

# Commission on Sustainability



MICHIGAN CITY  
INDIANA

Thursday, September 11, 2025, 4:30 pm  
City Hall, EOC Room Downstairs

## MEETING MINUTES

(recording of meeting available on ALCO YouTube channel)

### Michigan City Sustainability Commissioners:

- Tristan Bogart (Sustainability Commission Appointment; 7/10/25-7/10/27) **Absent**
- **Gianna Galante (non-voting rep from Board of Works) Excused**
- Beverly Mack-Martin (Represents Economic Development Council; 6/4/25- 5/1/27) **Present**
- Faye Moore – Co-Chair (Sustainability Commission Appointment; 5/1/24-5/1/26) **Present**
- Abigail Neary- Chair (Sustainability Commission Appointment; 5/1/24- 5/1/26) **Present**
- Em Racine (Mayoral Appointment; 3/12/25-3/19/26) **Present**
- Julie Smith (City Council Appointment; 5/7/25-5/27) **Present**
- Lawrence Zimmer- (Sustainability Commission Appointment 3/6/24-5/4/26) **Present**

**City Council Liaison:** Nancy Moldenhauer **Excused**

- I. **Roll Call by Larry – We had a quorum.**
- II. **Approval of August 2025 Minutes Unanimously approved.**
- III. **Project Teams**
  - A. **Explore Use of Biodiesel by City Fleet**—Beverly Mack-Martin, Tristan Bogart
    - a. **Project Summary:** Working with Drive Clean Indiana and Michigan City to identify opportunities to transition any vehicles from traditional fuel to biodiesel. Other cities that have implemented this have seen reduced costs and reduced emissions.
    - b. **Project Details:** Ryan Lisek at Drive Clean Indiana has been meeting with the Street Department and will take the lead on next steps.
    - c. **Status:** No updates. **Abby reported as noted.**
  - B. **Solar Power Options for City Government**—Tristan Bogart, Beverly Mack-Martin
    - a. **Project Summary:** Explore the use of solar power for City Government buildings.
    - b. **Project Details:** Report on Michigan City Electric Vehicle Charging Station Survey; solar panel array plan update for installation of solar panels at remaining city buildings without solar, plus battery and inverter installation in those buildings with panels only already
    - c. **Status:** On long-term hold. **Abby reported as noted.**
  - C. **Electric Municipal Vehicle Project: Michigan City Police Department (MCPD) & Transit Department**—Tristan Bogart & Beverly Mack-Martin
    - a. **Project Summary:** Explore the possibilities of adding electric vehicles to the MCPD and Transit fleets

- b. **Project Details:** Met with Chief Corley, he instructed us to collect some additional information about Dodge EVs, as well as up-fitter information. We also have reached out to Performance Services for some additional information regarding solar on the roof and/or field the department has. We have found 3 upfitters thus far that are known to have worked with EV vehicles.
- c. **Status:** No updates. **Issue to be addressed with the new police chief, Chief Forker.**

**D. Green Burials & Burial Sections—Lawrence Zimmer, Abigail Neary**

- a. **Project Summary:** Pursuing options for Green Burial and Burial Section at Swan Lake Cemetery.
- b. **Project Details:** Working with the Michigan City Cemetery Board, we are exploring options for green burial options at Swan Lake. The Commission members and Board have met several times and held discussions with other Indiana Cemeteries that have green burials.
- c. **Status:** This project is on hold for now while the cemetery completes testing and analysis of ground water issues. **Abby reported as noted.**

**E. Waste Reduction/"Garbology"—Em Racine, Julie Smith, Daisy Lee, Bailey Chavis, Angela Reynolds, & Michelle Basta**

- a. **Project Summary:** Pilot project in Washington Park Beach which would include fun, colorful recycling collection containers of native species, like frogs. Collaborative effort with Sacha Gee Burns for a "Re-Use Room", trading, borrowing, donating items to a communal or virtual location for public use.
- b. **Project Details:** \$3000 Community Activation Grant to our Boards and Commissions. These funds, made possible through the Mayor's Charitable Gala, are intended to support meaningful, locally focused initiatives that promote community involvement and visible neighborhood improvement. Continue to explore IDEM grant for recycling projects up to \$100,000; collaborative effort with Sacha Gee Burn of LP Co. Solid Waste District, Shannon Eason of MC Parks & Rec Dept., and Robin Kohn of MC Public Art Committee; contact within NIPSCO for potential public sculpture funding will be approached when plan available.
  - i. Sustainable options for restaurants campaign. Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory for carbon footprint reduction indicates Michigan City and NWI are extremely high for sending trash to landfills instead of practicing refuse, reduce, reuse, and recycle <https://www.in.gov/idem/recycle/resources/indiana-community-recycling-grant-program/>
  - ii. "Re-Use Room"- 1st Presbyterian of Michigan City has agreed to let us use their parking lot off Washington for our possible future Pop-Ups in Spring 2025
- c. **Status Update:** Abby to prepare grant application and share with Committee for review. **Abby reported as noted. Em attended the IDEM meeting and will have new updated info to share.**

**F. Continue Promoting SolSmart Silver Designation with Partner Indiana University Resilience Cohort and Indiana Clean Communities—**

Nancy Moldenhauer, Tristan Bogart, Angie Reynolds, Beverly Mack-Martin

- a. **Project Summary:** Michigan City had received SolSmart Silver Designation and has been pursuing "Gold" designation. Gold designation requires changes by LaPorte County Plan Commission and the Commission in their Solar Ordinance. Applying for membership in Indiana Clean Communities Program which is a free and voluntary program aimed at recognizing and rewarding Indiana communities for implementing a proactive, positive approach to addressing community and social issues through sustainable environmental and wellness projects.
- b. **Project Details:** Nancy will pursue the MC Council authoring a Resolution for the correction(s) then submit to Kelly Aves, National League of Cities, who will forward the passed Resolution to the U.S. Department of Energy for review with hopeful acceptance. Our link "Getting Started With Solar" found on Sustainability Commission Michigan City Government website page has been helping NWI Area residents and businesses with solar panel installations:

- a. <https://www.emichigancity.com/1214/Sustainability-Commission>
- b. <https://solsmart.org/news/soul-power-equitable-solar-workforce-development-in-michigan-city-indiana/> ]
- c. **Status Update:** No updates regarding Sol Smart Gold Designation. Abby has reached out to Indiana Clean Communities to begin the application process. Signature by the Mayor is required as well as some EPA permit details. **Abby reported as noted. Nicole Messcar to make a presentation at the next meeting.**

**G. Carbon Neutral Indiana (CNI)—Nancy Moldenhauer, Faye Moore, & Lawrence Zimmer**

- a. **Project Summary:** Carbon Neutral Indiana's innovative book—entitled *Carbon Neutral Indiana: A Practical Guide to Climate Solutions*—available to buy online includes interviews with Faye and Nancy and shout outs to Lawrence and Deb Chubb. We're backing [asphalt recycling in northern Indiana](#) that cuts carbon emissions by 71%. Indiana repaves 200,000 miles of roads every 15 years. That produces emissions like 16,000 households. It would take 700,000 football fields of forest to soak up that much carbon. We're also paying to [cap abandoned oil wells in Indiana](#). This could prevent 850,000 tons of carbon from reaching the atmosphere in Indiana alone. That's like removing 180,000 cars from the road for a year.
- b. **Project Details:** Open to all residents who would like to consider becoming Carbon Neutral in their household by getting an assessment OR with a monthly donation for CNI to purchase carbon credits to offset your household emissions.
  - i. To schedule an assessment or get an updated calculation for home to become carbon neutral with subscription OR set up a monthly tax-deductible contribution, contact Daniel Poynter, Executive Director and Founder of CNI. Learn more: <https://carbonneutralindiana.org/>
  - ii. Order the book: <https://carbonneutralindiana.org/book/> ;
  - iii. Donate: <https://carbonneutralindiana.org/about/donate/>
- c. **Status Update:** CNA received \$10,000 grant to expand climate solutions journalists from Purdue to Indiana and Ball State Universities. **Abby reported as noted. Beverly attended the Climate Solutions 10<sup>th</sup> Annual summit/conference last week and will report on the student climate journalists project at the next meeting. Julie stated that the purpose of the gatherings is to focus attention on a particular problem in a municipality and come up with solutions.**

**H. NWI Region Resilience (NWIRR) Action Planning Work Group—Nancy Moldenhauer & Tristan Bogart**

- a. **Project Summary:** Awarded National Wildlife Federation's Northwest Indiana regional certification—the first in our country—in September 2023 with coordinated efforts by Kathy Sipple. Continue efforts to enroll more private and public spaces within municipalities and counties.
- b. **Project Details:** Each county and municipality can now enroll more homes, schools, places of worship, businesses, parks, and nature preserves to obtain their individual local NWF pollinator sanctuary certifications.
  - i. To create and certify your pollinator garden: <https://www.nwf.org/Native-Plant-Habitats/Create-and-Certify>
  - ii. Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) has published a sustainability tool kit entitled "Sensible Tools Handbook + Best Practices for a Changing Landscape 2023" available online: [https://nirpc.org/wp-content/uploads/Sensible-Tools-Handbook-Plus-Final\\_12.2023.pdf](https://nirpc.org/wp-content/uploads/Sensible-Tools-Handbook-Plus-Final_12.2023.pdf)
  - iii. MC will secure municipal certification from National Wildlife Federation (NWF) Certification for our local wildlife habitats including households (1 point), common areas (3 points), and schools and nature centers (5 points).
- c. **Status Update:** Current National Wildlife Federation Wildlife Habitat points earned by MC which initially signed up in July 2024: 52 Habitats certified (76 points of 250), Registration (25 points of 40), Education (15 points of 40), Community Outreach (30 points of 50), Administration (5 points of 20); after certified, 30 new signups required annually for

recertification; Nancy received confirmation at NIRPC Environment Meeting that Climate Action Planning has resumed its prior plan to become once again a Greater Chicago Area Regional effort which will include Northwest Indiana--Lake, Porter, and LaPorte Counties  
**Updates sent in by Tristan.**

**I. Soul Power—Donnita Scully, Faye Moore, & Nancy Moldenhauer**

- a. **Project Summary:** Ongoing job training and certification program for solar panel installers and designers in partnership with NAACP LaPorte County, Michigan City Sustainability Commission, IBEW-531, Ivy Tech Valparaiso, WorkOne, and Just Transition NWI; to learn more about this program: <https://naacp3061.org/highlights/soul-power-program/> ; to sign up for future trainings: <https://naacp3061.org/programs/soul-power-program/> ; to make donations to this program: <https://buy.stripe.com/8wM4khgl4cud8gw288>
- b. **Project Details:** 31 Solar Panel Assistants certified [Tier I], 7 Solar Installers are North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP) certified [TIER II], 3 NABCEP Installation Professional and the NEC (National Electrical Code) certified [Tier III], for a total of 41 certificates earned; three of four students have completed the highest level NABCEP Installation professional and the NEC (National Electrical Code) certification with last one still working on it.
- c. **Status Update:** Five of six Tier II students completed the online and classroom coursework; four of five students obtained NABCEP PVA certifications; three students received stipend and trophy for full completion; three of five students have obtained jobs; one student is attempting to get into the IBEW trades apprenticeship program **Faye updated: The last Thursday in August 2 more students were certified – 1 student from Gary received a job already with use of a company car. However, more funding is still needed to continue this program. Donate at links above. Any amount appreciated.**

**J. Solar United Neighbors (SUN)— Andie Jahnz-Davis, Nancy Moldenhauer, Faye Moore, & Abigail Neary**

- a. **Project Summary:** Effort to coordinate SUN, Faith in Place (FIP), places of worship, nonprofits, and Mayor's Office for education on solar installation.
- b. **Project Details:** Brian Flory from SUN has offered his new Rural Associate to hold introductory sessions with Faith in Place for places of worship and nonprofits about solar panel installation on their facilities of which Nancy has requested and Mayor Angie supports; Brian is coordinating engagement of those interested in solar installation for homes and small businesses with ongoing solar panel Zoom sessions, information online, and continuous installer referrals at [bflory@solarunitedneighbors.org](mailto:bflory@solarunitedneighbors.org) ; <https://www.solarunitedneighbors.org/indiana/> ; <https://www.solarunitedneighbors.org/indiana/go-solar/>
- c. **Status Update:** Continue to advocate for community solar installations via online workshops and legislative actions. Be sure to sign up to be included in their emails and announcements; Nancy met up with Brian Flory and Zach Schalk at Climate Leadership Summit 10 in Indy. Abby reported as noted. Larry contributed: SUN was featured in a series in the NYTimes called '50 States, 50 Solutions'. Indiana was also featured in this series in the past.

**K. "Caught YOU Being Green" Engagement—Em Racine, Michelle Basta**

- a. **Social Media-** Shared posts, "Caught YOU Being Green"

**VI. Commission Comments** Beverly went on the city sponsored trip to New Albany, OH to explore how another similar size town is handling the development of massive data centers. The group met with the local mayor and economic development commission. They have 15-18 of them and are embracing them as a major economic driver. The centers have elaborate security and the visitors were not permitted inside. They also use massive amounts of water per day. They employ a small workforce. + Beverly also stated that the Midwest Energy Consortium, a group she helped found, has acquired a patent for a biodegradable casket – getting us one step closer to making green burial a reality. + Lawrence reported on an article in the Herald-Dispatch about a group in LaPorte called 463GOP having a speaker in

town who would appear to be a climate change denier. + Faye reminded us about the 'REAL MEN WEAR PINK' Gala on 9.20 at the Orak Shrine. A fund raiser for Womens' Health and Breast Cancer Awareness. + Faye also reported on the 'I LOST A LOVE ONE' event at the Senior Center on 9.21.

**VII. Public Comments** Ms. Leslie Shad expressed her concern about the city's tree ordinance and how it needs updating. She suggested creating public/private partnerships to plant and conserve trees.

**VIII. Announcements**

Help promote event and invite people to Northwest Indiana Green Drinks, Thursday, October 2nd, 6:30 pm, via Save the Dunes Facebook Live or for Zoom link, contact: [Em@savedunes.org](mailto:Em@savedunes.org). Topic on "Birds", will be presented by artist Jen Johnson, Chicago Bird Alliance Program Chair and Audubon Great Lakes Wild Indigo Associate. Abby announced.

**XI. Adjournment** at 5:20

Submitted by Lawrence Zimmer