

In the Council Chambers of the Showers City Hall, Bloomington, Indiana on Wednesday, February 28, 2024 at 6:30pm, Council President Isabel Piedmont-Smith presided over a Regular Session of the Common Council.

COMMON COUNCIL
REGULAR SESSION
February 28, 2024

Councilmembers present: Isak Nti Asare, Isabel Piedmont-Smith, Dave Rollo, Kate Rosenbarger, Andy Ruff (arrived at 6:32pm), Hopi Stosberg, Sydney Zulich
Councilmembers present via Zoom: Matt Flaherty (arrived 6:31pm)
Councilmembers absent: none
Clerk's Note: There was a vacancy in District 5.

ROLL CALL [6:30pm]

Council President Isabel Piedmont-Smith gave a land and labor acknowledgment and summarized the agenda.

AGENDA SUMMATION [6:31pm]

Stosberg moved and Ruff seconded to suspend the rules to consider the minutes for approval. The motion received a roll call vote of Ayes: 8, Nays: 0, Abstain: 0.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES [6:34pm]

Stosberg moved and Ruff seconded to approve the minutes of September 06, 2023 (with a minor correction), September 13, 2023, and September 20, 2023. The motion to approve the minutes received a roll call vote of Ayes: 8, Nays: 0, Abstain: 0.

September 06, 2023 (Regular Session)
September 13, 2023 (Regular Session)
September 20, 2023 (Regular Session)

Zulich noted her town hall scheduled for March 2, 2024.

REPORTS

Rosenbarger reminded the public that the Safe Streets event had been moved to the first week in April.

- Councilmembers [6:36pm]

Piedmont-Smith reported on the film showing by the Community Advisory on Public Safety Commission the previous weekend.

Deputy Mayor Gretchen Knapp reported on city preparations for the April 08, 2024 solar eclipse. She noted the influx of people, traffic congestion, slowed network connectivity, public safety, and more.

- The Mayor and City Offices [6:36pm]

Rosenbarger expressed her excitement for the solar eclipse.

Council discussion:

Piedmont-Smith asked if the event at the Monroe County (MC) Fairgrounds was canceled.

Knapp confirmed that was correct.

Asare asked where the large number of people would be guided.

Knapp stated that was a difficult task and referenced the eclipse website that contained guiding information.

Piedmont-Smith asked if the After Hours Ambassador positions would be filled by the date of the solar eclipse.

Knapp said one had been filled and another was in the process.

Piedmont-Smith asked about food trucks.

Adam Wason, Director of Public Works, said there were locations around the city and on the Indiana University (IU) campus.

Asare asked about preparation for the possibility of cell phone networks going down and if the emergency alert system might be used.

Wason explained that public safety departments were on the First Net system, which was a prioritized system. The Monroe County Emergency Management agency and partners would have a joint information center and emergency operation center.

Knapp stated that Information Technology Services (ITS) would also have ATT Cells on Wheels (COWS) downtown.

Knapp said there were organizations putting information out.

Wason confirmed the options for receiving information.

- The Mayor and City Offices (cont'd)

There were no council committee reports.

- Council Committees [6:56pm]

Piedmont-Smith extended the period for public comment until 7:40pm with no objections from the council.

- Public [7:00pm]

Charlotte Zietlow spoke about her experience on council and the importance of communicating to federal government about the crisis in Gaza and supporting the cease fire.

[Unknown] urged council to support the cease fire in Palestine and about the atrocities of the bombardment there.

Aviva Orenstein noted that she was Jewish and spoke out about the great harm being done, and the complicated conflict between Israel and Palestine.

Richard Bauman spoke as a Jewish Bloomingtonian and urged council to adopt the resolution in favor of a cease fire. He described the dire conditions in Gaza due to the disproportionate attack. He gave additional information.

David Sabbagh mentioned council having passed the Iraq resolution in 2001. He urged council to support the cease fire.

Patricia Cole supported a cease fire in Gaza. She spoke about the importance of hearts and humanity.

Dave Thelan hoped council would put the legislation on its agenda. He gave many reasons in support.

Susan Seizer's main concern as a Jewish American was the government fighting horror by providing arms instead of supporting a cease fire as well as the United States' (US) reputation. She was concerned about blowback.

David Keppel, spokesperson for the Bloomington Peace Coalition, spoke about the tragedy occurring in Gaza. He urged council to support the cease fire against the genocide funded by the US.

Kyle Feldcamp spoke about Dina Abu Mehseu whose family was killed by an Israeli airstrike, and she was treated in a hospital that was later bombed too, and she passed away. He reminded everyone that the people being attacked had hopes and dreams. He urged council to support the cease fire.

Nejla Routsong spoke about safety and the civilian population being bombarded by Israeli munitions manufactured in the US. She said there were many federal civilian defense employment and there was over a \$1 billion impact in the region. She, and the Community Advisory on Public Safety commission, urged that council support the cease fire.

Hemayatullah Shahrani spoke in favor of the cease fire in Palestine and humanitarian aid. He noted that there had been over seventy thousand deaths not including those not found under the rubble. He

commented on the impact on mental health and other unjustifiable actions.

- Public (cont'd)

Feza Midi did not appreciate that her tax dollars went towards a foreign war. She urged continued support for cities to pass cease fire legislation.

Dawud Midi noted that there was hesitation for supporting a cease fire in Palestine due to being seen as anti-Semitic. He spoke about his experience with Islamophobia in Bloomington and his school. He mentioned the number of times the mosque had been vandalized. He urged council to support the cease fire in Gaza.

Ann Kavalerchik spoke in favor of council supporting the cease fire in Gaza. She commented on her family's and others' experience with violence against them as Russian-area Jews. She spoke about the importance of stopping the genocide in Gaza. She said Never Again meant never again.

Rashid Midi commented on his experience in Bloomington. He was Algerian born during wartime. He had seen atrocities as a small child. He had been an activist his whole life and spoke against 9/11/2001 and urged council to do everything possible to support the cease fire.

Sidi [Unknown] supported the cease fire and humanitarian aid. She said that Benjamin Netanyahu was not concerned with the safety of Israel because he was bombarding Palestine. She commented on creating another generation seeking revenge.

Daniel Siegel was a Jewish American who had seen neighbors with tattooed numbers from Auschwitz. He said one of his closest friends had not known many cousins or their grandparents because they had died in concentration camps. He spoke against genocide and the need to do everything to stop it. He urged council to support a cease fire in the name of radical love. He noted the many Jewish voices supporting a cease fire.

Ruff moved and Piedmont-Smith seconded to appoint Andy Koop to seat C-1 on the Bloomington Digital Underground Advisory Committee, to reappoint Nejla Routsong to seat C-5 on the Community Advisory on Public Safety, and to reappoint Shannon Gayk to seat C-4 on the Environmental Commission.

APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS [7:36pm]

Rollo moved and Zulich seconded to appoint Paul Anderson to seat C-2 on the Bloomington Arts Commission, and to reappoint Eoban Binder to seat C-3 and to appoint Stephen Volan to seat C-5 on the Parking Commission.

Stosberg moved and Zulich seconded to reappoint Herbert Caldwell to seat C-2 on the Commission on the Status of Black Males, and to reappoint Wendy Rubin to seat C-1, and to reappoint Robert Deppert to seat C-2, on the Commission on Aging.

The motions received a roll call vote of Ayes: 8, Nays: 0, Abstain: 0.

LEGISLATION FOR SECOND
READING AND RESOLUTIONS
[7:41pm]

Stosberg moved and Ruff seconded that Resolution 2024-02 be introduced and read by title and synopsis only. The motion received a roll call vote of Ayes: 8, Nays: 0, Abstain: 0. Clerk Nicole Bolden read the legislation by title and synopsis.

Stosberg moved and Ruff seconded that Resolution 2024-02 be adopted.

Margie Rice, Corporation Counsel, presented the legislation. She discussed changes including the removal of language for the city to make recommendations to the Convention Visitors Commission (CVC), the removal of the requirement that the Capital Improvement Board (CIB) members comprise the city's building corporation and instead have the city council determine the members, and the CIB budget.

There were no council questions.

The following individuals gave reasons in support of Resolution 2024-02: Mike McAfee, Visit Bloomington; Christopher Emge, Greater Bloomington Chamber of Commerce; Talisha Coppock, Convention Management company; Jen Pearl, Bloomington Economic Development Corporation; Eric Spoonmore, President of Greater Bloomington Chamber of Commerce.

Rosenbarger commented on responses to the city survey which prioritized high-speed fiber for internet access, development of the Hopewell project, and development of the Trades District. The expansion of the Convention Center was prioritized. She noted the regulations for the Food and Beverage (FAB) Tax monies which was not limited to the Convention Center, it could include other tourism options. She discussed state statutes, economic development in the downtown, vacancies in parking garages, data on Convention Centers indicating an increase in space but a not with the demand, and the new Monon South Freedom Trail connecting New Albany to Bedford. She wondered if it best benefitted residents of Bloomington to spend the FAB tax on more innovative options like additional housing in the downtown which brought people to downtown businesses, or on the Convention Center.

Rollo thanked John Whikehart, President, CIB, and CIB members. He noted that the Convention Center would also be a civic center, which was integral in the decision to support the FAB tax. He realized that there had been many advocates for commerce that had made public comment. Businesses expected that the funds be used for the expansion. Rollo understood that there were differences post-pandemic but stated that the demand was still steady.

Stosberg said she agreed with Rosenbarger but would support the legislation and provided reasons why, like current expenses.

Flaherty thanked everyone for the discussion. He stated that the city surveys were the only tool available and were underutilized. He concurred that having additional housing downtown would provide more business. He commented on the inconsistency in decision making by elected officials, especially given that there was a different council in 2017 when the discussions began. He believed it

Resolution 2024-02 - To Amend Resolution 23-22, Which Approved an Interlocal Cooperation Agreement Between the City of Bloomington and Monroe County, Indiana for the Operation of the Bloomington/Monroe County Capital Improvement Board and the Convention and Visitors Commission (To Reconcile Two Versions of the Agreement)
[7:41pm]

Council questions:

Public comment:

Council comments:

was important to be thoughtful on how to spend the FAB tax money according to what was legally allowed. The FAB tax funds did not have to be spent entirely on the expansion of the Convention Center. He said he would scrutinize all proposals for the expansion.

Resolution 2024-02 (cont'd)

Piedmont-Smith clarified that she had been hesitant from the beginning on the FAB tax for the Convention Center expansion, especially for a city the size of Bloomington. She noted that it would rely heavily on the use of fossil fuel methods of transportation for the conventions. She gave a brief history of the project. She would support the legislation as a step in the process but would also scrutinize the plans for the expansion and would push for a sustainable building and on reducing its carbon footprint. She also agreed that more housing downtown was ideal and gave reasons.

The motion to adopt Resolution 2024-02 received a roll call vote of Ayes: 7, Nays: 1 (Rosenbarger), Abstain: 0.

Vote to adopt Resolution 2024-02 [8:17pm]

Stosberg moved and Ruff seconded that Resolution 2024-03 be introduced and read by title and synopsis only. The motion received a roll call vote of Ayes: 8, Nays: 0, Abstain: 0. Bolden read the legislation by title and synopsis.

Resolution 2024-03 – Resolution Urging Passage of United States Senate Bill 2990, Regarding the Expansion of the Charles C. Deam Wilderness and the Establishment of the Benjamin Harrison National Recreation Area [8:19pm]

Stosberg moved and Ruff seconded that Resolution 2024-03 be adopted.

Rollo presented the legislation which would double the size of the Deam Wilderness, and created the Benjamin Harrison national recreation area consisting of twenty nine thousand acres. He said there were additional protections of the ecosystem, including plants and animals.

Ruff added that it was a rare and significant opportunity. It would have the highest level of protection against exploitation of the land.

Jeff Stant, Executive Director of the Indiana Forest Alliance, described the work on the legislation which was a culmination of years of efforts. He gave a history on the process of saving the land and expanding the Deam Wilderness. He explained that the land contained the most ecologically valuable, intact forest in the central hardwood forest region of eastern North America. He gave additional details and urged council support the legislation.

Dr. Sherry Mitchell Brooker, President and Founder of Friends of Lake Monroe, described slopes, erosion, and the mission of protecting and enhancing Lake Monroe and its watershed. She was a hydrologist with over thirty years' experience in water resources. She spoke about reducing toxins in drinking water, and gave additional information about the land, water quality, and controlled burns in forests.

Stosberg asked about funding.

Council questions:

Stant said Senator Mike Braun hoped that the Forest Service would change its priorities and also appropriate funding. National recreation areas tended to be around water supply reservoirs and brought additional Forest Service resources. There were about forty in the United States. Federal funding would likely come once the area was established as a national recreation area. Ruff asked about impacts or concerns about restrictions.

Stant said there would be some restrictions on camping and groups of people. He said there was over-usage of the Deam Wilderness land. He gave additional examples.

Stosberg asked how the recreation and wilderness areas were determined.

Stant described the areas and discussed that there were protections from logging. There were also private land areas and army corp areas. There were also things like horse paths in the area that promoted recreation.

Piedmont-Smith asked about the process for the legislation.

Stant explained that it would next go to the House of Representatives and they would be working with Representative Erin Houchin.

Tyler Kivland, Skill Development Coordinator at Indiana University Outdoor Adventures, was conflicted about the proposal primarily because of the limit on group sizes. He supported the expansion and recreation areas but there was limited or no access to the Deam Wilderness for his adventure groups. He gave details about the types of activities the groups did and the importance of “leaving no trace” principles.

Irene Georgiotis spoke about public recreation, the IU Outdoor Adventure activities, and in favor of the bill and its protections but also expressed concern about the group size limitation. She stressed the importance of including future land care takers access to land.

Liam Hobson agreed on the importance of protecting the land, and being able to teach people about the “leaving no trace” concept and being respectful of wilderness. He did not want to see IU Outdoor Adventure be unintentionally negatively affected.

Nicci Brown, Academic Coordinator at IU Outdoor Adventures, spoke about the program and its impact on students. She stressed the importance of protecting the land, and how the program shows individuals how to do so. She gave additional examples of the successes of the program.

Austin Crouch noted his and his peers’ alliance with Friends of Lake Monroe. He said that the program taught over four hundred local and international students about the preservation of the land, and future stewardship. He expressed concern about the quick pace of the legislation.

Douglas Rapp stated that the proposal originated four years ago with Senator Braun’s staff. A coalition of groups including conservationists, hunters, fishers, and more had come together to create the legislation. He said that the Forest Service would still manage the land and the rules would not change. He stressed the importance of Senate Bill 2990.

Neil Goswami spoke about strengthening forests, especially old growth forests. He discussed climate crisis and the importance of combating it. The proposal would protect water quality.

Max Wolf talked about his enjoyment of Monroe County forests. He related the devastating, ecological impact on land in Palestine due to the genocide currently happening. He urged council to not only listen to the individuals from Indiana University.

Resolution 2024-03 (cont’d)

Council questions:

Public comment:

Asare asked for clarification on the concerns and what council should consider when voting on the legislation.

Kivland clarified that the goal would be to modify the senate bill to allow IU Outdoor Adventures to continue to educate students. He also clarified that he and his colleagues supported the legislation.

Stant added there would be almost thirty thousand acres that would be designated with the purpose of promoting recreation in the area and did not have a limit to the size of groups. The Forest Service could limit group sizes in the wilderness area. It could be possible that special permits could be allowed. He detailed the process the bill would undertake and urged IU Outdoor Adventure to work with the Forest Alliance.

Rollo asked about the scale of the proposal and its impact on the watershed.

Brooker clarified that she would have to do additional analysis because there was not one direct cause, it was a variety of things affecting the watershed, like erosion and farms.

Rollo noted the importance of protecting the water source in perpetuity. He asked about the materials that ended up in the water after clearcutting.

Brooker said there was sediment and nutrients entering the lake. The sediment settled on the bottom of the lake but the chemistry of the lake changed as the seasons changed, the sediment promoted algal blooms. There were other nutrients that would go into the lake from things like burns.

Zulich believed it was important to do as much as possible to protect wildlife and nature preserves. She spoke about February being the hottest in recorded history relating to climate crisis.

Rollo spoke about the biodiversity crisis and the need to protect old growth. He noted Cerulean Warblers that traveled from Peru but were in decline for decades. It was imperative to preserve wildlife's habitat. There were multiple tradeoffs and an opportunity for flexibility to allow outdoor groups to use the land.

Flaherty would support the legislation. He was not a sponsor of the legislation, but had done preliminary work such as investigating impacts on the city departments like utilities and parks. He had also spoken with IU Outdoor Adventures. He believed it was important to support conservation in the region.

Ruff thanked Stant, Brooker, and IU Outdoor Adventure. He was confident that special permits could be done to allow larger groups. He committed to advocating for that.

Asare thanked everyone for the discussion. He noted that if access to a water source was compromised, the city would cease to exist. If was a false equivalent to compare that to the success of an IU outdoor program. He supported figuring out a way to ensure that IU Outdoor Adventure could continue to use the land.

Stosberg shared her experience with hiking the land with her family. She supported protecting the land so future families could low-impact camp.

Piedmont-Smith thanked Indiana Forest Alliance for their work in collecting data of the flora and fauna in the land. She encouraged the public to contact Representative Erin Houchin and urge her support for the bill.

Resolution 2024-03 (cont'd)

Council comments:

The motion to adopt Resolution 2024-03 received a roll call vote of Ayes: 8, Nays: 0, Abstain: 0.

Vote to adopt Resolution 2024-03
[9:48pm]

There was no legislation for first reading.

LEGISLATION FOR FIRST
READING [9:49pm]

Michael Martin spoke in favor of a cease fire in Gaza. He urged council to pass legislation as many other municipalities had, as well as many organizations around the nation.

ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENT
[9:49pm]

[Unknown] spoke in favor of an immediate and permanent cease fire in Gaza. It was a first step and many had died over the last four months. He encouraged Bloomington to implement the Boycott, Divest, Sanction (BDS) policy against Israel to divest from weapons manufacturing, apartheid, and genocide.

Stephen Lucas, Council Attorney, read a comment submitted via Zoom chat from Sam Dove pertaining to an event at New Hope for Families.

Piedmont-Smith noted the upcoming Regular Session.

COUNCIL SCHEDULE [9:54pm]

Lucas mentioned the upcoming Jack Hopkins Social Services Funding committee meeting.

Piedmont-Smith adjourned the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT [9:55pm]

APPROVED by the Common Council of the City of Bloomington, Monroe County, Indiana upon this ____ day of _____, 2024.

APPROVE:

ATTEST:

Isabel Piedmont-Smith, PRESIDENT
Bloomington Common Council

Nicole Bolden, CLERK
City of Bloomington