

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

For the Monroe County Environmental Quality and Sustainability Commission 2015 was a year of struggles for some projects, sustained support for others, and some new, exciting, and ultimately successful projects.

It was a struggle as we attempted increased sophistication in reporting the County's energy use by incorporating temperature normalization, a statistical way of isolating actual energy efficiency. This year we changed the formula for temperature normalization to match the type used by Honeywell, who contracted with the County to do energy efficiency improvements to County buildings and guaranteed a level of energy savings. Changing our way of calculating energy savings will give us an independent crosscheck on Honeywell's numbers. However we will need to rework the spreadsheets used to calculate the results and this will take much of 2016. With the Commissioners' consent and with regret, we will not have utility data for this year's report. By the end of 2016, we will have a user-friendly, accurate system to analyze and report on the County's utility data.

It was a year of continued support for many ongoing projects including the Monroe County Energy Challenge, a county-wide contest to reduce energy use. Our commission received a monthly progress update and 3 commission members worked directly with the Energy Challenge. The Energy Challenge has grown with the award of grants, the purchase of a vehicle named the Energy Mobile, the labor of AmeriCorps workers this summer who did home audits and weatherization, outreach to educators in our County's schools, the compilation and upload of utility data, and the hiring of an Energy Outreach Coordinator. It is a positive project! We also supported County Planning in their efforts to create an appropriate zoning category for a 'Solar Farm' proposed by Hoosier Energy. We followed and applauded the County Commissioners as they oversaw the final hook-up of solar panels on the Justice Building and authorized a new solar panel installation on the Showers Building as part of the Honeywell contract.

It was a year of exciting beginnings when our commission members became interested in the EPA's Clean Power Plan. Our group decided to invite experts and hold a public forum to educate the citizens of Monroe County. We were extremely fortunate when Janet McCabe, head of the EPA's Office of Air and Radiation agreed to participate. By the end of 2015 we knew that Bob Zaltsberg would be our moderator and Dr. Kenneth Richards from IU SPEA was interested in being on the panel. This concluded successfully in February of 2016 with Janet McCabe, Dr. Richards, Jessie Kharbanda from the Hoosier Environmental Council, and Mark Maassel from the Indiana Energy Alliance all participating and over 100 people attending the event that was sponsored by the County Commissioners, our commission and the Monroe County Energy Challenge.

I look forward to next year including a focus on ongoing projects to identify energy conservation opportunities for the County, an ongoing look at ways to improve our commission's function, the creation of workable spread sheets for the analysis of the County's energy use, and the ongoing support for great projects currently going forward.

Thanks to the County Commissioners who created our commission in 2011, the Commissioners and County Council members who have initiated and supported significant energy saving projects in County buildings. Thanks to the great members for our commission and the bodies that chose them. I look forward to next year.

Sincerely,
Dave Parsons, Chair
Monroe County Environmental Quality & Sustainability Commission