



SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION
City Hall—Shared Vision Room, 3989 Central Ave NE
Tuesday, March 10, 2026
6:00 PM

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Jensen Christen at 6:02 p.m.

Members present: Commissioners Carlson, Evenson, Jensen Christen, Groseth, Johnson, LaPlante
Leoni-Helbacka, Small

Staff present: Mitchell Forney, Community Development Director
Ursula Brandt, City Planner
Liam Genter, City Forester/Natural Resources Specialist

Members absent: None.

Council Liaison: Mayor Amáda Márquez Simula

COMMUNITY FORUM

No community members were present.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approve February 10, 2026 Regular Sustainability Commission Meeting Minutes

MOTION: Move to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

Motion to approve by Commissioner Evenson, seconded by Commissioner Carlson. The motion was approved unanimously.

BUSINESS ITEMS

2. Sustainable Purchasing Policy

Presenting Item: Ursula Brandt, City Planner

Planner Brandt reviewed the most recent edits to the Sustainable Purchasing Policy and asked Director Forney to elaborate on those changes. Director Forney related to the commissioners that the most recent changes occurred after final review of the document by staff and the City Attorney. The language in the policy related to preferential purchasing from women and minority owned businesses with price differences of up to 10% was reviewed by the City Attorney and determined to be out of compliance with the public purpose doctrine. The language was changed to state that women and minority owned status of businesses would be taken into consideration for procurements by staff, but with no specific stated percentage of

price difference. Director Forney also related that the Sustainable Purchasing Policy would now live as the second appendix to the City's existing purchasing policy, after the short purchasing cheat sheet and before the long section with legal language related to purchasing. The commissioners congratulated Commissioner LaPlante on her hard work and success as the principal proponent and driving force behind the Sustainable Purchasing Policy. Director Forney told the commissioners that the recommendation from the commission would be sent to the City Council, who will vote on the final approval of the policy at the March 23 meeting. Forney also related that the approval of the policy would be the final milestone needed to apply for GreenStep Cities step 3 status. GreenCorps Member Rashid has led the staff effort to update reporting on the milestones and achievements already in place to get the city to this new step. Chairperson Jensen Christen suggested a minor edit to section F3, recommending that the section left for leaving examples of products could be deleted. Jensen Christen further suggested that language should be changed from "sustainable cleaning products" to "environmentally non-toxic". The commission generally agreed to these edits suggested by the chair. Commissioner LaPlante asked if benchmarking and reporting was still going to be included in the final purchasing policy. Director Forney replied that annual reporting back to the commission had been moved to the section on measurement and evaluation.

MOTION: Motion to recommend approval and adoption of the updated Purchasing Policy, including edits from this meeting, including the Sustainability Appendix, to the City Council. The motion was approved unanimously.

Director Forney asked if any of the members of the Sustainability Commission would like to present the Sustainable Purchasing Policy as an agenda item at the upcoming City Council meeting. Commissioner LaPlante volunteered to present the item, which was approved by all members of the commission.

BUSINESS UPDATES

Staff Updates

Director Forney provided an update that the April meeting of the Sustainability Commission would be held on Wednesday, April 15. The meeting will include a meet and greet for the new commissioners and thank you social hour for departing commissioners from 5-6pm before the regular meeting is held. Forney provided an update on the activities of GreenCorps Member Rashid, who has been working on the CERTs program and GIS updates with city staff. Rashid has also been working to create the new commission website Sustainability Information Hub. Director Forney and Rashid also met recently with the Library Director to discuss getting energy action kits into the library from the Partners in Energy program, as well as other sustainability related initiatives at the library. Possible initiatives include energy efficiency tools for check-out, a sustainability speaker series, and invasive species removal tool check out.

Forester Genter provided an update on the Arbor Day Tree Sale and noted that over half of the 60 available trees had been sold already. Genter also stated that the Arbor Day celebration would be held at Huset Park East on Friday, April 24 and that all are welcome. Mayor Márquez Simula said that this would likely be her last Arbor Day celebration as mayor and encouraged all

the commissioners to attend if they are available. Commissioner Carlson asked how long the ceremony typically ran and Forester Genter replied that it was typically about 45-60 minutes long depending on the weather.

Directory Forney updated the commissioners that a spreadsheet for Sustainability Committee events had been added to the commission Teams folder and was available to be modified. Forney related that the next upcoming event would be the paper shredding event.

Commissioner LaPlante asked what day the HeightsNEXT cleanup on Central Avenue would be held and commissioner Groseth responded that it would be held on April 25 from 9-11am, and that the group would meet at the library.

Subcommittee Updates

Chairperson Jensen Christen made a motion to add commissioner Carlson to the Sustainable Collaborations subcommittee, seconded by commissioner LaPlante. The motion was approved unanimously. Commissioner Carlson stated that he was looking forward to exploring collaborations with the Blooming Heights garden at the school and bringing those to the commission.

Mayor Márquez Simula asked for a more detailed description of the subcommittees and stated that she was not aware of any other city commissions that had active subcommittees. Chairperson Jensen Christen said that Sustainable Collaborations was the first subcommittee created and has a focus on seeking out partnerships, building awareness, finding grants and internship opportunities, and exploring other extra resources to help city staff and the commission accomplish sustainability goals. Chairperson Jensen Christen said that the second subcommittee created was the Invasive Species subcommittee and asked commissioner Leoni-Helbacka to say more about it. Commissioner Leoni-Helbacka said that the focus of the subcommittee was on removal of invasive plants from parks. Leoni-Helbacka said that the subcommittee had successfully applied for a grant from MDA in 2025 to create a volunteer support kit for community invasive plant removal events. The Invasive Species subcommittee hosted 4 successful community events in 2025 and plans to continue their efforts in the future. Chairperson Jensen Christen said that the last subcommittee created was the Events and Activities subcommittee, which focuses on planning, outreach, and staffing at city events.

Commissioner Updates

Commissioners Johnson, Evenson, and Groseth will not be serving a second term on the Sustainability Commission, and this is their final meeting. The departing commissioners took turns talking about their experiences on the commission and thanked their fellow commissioners for a great experience. Director Forney thanked the departing commissioners for their service and time and encouraged them to stay engaged.

Planning and Coordination

ADJOURNMENT

Chairperson Jensen Christen made a motion to adjourn, and Commissioner Groseth seconded.
The motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Liam Genter
City Forester/Natural Resources Specialist