

Commission on Sustainability



MICHIGAN CITY INDIANA

Thursday, July 9, 2026, 4:30 pm
City Hall, EOC Room Downstairs

MEETING MINUTES (Shown in italics; recording available on YouTube: Access LaPorte County)

Michigan City Sustainability Commissioners:

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|---|----------------|
| • Tristan Bogart (Sustainability Commission Appointment; 7/10/25-7/10/27) | <i>PRESENT</i> |
| • Beverly Mack-Martin (Represents Economic Development Council; 6/4/25- 5/1/27) | <i>PRESENT</i> |
| • Faye Moore – Co-Chair (Sustainability Commission Appointment; 5/1/26-5/1/28) | <i>PRESENT</i> |
| • Abigail Neary- Chair (Sustainability Commission Appointment; 5/1/26- 5/1/28) | <i>PRESENT</i> |
| • Em Racine (Mayoral Appointment; 3/12/26-3/19/28) | <i>EXCUSED</i> |
| • Lawrence Zimmer- (Common Council Appointment 5/1/26-5/1/28) | <i>PRESENT</i> |
| • Dale Batz - - (Common Council Appointment 6/3/26-6/2/28) | <i>PRESENT</i> |

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

I. **Roll Call** *At 4:32 and a quorum was present*

II. **Approval of June 2026 Minutes** *Voted on and unanimously approved*

III. **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 updates from Councilman Don Przybylinski.

No updates as reported 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. Solar panels at Police Station and Senior Center are down and need repair.

Tristan to pursue solar panel repairs with the Board of Works

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-fitment information. We have found 3 upfitters thus far that are known to have worked with EV vehicles.
- c. **Status:** MCPD has applied for the grant available from Drive Clean Indiana for police vehicles and charging stations.

No updates. It was noted that the car charging station at the Lighthouse Museum needs to be replaced, it has never worked. Tesla charge stations can be used by any electric vehicle since it conforms with the North American standard.

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 met on June 11th. They voted on and approved implementation.

Lawrence will continue to monitor next steps with the board and superintendent.

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:** Lawrence made a recommendation 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.

Another meeting is needed to determine why recycling is not happening at special events. Lawrence to pursue with Nancy, Daisy, Chris Carter, Terry Greetham, and the mayor.

F. 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 by Abby. It was noted that student journalists are on summer break.

G. 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=IwY2xjawQbLrxleHRuA2FlbQlxMABicmlkETFHV2Y4U1pYQ0RHR1pJVkVrc3J0YwZhchBfaWQQMjlyMDM5MTc4ODIwMDg5MgABHqEM7yQsBLXWeHdzvAAxMw6yOfNFqT3T6Jb4eSEFbiw_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.
 - 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
 - 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. Current National Wildlife Federation Wildlife Habitat points earned by MC (which initially signed up in July 2024): 59 Habitats certified (83 points of 250) [gained 6], Registration (25 points of 40), Education (35 points of

40) [gained 20], Community Outreach (30 points of 50), Administration (5 points of 20); after certified, 30 new signups required annually for recertification. Have one more Education event to accumulate points for the April NWI Green Drinks on creating native habitats for birds entitled "Building Bird Habitat at Home: Introducing a New Native Landscaping Guide": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gGM1zZev50U>. Hitachi-Sullair is seeking certification for their 7 acres of native wildlife habitat on their Michigan City campus. Nancy with Tristan's assistance sent Media Release to NWF for approval. Will need to ready for and schedule in May 2027 a Proclamation entitled "Garden for Wildlife Month" in City Council.

Tristan reported that goals for the Education & Administration category have been met; Nancy added that beach clean-ups are on Monday mornings (see Announcements); Dale and Tristan volunteered to host a table at the Farmers Market Saturday mornings.

H. 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:** -- NAACP has set up a nonprofit separate from their organization for Soul Power as a 501(c)(3) for fundraising purposes. New website has links to sign up for training and make donations to train solar panel installers: <https://soulpowerinc.org/> Nancy spoke with Kila Ward, Director of the Michigan City Promise Scholarship, who is positive about the possibility of paying tuition for Michigan City residents who want to enroll in Soul Power courses to receive certification with further discussion to continue in the fall.

Abby reported as noted above; Nancy will propose an amendment to the Promise Scholarship Ordinance to the City Council.

I. 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 ; <https://www.solarunitedneighbors.org/indiana/> ; <https://www.solarunitedneighbors.org/indiana/go-solar/>
- c. **Status Update:** Monthly Solar Action Team Meetings. fourth Tuesdays monthly, 6 pm, via Zoom, sign up to receive email invitations in order to RSVP monthly and receive link: <https://solarunitedneighbors.org/actions/join-the-indiana-solar-action-team/>
Abby reported as noted above.

J. 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 updates.

As reported by Abby.

K. 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:** The Mayor's Office is supporting the completion of and Sustainability Commission approved participating in Indiana Clean Community Program.
- c. **Status Update:** No updates.

Abby to pursue with Gianna Galante in the mayor's office.

L. Continue Promoting SolSmart Silver Designation with Partner Indiana University Resilience Cohort
Nancy Moldenhauer, Tristan Bogart & Beverly Mack-Martin

- a. **Project Summary:** Michigan City received SolSmart Silver Designation and had been pursuing Gold designation. Pursuit for Gold Designation has come to an end with the cancellation of this program under the U.S. Department of Energy by this current Administration. Elections have consequences.
- b. **Project Details:** Corrections in the LaPorte County Solar Ordinance by the LaPorte County Plan Commission and the Commission should still be pursued due to mistakes contained within it which affect Michigan City's use of this Ordinance.
- c. **Status Update:** Solar informational landing page needs to be established on MC municipal government website since links for solar information were removed when MC Sustainability Commission page streamlined on new website.

Abby reported as noted above. Nancy to pursue getting the links put back into the city's new website.

M. NWI Clean Air Partners—Em Racine & Nancy Moldenhauer

- a. **Project Summary:** Northwest Indiana Partners for Clean Air (PCA), coordinated by the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM), and the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC), is a coalition of Indiana businesses, industries, government entities, community groups, and individuals that are committed to improving overall air quality and public health through voluntary actions in northwest Indiana. The goal of the coalition is to educate its members and the public about the importance of air quality and what can be done to help reduce ground-level ozone and particulate matter (PM) in Northwest Indiana communities. Learn more: <https://nwipartnersforcleanair.org/>
- b. **Project Details:** Membership is determined based on financial contributions (monetary or in-kind) and number of voluntary actions taken to improve air quality, including energy

conservation, emissions reductions and organizational policies and incentives. Membership is FREE for *Bronze Members* commitment to implementing at least 4 voluntary actions to improve air quality, and for *Green Members* commitment to implementing at least 2 voluntary actions to improve air quality.

- c. **Status Update:** Nancy registered our Sustainability Commission as a Green Member. One of the two required actions for the year have been completed with our electric vehicle showcase at Earth Month Extravaganza.

Nancy noted that we had an air quality action day this past week due to the smoke from the forest fires up north. Tristan suggested inviting Tesla owner 'Ted' to come and speak about all things EV.

N. "Caught YOU Being Green" Engagement—Em Racine

- a. **Social Media-** Shared posts, "Caught YOU Being Green"
b. **Earth Month Extravaganza:** Last Saturday in April- 24th or first weekend in May- 1st

After a brief discussion everyone thought it best to keep the Extravaganza on the last Saturday of April next year (4.24.27) so it stays within Earth Month.

IV. Public Comments

- *Citizen Nancy had several comments : Related to the data center - Phoenix Development and Google are engaging with the city and they are making remarkable progress with our community ; Mayor Angie is keeping an eye on all the boards and commissions, MC has a lot of them, more than most towns our size , they cost about 100k/year ; Nancy would like us to keep meeting monthly and was thankful for all that we all do.*
- *Citizen Beverly has been hearing a lot of good things about our Sustainability Commission, we're a model for other communities.*

V. Commission Comments

Beverly suggested that perhaps Soul Power graduates could participate in the solar panel repairs that are needed as noted earlier. Nancy and Tristan to pursue SUN installers who are bonded and insured.

VI. Announcements

NWI Green Drinks will return Thursday, August 6th, 6:30 pm, via Save the Dunes FB Live and Zoom link from Em@savedunes.org

The topic next month will be 'The Future of Green Steel' with Jack Weinberg, which is particularly relevant here in NW IN. The program will be recorded and available later on YouTube.

Household Hazardous Waste ONLY Collection, Saturday, July 11th, 9 am to 2 pm, Marquette Mall West Parking Lot, an opportunity to get rid of items out of your home, garage, and storage! Sponsored by LaPorte County Solid Waste District. Waste guidelines:

- https://www.solidwastedistrict.com/_files/ugd/766f6e_dae3cb966b20454bbab72565f5131351.pdf
- https://www.solidwastedistrict.com/_files/ugd/766f6e_cdce320deba44326ab9fa1ed88dcfb9e.pdf
- Schedule 2026: <https://www.solidwastedistrict.com/household-hazardous-waste>

Microplastic Remediation, Meeting & Lab Tour (additional), Tuesday, July 14th, 1 pm, Dworkin Student Services and Activities Complex, Westville Campus, Purdue NW, learn about breakthrough technologies and patents received to deal with plastic waste

Abby reported that attendees should RSVP to BabcockD@PNW.edu.

Solar Action Team, Tuesday, July 28th, 6 pm, Solar United Neighbors Indiana, Zoom, register via email and RSVP monthly

Environment Committee Meeting, Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC), Thursday, August 6th, 10 am, 6100 Southport Rd, Portage, IN 46368

Nancy is unable to attend this meeting and asked that one of our members attend in her place.

Monday Mornings Beach Clean-Ups! Show up at 8:30 am and stay until 10 am—or as long as you're able--to become a member of the Michigan City and LaPorte County Solid Waste District crews which make our gorgeous Washington Park Beach even more beautiful. Do you know Sacha Gee Burns and Mike Kilbourne who coordinate these activities by making announcements regarding cancellations due to weather on The Great Michigan City Green Clean FB page? <https://www.facebook.com/groups/549215926250423/>

Michigan City Farmed and Forged Market, 8th & Washington Streets, Saturdays, 8 am to 12 pm, triple SNAP benefits, until Sept. 26th

REACT Expo, November, Drive Clean Indiana, Blue Chip Casino & Events Center (details to follow)

VII. Adjournment at 5:32

Submitted by Lawrence Zimmer, Secretary