

# Commission on Sustainability



## MICHIGAN CITY INDIANA

Thursday, February 12, 2026, 4:30 pm  
City Hall, EOC Room Downstairs

### *Meeting MINUTES (shown in italics; recording available on ALCO YouTube channel)*

#### Michigan City Sustainability Commissioners:

- Tristan Bogart (Sustainability Commission Appointment; 7/10/25-7/10/27) *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) *EXCUSED*
- Lawrence Zimmer- (Sustainability Commission Appointment 3/6/24-5/4/26) *PRESENT*

**City Council Co-Liaisons:** Nancy Moldenhauer and Daisy Lee *BOTH PRESENT*

I. **Roll Call** *A quorum was present.*

II. **Approval of January 2026 Minutes** *Unanimously approved.*

#### III. **Project Teams**

- A. Explore Use of Compressed Natural Gas by City Fleet**—Councilman-at-Large Don Pryzbylinski, Abigail Neary
- a. **Project Summary:** Working with Drive Clean Indiana and Michigan City to identify opportunities to transition vehicles from traditional diesel to compressed natural gas. Other cities that have implemented this have seen reduced costs and reduced emissions.
  - b. **Project Details:** Ryan Lisek of Drive Clean Indiana along with Councilman Don Prysbylinski and Shong Smith of the Street Department under Central Services are gathering data for grant applications.
  - c. **Status:** Councilman Don Pryzbylinski is coordinating efforts of Drive Clean Indiana and the Street Department under Central Services to gather information for grant applications  
*As reported above by Abby.*
- 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.  
*As reported above by Abby.*

- 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 Forker, he instructed us to collect some additional information about Dodge EVs, as well as upfitment information. We have found 3 upfitters thus far that are known to have worked with EV vehicles.
  - c. **Status:** Meeting held on February 6<sup>th</sup> with the MCPD. They will be exploring grants that are available from Drive Clean Indiana for non-patrol police vehicles and charging stations.  
*As reported above by Abby.*
- 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.  
*As reported above by Abby.*
- E. Waste Reduction: “Recycle Smart, Do Your Part” & “Ask for a Straw and Cutlery”—**Em Racine, Julie Smith, Daisy Lee & Nancy Moldenhauer, Refuse Department Director Chris Carter
- a. **Project Summary:** A city-wide effort will be launched to reduce waste via two campaigns, one called “Recycle Smart, Do Your Part” and another around “Ask for a Straw and Cutlery”
  - b. **Project Details:** \$3000 Community Activation Grant awarded to our Commission. 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 Matt Kubik of MC Public Art Committee; contact within NIPSCO for potential public recycling sculpture funding will be approached when plan available. Explore sustainable options for expanded restaurant projects. 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/>
- Status Update:** Mayor Angie has graciously granted us an extension on project completion date; design and marketing consultant will return from overseas this coming Wednesday and will be ready to coordinate pro-bono services once acclimated to return home by setting up a meeting via Zoom.  
*As reported above by Abby. In addition, Lawrence volunteered to author an email letter to Sacha at Solid Waste District, Chris Carter at Parks Dept, and Terry Gretham at Special Events to kick-start more aggressive recycling at all city special events this summer. Lawrence also suggested, with the Mayor’s and Council’s blessing, a city-wide experiment to encourage more recycling and to help reduce landfill tipping fees: Following an aggressive marketing campaign on all media platforms, the city would need to see a substantial reduction in tipping fees (50% to start?) in a 6 month period in order to not have to begin charging residents for garbage removal, which is currently a no charge service. Lawrence will send this idea in an email to the Mayor, Nancy, and Daisy. All agreed this was a good idea.*
- F. Continue Promoting SolSmart Silver Designation with Partner Indiana University Resilience Cohort**  
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:** Nancy connected with Daniel Straka, Senior Field Manager of Land & Liberty Coalition Indiana, at Renewable Energy Day (RED) at the Statehouse to coordinate with LaPorte County Plan Commission and LaPorte County Commission to hopefully get language and data in Solar Panel Ordinance corrected in order to obtain SolSmart Gold Designation this year.  
*As reported above by Nancy.*

**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.  
*As reported above by Abby.*

**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:** Waiting for Julie and Abby’s acceptance of Tristan’s invite in order to monitor account, so more have access to data. Julie to follow up with common areas, schools, and nature centers to earn higher points with less effort. 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 July2024: 53 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.

*As reported above by Abby. In addition, Nancy added that Leslie Chad, a local resident from Evanston, IL, who is behind the Green Evanston effort, would like to lend her expertise to our efforts here. She will be a speaker at the 3.5 Green Drinks.*

**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:** -- No update. NAACP continues to seek and has submitted grants to sustain Soul Power. Looking for Advisory Board Members, so contact Donnita Scully at [donnita4sfhs@hotmail.com](mailto:donnita4sfhs@hotmail.com) if interested. Donations to train solar panel installers can be made at: <https://buy.stripe.com/8wM4khgl4cud8gw288>

*As reported above by Abby. In addition, Faye noted an Advisory Board meeting is to be held on 2.18 at 11 at the Hope Center.*

**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:** Front page article and photo appeared in the LaPorte County Herald-Dispatch on “plug-in” solar which was a featured new Bill for Renewable Energy Day (RED) at the Statehouse earlier this month. “Plug-in solar aims to boost access to renewable energy” by

Anthony Hudson, Staff Writer: [https://www.lpheralddispatch.com/news/local/plug-in-solar-aims-to-boost-access-to-renewable-energy/article\\_29a3ce7c-70ca-56ae-a22b-f76682753703.html](https://www.lpheralddispatch.com/news/local/plug-in-solar-aims-to-boost-access-to-renewable-energy/article_29a3ce7c-70ca-56ae-a22b-f76682753703.html)

*Nancy reported that the seed has been planted in the Indiana House and Senate to allow 'plug-in' solar to the state. Please contact your representatives to say that the bill should get a reading. These plug-in units can have a 2–3-year payback and help residents reduce their energy bills. Em offered to post this info on social media.*

**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. Suggested that interested individuals could meet during the off months of the quarterly NIRPC Environmental Committee's Climate Meeting to work on it.
- c. **Status Update:** No update.  
*Nancy noted she was at a meeting where the concept of 'clean steel' was presented. Local steel maker Cleveland Cliffs is exploring this new electric technology which could reduce fossil fuels consumption by this industry.*

**L. Indiana Clean Community Program—Abigail Neary, Gianna Galante**

- a. **Project Summary:** IDEM's Clean Community Program seeks to make Indiana a cleaner, healthier, more sustainable place to live. The Clean Community Program is about ensuring a better quality of life for all Hoosiers, now and for generations to come. The Clean Community Program 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:** Public Works team is supporting the completion of and Sustainability Commission approved participating in Indiana Clean Community Program.
- c. **Status Update:** Application in process of being completed.  
*No updates as reported by Abby.*

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

- a. **Social Media-** Shared posts, "Caught YOU Being Green."
- b. **Earth Month Extravaganza** - April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2026, 12-3pm, Michigan City Senior Center  
*Requests to have a display table at this event are still being taken by Andie Jahnz-Davis.*
- c. **Discussion Item :** Citizens, government agencies, businesses, organizations, and educational institutions are invited to submit nominations on behalf of others. Self-nominations (applications) are also encouraged. Eligible projects must have occurred in Indiana and been implemented in 2024 or 2025.

IDEM and the Governor's Office will present seven awards, one in each of the following categories:

- Energy Efficiency/Renewable Resources
- Environmental Education/Outreach
- Five-Year Continuous Improvement
- Greening the Government
- Land Use/Conservation
- Pollution Prevention
- Recycling/Reuse

*The deadline for award nominations is 3.6. Abby moved to nominate Michigan City's Earth Month Extravaganza in the Environmental Education/Outreach category. It was seconded and unanimously approved. Nancy volunteered to prepare the nomination documents.*

**VOTE: Policy Recommendations for the Water Resources Development Act of 2026.** The Water Resources Development Act is one of the main things the Water Protection Network has had influence on in the past, so getting as many organizations to sign on as possible is a high priority. The undersigned XX organizations urge you to include the reforms outlined below in the next Water Resources Development Act (WRDA). These common-sense reforms would build on recent Water Resources Development Acts to keep communities safe, allow our treasured wildlife to thrive, and protect billions of dollars of federal and state investments. 1) Improve Project Cost Estimates. 2) Facilitate Nonstructural Solutions. 3) Utilize Federal and State Expertise. 4) Clarify Need to Offset Impacts from Operations and Maintenance. 5) Improve the Corps' Infrastructure Inventory and Disposition Study Process. 6) Amend the National Levee Safety Program and Authorization of Floodplain Functions Mapping Initiative. 7) Maximize Emergency Debris Removal Benefits. 8) Create an Integrated Floodplain Management Pilot Program. Our organizations urge Congress to adopt these common sense, cost-effective, and multi-benefit reforms to protect communities, wildlife, and taxpayers.

*There was a motion that was seconded and unanimously approved to support and sign on to this effort.*

- IV. Public Comments:** *Nancy thanked everyone for all that is been done by our commission recently.*
- V. Commission Comments:** *Abby heard about a developer that would like to look into turning coal ash into an agricultural product. Discussed getting a sample bucket of coal ash for a trial. Nancy noted that all the coal-ash has been remediated so may not be an opportunity.*
- VI. Announcements:**
- *Faye reminded everyone about Black History Month events including Black History trivia night and a gospel fest. More details on the MC Black History FB page.*
  - *Nancy: A 2<sup>nd</sup> recycling workshop is coming in April*
  - *May brings a pollinator plant event.*
  - *March Green Drinks, 3.5 at 6:30 will feature previously mentioned Leslie Chad and Cathy Sipple. See below.*
  - *Daisy: Family STEM night is Wednesday 3.18 from 5-6:30.*

Join Save the Dunes

Join Leslie Chad and Kathy Sipple as they share their knowledge of and experience with native plants and pollinator gardens. Between the two of them, they possess decades of community gardening and certifying yards and parks with the National Wildlife Federation. Northwest Indiana Green Drinks will meet on Thursday, March 5th, 6:30 pm, at Save the Dunes Facebook Live or via Zoom. Link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86172331595> . For questions and more information: [em@savedunes.org](mailto:em@savedunes.org).

**VII. Adjournment at 5:40.**

*Submitted by Lawrence Zimmer*