

Commission on Sustainability



MICHIGAN CITY
INDIANA

Thursday, August 13, 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)
- Beverly Mack-Martin (Represents Economic Development Council; 6/4/25- 5/1/27)
- Faye Moore – Co-Chair (Sustainability Commission Appointment; 5/1/26-5/1/28)
- Abigail Neary- Chair (Sustainability Commission Appointment; 5/1/26- 5/1/28)
- Em Racine (Mayoral Appointment; 3/12/26-3/19/28)
- Lawrence Zimmer- (Common Council Appointment 5/1/26-5/1/28)
- Dale Batz - - (Common Council Appointment 6/3/26-6/2/28)

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

- I. **Roll Call** *All present except as noted. We had a quorum.*
- II. **Approval of July 2026 Minutes** *Unanimously approved.*
- III. **Vote: Add reusable bag project with Al's Supermarket to Waste Reduction Project Team** *Dale Batz suggested this new project to encourage retailers to offer money back for every reusable bag a customer brings in and uses. This will be added to the 'E' project team for Waste Reduction. Voted on and approved.*
- 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:** Councilman Don Przybylinski reported that Darrel Garbackic, Central Maintenance Director is still working on getting a bid from a contractor on getting the Maintenance Garage fitted to repair CNG (compressed natural gas) vehicles.

Abby reported as stated above.

- B. **Solar Power Options for City Government**—Tristan Bogart, Beverly Mack-Martin

- a. **Project Summary:** Explore the use of solar panels and arrays to save on utilities and lower carbon footprint for City Government buildings.
- b. **Project Details:** Plan 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 pause; Solar panels at Police Station and Senior Center are down and need repair

Nancy and Tristan reported that they are moving forward on getting the repairs made.

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 upfitment information. We have found 3 upfitters thus far that are known to have worked with EV vehicles.
- c. **Status:** MCPD was not selected for the 2026 grant available from Drive Clean Indiana for police vehicles and charging stations. We will continue to pursue other grant and funding options.

Tristan reported that MCPD was not selected for a grant but will continue looking for other opportunities.

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 August 13th. Larry to share meeting details and rules for Green Burials.

Lawrence reported that the Board of Cemetery Trustees has not officially approved the Rules for Green Burials yet. He will share them once approved.

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, and Sacha Gee Burns

- 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:** Recommendation made to have an educational video made with Sacha Gee Burns and Chris of MC Refuse Department. Em and Nancy contacted pro-bono design and marketing professional to resume consultation fall

Nancy noted that “Recycle Smart, Do Your Part” is a great tagline for future promotions of this effort. Lawrence will be coordinating the recycling effort at the Dunebrook Dragon Boat Family Festival on Saturday 9.12 at Stone Lake Beach in LaPorte.

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.
- b. **Project Details:**
 - i. Climate solutions journalists are authoring articles for Purdue, Indiana, and Ball State Universities’ student newspapers
 - ii. Order the book: <https://carbonneutralindiana.org/book/>
- c. **Status Update:** Hopefully, student articles will resume with upcoming school year.

Nothing further to report here.

G. National Wildlife Federation (NWF)—Nancy Moldenhauer, Tristan Bogart & Dale Batz

- 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=IwY2xjawQbLrxleHRuA2FlbQIxMABicmlkETFHV2Y4U1pYQ0RHR1pJVkVrc3J0YwZhcHBfaWQQMjlyMDM5MTc4ODIwMDg5MgABHqEM7yQsBLXWeHdzvAAxMw6yOfNFqT3T6Jb4eSEFbiw_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): 60 Habitats certified (84 points of 250), Registration (25 points of 40), Education (40 points of 40),

Community Outreach (40 points of 50), Administration (20 points of 20) [gained 15!]; after certified, 30 new signups required annually for recertification. Hitachi-Sullair is in communication with NWF to certify 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" by Nancy at City Council Meeting. Tristan is planning with Leslie Shad and Dale to table at Farmed and Forged (formerly MC Farmers Market) this season while Leslie is seeking groups like Master Gardeners and Potawatomi Audubon to present for Community Outreach points.

In addition to the above, Tristan reported that we (MC) have reached 33.6% of our goal. We should focus on the low hanging fruit like schools and places of worship. For example, Joy, Edgewood and Krueger Schools are already registered. Other schools can register with principal sign-off.

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

- a. **Project Summary:** Ongoing job training and certification program for solar panel assistants, installers, and designers in partnership with NAACP LaPorte County, Michigan City Sustainability Commission, IBEW-531, Ivy Tech Valparaiso, WorkOne, and Just Transition NWI
- b. **Project Details:** Soul Power is 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization; certifications offered are: Solar Panel Assistants certified [Tier I], Solar Installers are North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP) certified [TIER II], NABCEP Installation Professional and the NEC (National Electrical Code) certified [Tier III]; new website has information to learn more about this program, to sign up for future trainings, and to make donations: <https://soulpowerinc.org/>
- c. **Status Update:** Nancy will follow up 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; received no updates as attendance at NAACP National Convention in Chicago took precedence

Abby reported as noted above.

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/>

Nancy spoke of her experience working with SUN when putting panels on her roof.

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:** Lawrence to report on meeting he attended.

Lawrence did not provide a report on this meeting.

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:** Accepted into the program with more details to follow! Indiana Clean Community Program, Annual Meeting, Wednesday, October 14th (details to follow whether only in Bloomington or virtual as well)

Abby reported that this event will not be available virtually. As a program requirement we need at least one person to attend in Bloomington.

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 is pursuing Gold designation. Gold Designation is back on the table since SolSmart has been transferred from the U.S. Department of Energy to International City/County Management Association (ICMA) and Interstate Renewable Energy Council (IREC) under Sarah Yaeger with consulting support via Upasana Roy of the Great Lakes Institute.
- b. **Project Details:** Corrections in the LaPorte County Solar Ordinance by the LaPorte County Plan Commission and their Commission should still be pursued due to mistakes contained within it which affect Michigan City's use of this Ordinance; seeking Gold Designation by ICMA and IREC
- c. **Status Update:** Solar informational landing page needs to be re-established on MC municipal government website since links for solar information were removed when MC Sustainability Commission page was streamlined on new website; SolSmart has been transferred from the U.S. Department of Energy to International City/County Management Association (ICMA) and Interstate Renewable Energy Council (IREC) under Sarah Yaeger with consulting support via Upasana Roy of the Great Lakes Institute.

Nancy reported as stated above.

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

- a. **Project Summary:** Northwest Indiana (NWI) 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 NWI. 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 NWI communities. Learn more: <https://nwipartnersforcleanair.org/>

- b. **Project Details:** Membership is determined based on 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. We are registered as a Green Member.
- c. **Status Update:** We took part in the several day Air Quality Action Days in July by sharing five (5) alerts on four FB sites. Invited to upcoming meetings on Friday, August 14th and September 11th (every second Friday monthly), 9-10 am, 330 West U.S. Highway 30, Ste. F, Valparaiso OR Google Meet.

Nancy reported that the 8.14 meeting was cancelled due to power outages.

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

Em reported she would like to nominate Sacha Gee-Burns for her work educating kids in the schools about recycling.

- e. **Social Media-** Shared posts, “Caught YOU Being Green”
- f. **Earth Month Extravaganza:** April 24th, 2027

- V. **DISCUSSION & VOTE:** City Councilpersons Greg Coulter and Nancy Moldenhauer recommend Tom Donegan for the Nora L. Schultz Tribute Award for Sustainability due to his outstanding contribution by cleaning up his neighborhood weekly. Every Monday, he fills a huge multi-gallon bag with trash collected from yards and streets. Like Nora, who could be seen picking up litter consistently, he realizes the importance of keeping our community clean and invites all residents to join in this endeavor.

Donegan’s nomination was voted on and unanimously approved. Andie Jahnz-Davis (not present) will coordinate the award presentation and invites of the Schultz family to a future meeting.

VI. Public Comments *None*

- VII. **Commission Comments** *Nancy paid tribute to her friend and one of the Sustainability Commission’s founders, Deb Chubb, who passed away recently. Elected to the school board for 4 terms, Deb got Nancy into politics when they met through former schools superintendant Xavier Botana. Deb held many different offices and contributed to numerous organizations. She had a great ‘we can do this’ attitude. She initiated and won a 600k grant for lead testing and remediation in homes where school children lived. She also got the kids tested for lead poisoning.*

Beverly added that Deb was also a good friend of hers and admired her passion.

Faye added that Deb Chubb was an encourager and is thankful for the new windows and doors she received in her home because of the lead program. Unfortunately, the mayor at the time sent the grant money back after all the work it took to get the grant. Deb was also the executive director of Imagination Station the parent organization of Head Start.

- VIII. **Announcements** *Reported as shown by Abby.*

Northwest Indiana Partners for Clean Air, Friday, August 14th (*cancelled due to power outages*) and September 11th (every second Friday), 9-10 am, 330 West U.S. Highway 30, Suite F, Valparaiso, OR Google Meet.

Northwest Indiana Green Drinks, "Endangered and Threatened Species: In Jeopardy/Two Perspectives" presented by Laurel Izard, artist, and Susan Kirt, biologist, Thursday, September 3rd, 6:30 pm, via Save the Dunes FB Live and Zoom link from Em@savedunes.org or at Save the Dunes website under Events.

The previous Green Drinks presentation on 'Green Steel' is now available on the STD Facebook page.

7-in1 Hazardous Waste Collection, Saturday, September 19th, 8 am to 1 pm, LaPorte County Fair Grounds, 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>

Solar Action Team, Tuesday, August 25th, 6 pm, Solar United Neighbors Indiana, Zoom, register via email and RSVP monthly

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. Did you know Sacha Gee Burns and Mike Kilbourne 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/>
Meet at the parking lot west of Stop 0.

Dale added that he has monitored the Little Free Library of beach toys adjacent to the Fedders Alley ADA boardwalk ramp to the beach. Items found on the beach are reused/recycled here rather than thrown in the trash.

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

These extra benefits are funded by The Collective, which operates the market. Lawrence to post this info on Nextdoor.

Indiana Clean Community Program, Annual Meeting, Wednesday, October 14th (details to follow whether only in Bloomington or virtual as well)

No virtual for this event, in person only.

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

IX. Adjournment at 5:31

Submitted by Lawrence Zimmer, Secretary