

# Commission on Sustainability



## MICHIGAN CITY INDIANA

Thursday, November 13, 2025, 4:30 pm  
City Hall, EOC Room Downstairs

### MINUTES

(ALCO recording link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4d6JJZuSvtE> )

#### Michigan City Sustainability Commissioners:

- Tristan Bogart (Sustainability Commission Appointment; 7/10/25-7/10/27) **Present**
- Beverly Mack-Martin (Represents Economic Development Council; 6/4/25- 5/1/27) **Absent**
- 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) **Absent**
- Julie Smith (City Council Appointment; 5/7/25-5/27) **Present**
- Lawrence Zimmer- (Sustainability Commission Appointment 3/6/24-5/4/26) **Present**

**Public Works Department Liason:** Gianna Galante **Excused**

**City Council Liaison:** Nancy Moldenhauer **Present**

- I. **Roll Call** **A quorum was present**
- II. **Approval of October 2025 Minutes** **Unanimously approved as revised by Nancy**
- III. **Project Teams**
  - A. **Explore Use of Biodiesel by City Fleet**—Abigail Neary, 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 to reengage Street Department. **Abby reported as stated.**
  - 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 stated.**
  - C. **Electric Municipal Vehicle Project: Michigan City Police Department (MCPD) & Transit Department**—Tristan Bogart & Beverly Mack-Martin, Abigail Neary
    - 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 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. New grants are available from Drive Clean Indiana for police vehicles via Ryan Lisek. Abby reported as stated. Tristan noted that Chief Forker is aware of this. Nancy noted that neighboring communities have received grants for this. Faye added that MC is offering free bus service through the end of the year as a way of helping those who are struggling financially. General discussion followed regarding loss of SNAP benefits.

**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 stated.

**E. Recycle Smart, Do Your Part/ Waste Reduction—Em Racine, Julie Smith & Daisy Lee**

- 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/>
- c. **Status Update:** Project Team is revising application for submission. Nancy stated that she has gotten a professional graphic designer to design the campaign.

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

Nancy Moldenhauer, Tristan Bogart & 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. Public Works team is supporting the completion of the application for Indiana Clean Community Program. Commission voted last meeting to approve participating in Indiana Clean Community Program. It appears that we may already qualify at the Bronze or Silver levels with our projects already completed. Abby attended the annual meeting online.

**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. Climate solutions journalists will author articles for Purdue, Indiana, and Ball State Universities’ student newspapers
- 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:** No updates. Abby reported as stated.

**H. National Wildlife Federation (NWF)**—Nancy Moldenhauer, Tristan Bogart & Julie Smith

- 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:** There have been no new enrollments, and statistics remain the same. 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 Tristan reported as stated and Julie plans to speak with the MC Parks Department to promote this program.

**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:** -- We continue to look for grants to sustain our program. We are currently submitting grants as we speak. Advisory Board and workers needed for Soul Power! If you are interested, please contact Donnita Scully at [donnita4sfhs@hotmail.com](mailto:donnita4sfhs@hotmail.com) ..... please! We will meet quarterly starting in October. Donations are being requested for and accepted to support Soul Power. **Faye provided updates on the program from the NAACP website. This project needs financial support. Learn more and donate at links above.**

**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; Abby reported as stated. Nancy noted that SUN helps residents and businesses go solar. She also reminded us that, unfortunately, the Federal tax credit is ending 12.31.25.

**K. Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC)'s Environment Committee's Climate Action Plan**

- a. **Project Summary:** NIRPC Environment Committee's Climate Action Plan has completed its prior commitment to become once again a Greater Chicago Area Regional effort to create a Climate Action Plan which will include Northwest Indiana--Lake, Porter, and LaPorte Counties
- b. **Project Details:** Headed by NIRPC, NWI will return to create a collaborative effort to author a NWI Specific Climate Action Plan
- c. **Status Update:** Chicago Area Climate Action Plan has finally been completed! Focus of NIRPC will once again return to the Northwest Indiana Region. It suggested that interested individuals could meet during the off months of the quarterly NIRPC Environmental Committee's Climate Meeting to work on it. **Abby reported as stated.**

**L. "Caught YOU Being Green" Engagement—Em Racine**

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

**M. VOTE:**

- a. Pass our Officer's approval of signing onto the letter with Indiana Conservation Voters group letter regarding the protection of our water quality. "The undersigned organizations write to express our strong support for increasing authorized funding levels for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) when the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee takes action to reauthorize the program. Conversely, we would strongly oppose efforts to reduce authorized funding below the current level." **Voted on and passed unanimously.**
- b. New Project Team Creation: Sustainable Building – Larry Zimmer, Sheila Matias, Sheree Wilson, and Nancy Mouldenhauer

**VI. Commission Comments**

"Recycle Smart: Do Your Part!", Wednesday, November 19<sup>th</sup>,--note change in date from 12<sup>th</sup>--5:30 pm, Michigan City Hall, EOC Room, hands-on workshop presented by Sacha Gee Burns, program sponsored by City of Michigan City, MC Refuse Department, MC Sustainability Commission, and LaPorte County Solid Waste District **On November 12 the city held a recycling workshop: Only 15% gets recycled, don't bag it, many more items are now accepted like spray bottle nozzles, medicine bottles, black No. 6 plastic, plastic plant pots, Styrofoam, wax lined paper containers. Total cleansing is not necessary but a good rinse to get rid of any food is essential. There will be another workshop in the spring. Nancy thanked Sacha Gee Burns from the Waste District for her expert presentation.**

**VII. Public Comments** **Beach clean-ups continue in the spring.**

**VIII. Announcements** **Saturday April 25, 2026 will be the next EARTH DAY EXTRAVAGANZA. We are looking for individuals or groups to host tables. Contact Andie Janz-Davis.**

Per customary winter break, Northwest Indiana Green Drinks will not be meeting the month of December. January 8<sup>th</sup> (second Thursday of the month, not the first Thursday due to New Years Day) will see the highly anticipated return of Betsy Maher, Executive Director of Save the Dunes, to introduce and overview of all the exciting new ventures being undertaken in 2026! **Via Zoom and Facebook Live.**

**XI. Adjournment** **at 5:11.**

**Submitted by Lawrence Zimmer**