5 minutes. The motion passed by voice vote.

11. Member Announcements

Jami Scholl raised concerns about national trends, specifically President Trump's mention of

Indiana as a potential location for massive data centers, referencing a City Council discussion in April 2024 regarding a data center and the LEAP pipeline project affecting farmland in northern Indiana due to high water demands.

She highlighted the significant water consumption of hyperscale data centers (550,000 gallons per day) and wholesale retail facilities (18,000 gallons per day). Given Bloomington's efforts to attract tech businesses, including Vivian AI's move to The Forge, she expressed concern about the potential environmental impact on Lake Monroe, the state's largest lake, as a desirable water resource for these facilities.

Jami also noted potential impacts on local food systems and referenced the Sustainable Food Coordinator position mentioned in the 2022 Climate and Sustainability Progress Report. She emphasized the need to monitor these developments and consider preparing the community for potential impacts.

Zero Rose also raised concerns about potential cuts or delays in federal funding for green initiatives and the implications of data centers potentially relying on polluting energy sources like coal or nuclear power.

12. Adjournment:

ACTION: The meeting was adjourned without objection at 7:40pm.

NEXT MEETING:
MARCH 11, 2025 6PM