

# Commission on Sustainability



## MICHIGAN CITY INDIANA

Thursday, May 14, 2026, 4:30 pm  
City Hall, EOC Room Downstairs

*MINUTES (Shown in italics; view recording on the ALCO YouTube channel)*

### 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) PRESENT
- Faye Moore – Co-Chair (Sustainability Commission Appointment; 5/1/26-5/1/28) PRESENT
- Abigail Neary- Chair (Sustainability Commission Appointment; 5/1/26- 5/1/28) PRESENT
- Em Racine (Mayoral Appointment; 3/12/26-3/19/28) PRESENT
- Lawrence Zimmer- (Common Council Appointment 5/1/26-5/1/28) PRESENT

**City Council Liaisons:** Nancy Moldenhauer & Daisy Lee

*BOTH PRESENT*

*VISITOR: SCOTT MELAND*

- I. **Roll Call** *At 4:32, a quorum was present*
- II. **Approval of April 2026 Minutes** *Unanimously approved*
- III. **Guest Update on Earth Month Extravaganza on 4.25** *Abby read a summary of the day's events sent by Andie Jahnz-Davis who could not attend. Highlights: More than 500 guests attended, there were hikes, thousands of tree saplings given away, 27 tables representing 38 groups sharing info and hands on activities, electric vehicles were on display, a beach clean-up, considered a 'Saturday School' event, thanks given to all who participated and attended.*
- IV. **Project Teams**
  - A. **Explore Use of Compressed Natural Gas by City Fleet**—Councilman-at-Large Don Przybylinski, 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 Przybylinski and Shong Smith of the Street Department under Central Services are gathering data for grant applications.
    - c. **Status:** No update from Councilman Don Przybylinski i regarding coordinating efforts of Drive Clean Indiana and the Street Department under Central Services to gather information for grant applications.  
*Abby reported as noted above.*

- 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 above.*
- 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 up-fitment information. We have found 3 upfitters thus far that are known to have worked with EV vehicles.
  - c. **Status:** MCPD is exploring grants that are available from Drive Clean Indiana for police vehicles and charging stations.  
*Tristan reported that a grant has been applied for with a response due in July.*
- 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:** The Cemetery Board is meeting on May 14<sup>th</sup> to discuss testing and analysis of ground water issues.  
*Lawrence reported that he had just come from the Cemetery trustees meeting where the superintendent reported that the ground water burial test showed no significant movement of the buried upside-down vault. This is a positive development. He also commented that Green Burials will most likely be limited to the ‘Serenity’ section of Swan Lake cemetery where the water table is not an issue.*  
*Another report will be given regarding public interest at the June meeting with a vote by the board expected at that time. All are encouraged to send letters of support and attend on June 11 at 3 at the Swan Lake office meeting room.*
- E. Waste Reduction: “Recycle Smart, Do Your Part”, “Ask for a Straw and Cutlery”, & Festival Recycling**—Em Racine, Daisy Lee, Lawrence Zimmer, 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”. Project members, City Directors & Supervisors agreed on a pilot recycling trial at a couple festivals this year supported by a big recycling dumpster to be purchased by our Mayor which will be filled by smaller cardboard box containers labeled with paper stickers indicating they’re only for plastic bottles and aluminum cans throughout the park yet placed far away from the trash containers to prevent contamination while the MC Events Director is to work with the food trucks indicating MC would prefer cardboard water containers or aluminum water bottles over plastic plus require placement of vendors’ large broken-down cardboard boxes into the recycling dumpster.
  - 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/>

- c. **Status Update:** Recycle Smart: Do Your Part” was held on Wednesday, April 15th, with a dozen participants. Much helpful information was disseminated and questions asked of Sacha Gee Burns, of LaPorte County Solid Waste District, were pertinent; a recommendation has been made to have an educational video made with Sacha and Chris Carter of MC Refuse Department. Em and Nancy to follow up with pro-bono design and marketing professional Em reported as noted above.

#### 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:** SolSmart program has been terminated by The Federal Administration once again proving that elections have consequences.  
*Nancy reported that this project should be removed from our agenda going forward as this program no longer exists. We should be proud of the designation we attained for MC and the plaque in the City Hall lobby will be a reminder of those efforts/accomplishments.*

#### 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:** New articles in Purdue and Ball State student newspapers: “Celery Bog offers unique natural space for community, wildlife” by Amelia Angeline  
[https://www.purdueexponent.org/city\\_state/celery-bog-offers-unique-natural-space-for-community-wildlife/article\\_3c9ae287-e046-4a47-9171-1c429bc97e6f.html](https://www.purdueexponent.org/city_state/celery-bog-offers-unique-natural-space-for-community-wildlife/article_3c9ae287-e046-4a47-9171-1c429bc97e6f.html)

“How AZO uses waste collection to connect with the community four generations later” by Bentley Ford  
<https://www.ballstatedailynews.com/article/how-azo-services-management-uses-waste-collection-to-connect-with-the-community-four-generations-later-20260427>  
*Abby reported as noted above.*

#### 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. New statewide initiative, entitled “Hoosier Habitats Challenge”, coordinated by Kathy Sipple with partners Earth Charter Indiana and National Wildlife Federation, is an effort to certify Indiana to become the first ever statewide community wildlife habitat in the whole country! Engage here:  
[https://www.earthcharterindiana.org/nwf?fbclid=IwY2xjawQbLrxleHRuA2F1bQIxMABicmlkETFHV2Y4U1pYQ0RHR1pJVkVrc3JOYwZhcHBfaWQQMjlyMDM5MTc4ODIwMDg5MgABHqEM7yQsBLXWeHdzvAAxMw6yOfNFqT3T6Jb4eSEFbiw\\_bpvThAy074W-SoNi\\_aem\\_9BKAjkr9JyVHLF-hFEzKFw](https://www.earthcharterindiana.org/nwf?fbclid=IwY2xjawQbLrxleHRuA2F1bQIxMABicmlkETFHV2Y4U1pYQ0RHR1pJVkVrc3JOYwZhcHBfaWQQMjlyMDM5MTc4ODIwMDg5MgABHqEM7yQsBLXWeHdzvAAxMw6yOfNFqT3T6Jb4eSEFbiw_bpvThAy074W-SoNi_aem_9BKAjkr9JyVHLF-hFEzKFw)
- 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.
- To create and certify your pollinator garden: <https://www.nwf.org/Native-Plant-Habitats/Create-and-Certify>
  - 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)
  - 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 2 new enrollments! Current National Wildlife Federation Wildlife Habitat points earned by MC (which initially signed up in July 2024): 55 Habitats certified (79 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. Will have two more Education events to add when the February NWI Green Drinks on native plants and pollinator gardens is submitted from YouTube as well as Earth Month Extravaganza. Pollinator Garden Planting Workshop” had 40 participants who took home four natives each to replant at home with presentation by Leslie Shad, former National Wildlife Federation Board Member, and Kathy Sipple, Resiliency Coordinator of Earth Charter Indiana and founder NWI Region Resilience, on Saturday, May 9th.  
*Abby reported as noted above.*

#### 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], 4 NABCEP Installation Professional and the NEC (National Electrical Code) certified [Tier III], for a total of 42 certificates earned; total of four students have completed the highest level NABCEP Installation professional and the NEC (National Electrical Code) certification!
- c. **Status Update:** -- Soul Power Project is now a stand alone 501 (c) 3 project managed by Donnita Scully and a newly formed Board. At our June 2026 Sustainability meeting we will have the new link to this project, website and donation form. Remaining Tier III student passed test for the NABCEP PV Installation professional exam.  
*Faye reported as noted above.*

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

- a. **Project Summary:** Effort to coordinate Solar United Neighbors, Faith in Place (FIP), places of worship, nonprofits, and Mayor's Office for education on solar installation. Cooperatively, their commitment is to build a more democratic, transparent, and sustainable energy future. Their focus is on energy democracy, energy affordability, and energy freedom for homeowners and rural communities.
- 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:** No update.  
*Abby reported as noted above.*

**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:** Nancy and Kathy Sipple attended the NIRPC Environment Committee in Hammond at which Kathy Luther presented data on greenhouse gas emissions and pollution for NW Indiana. She desires to attend our next meeting to present her findings to us and ask for feedback regarding relevancy and application.  
*Nancy reported as noted above.*

**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 submitted!  
*Abby reported that an update is expected next month.*

**M. “Caught YOU Being Green” Engagement—Em Racine**

- a. **Social Media-** Shared posts, “Caught YOU Being Green”  
*Em reported that she will post updates on all ‘socials’ as well as links to these meetings on ALCO. She also asked for nominations for the Caught You Being Green Business Award and the Nora L. Schultz Tribute Award for the Individual’s sustainability award. Please submit for the June meeting.*

**Vote :**

**VOTE #1:** The undersigned XXX public interest groups from XX states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico, strongly oppose the Environmental Protection Agency’s (“EPA”) proposed Legacy/CCRMU Amendments Rule (“Proposed Rule”). Our organizations represent more than a million Americans concerned about hazardous pollution from leaking coal combustion residuals (“CCR” or coal ash) surface impoundments, landfills, and “beneficial use” sites. The Proposed Rule will severely harm water resources and the health of communities across the nation. We urge EPA to immediately withdraw this dangerous and illegal proposal and instead aggressively enforce the federal coal ash rules that are currently protecting the health and environment of Americans. Failure to do so will result in widespread harm from toxic waste, inflicted with full knowledge of the consequences by your EPA.

EPA’s Proposed Rule would:

- Exempt more than 700 newly regulated coal ash dumpsites (CCR Management Units) from the rule entirely. These older ash dump sites are found at nearly every coal plant, and [CW1] many show evidence of contributing to groundwater contamination.
- Authorize state and federal permit writers to allow companies to close units with [GK2] coal ash in contact with and contaminating groundwater.
- Grant state agencies and EPA broad discretion to weaken monitoring and cleanup requirements at all coal ash dumps upon the request of utilities. The Proposed Rule creates new exemptions allowing companies to seek permits that may result in no cleanup being required at many sites.
- Allow states and EPA to increase the amount of cobalt, lithium, molybdenum and lead permitted in coal ash-contaminated water above federal safe standards.
- Avoid or delay the monitoring, closure and cleanup of hundreds of legacy coal ash ponds by removing deadlines set by the 2024 Legacy Rule and allowing industry to claim that past, ineffective cleanups obviate the need for any further action.
- Remove all specific safety standards for “piles” of coal ash waste no matter how large they are, or where they are located.
- Eliminate all safeguards on the use of coal ash as a substitute for clean soil both on and off coal plant properties, even in such places as playgrounds, residential areas, and parks.

The Proposed Rule, if finalized, will hurt generations of Americans by depriving them of clean water, air and soil. It will facilitate the ongoing spread of hazardous and persistent chemicals that will harm the health of millions and be difficult or impossible to clean up. The Proposed Rule ensures that the mess created over decades by U.S. coal plants will be the responsibility of the American taxpayer in communities least able to shoulder the cost. By any measure, the Proposed Rule is contrary to science, dangerous, unfair, and illegal.

*We voted on and unanimously approved to sign on to this letter. Beverly also suggested that individuals may sign on to the agency’s website and leave comments.*

## **VOTE #2: Request of In-Person Hearings by EPA for Closures of Coal Ash Waste Sites**

The undersigned XX groups write to formally request that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (“EPA”) hold an in-person public hearing on its proposed rule, Hazardous and Solid Waste Management System: Disposal of Coal Combustion Residuals From Electric Utilities; Legacy/CCRMU Amendments, Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OLEM-2020-0107 and extend the comment period for 30 days.

EPA has announced that it will hold only an *online* public hearing on this proposal. We respectfully urge EPA to supplement this format with one or more in-person hearings, particularly in communities located near coal ash disposal sites that will be harmed by this rulemaking.

This proposed rule would make devastating rollbacks to essential coal ash protections, including rescinding all coal combustion residuals (“CCR”) management unit requirements, weakening closure standards for legacy ponds, removing safeguards for coal ash waste piles, allowing coal ash ponds to close with ash in groundwater, and eliminating safeguards for large-scale unencapsulated coal ash placement on land (“beneficial use”), among other dangerous measures. The working-class communities most at risk from these changes often lack reliable Internet access and are least able to participate effectively in an exclusively online format.

The Proposed Rule raises many critical issues that require close examination and thoughtful consideration. The Proposed Rule would significantly weaken and/or eliminate fundamental safeguards governing the disposal of CCR despite widespread harm to health and the environment caused by toxic coal ash, one of the largest industrial waste streams in the nation. Given the national implications and substantial risk of harm posed by the Proposed Rule, the current 60-day comment period fails to provide the public with “ample opportunity” to comment.

*Discussed, voted on and unanimously approved to sign on to this letter.*

## **VOTE #3: Comments in Response to the Department of the Army Corps of Engineers’ Notice of Solicitation of Input on Potential Future Changes to Nationwide Permits, Docket No. COE-2026-0001**

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters across the country, the undersigned XX organization submit the following comments in response to the Department of the Army Corps of Engineer’s (“Corps”) notice soliciting input on potential future changes to the Clean Water Act (CWA) nationwide permit program. Our organizations have a long history of working to improve management and conservation of the nation’s rivers, streams, and wetlands, including by working to ensure that the nationwide permits (NWP) issued by the Corps’ are utilized responsibly in a manner that results in no more than minimal environmental impact, as required by the law.

The requirements of the CWA are clear. General permits may be issued only for categories of activities that are similar in nature and that “will cause only minimal adverse environmental effects when performed separately and will have only minimal cumulative adverse effects on the environment.” 33 U.S.C. § 1344(e). To comply with these vital directives, our organizations urge you to implement the following recommendations.

It includes the following recommended protections:

- \* Ensure that each NWP Complies with the Clean Water Act’s “Minimal Harm” Standard
- \* Ensure that each NWP Complies with the Clean Water Act’s “Similar in Nature” Standard
- \* Limits on Impacts, Including Linear Feet
- \* Adopt Preconstruction Reporting Requirements for All NWPs
- \* Incorporate Consideration of Nature Based Solutions in all NWPs
- \* Eliminate Use of Multiple NWPs to Authorize Individual Segments of High Impact Projects

*Discussed, voted on and unanimously approved to sign on to this letter.*

**V. Public Comments**

*Scott Meland, 200 Kenwood Place : Cemeterys were not included in the tree inventory ; he suggests recommended tree list for memorials ; perhaps add a native perennial garden in the cemetery ; data centers landscaping should include native perennials ; finds it ironic that the president is blocking clean energy projects while also declaring a fossil fuel energy emergency.*

*Nancy : It is important for all of us to keep supporting Congressman Frank Mrvan's stance on these issues and to keep the pressure on Senators Young and Banks to do the right thing and thank them when appropriate.*

**VI. Commission Comments** *None*

**VII. Announcements**

*Nancy – Green Drinks is Thursday June 4 at 6:30 which will feature CJ from Chicago's Lincoln Park Zoo's 'Out in Nature' program. Via Zoom link (email [em@savethedunes.org](mailto:em@savethedunes.org)) or FB Live.*

*Em – Beach clean-ups have moved to Monday mornings from 8:30-10 at MC Washington Park Beach.*

*Em- MC Farmers Market open and there will be a walking tour Sat 5.23 from the train station through the Uptown Arts District to the market starting at 10am. Free and all are invited.*

**VIII. Adjournment** *at 5:30*

*Submitted by Lawrence Zimmer, Secretary*