



SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION

City Hall—Shared Vision Room, 3989 Central Ave NE

Tuesday, May 12, 2026

6:00 PM

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Jensen Christen at 6:01 p.m.

Members present: Commissioners Carlson, Jensen Christen, LaPlante, Leoni-Helbacka, Matson-Brady, Nelson, Woods

Staff present: Liam Genter, City Forester/Natural Resources Specialist
Drew Chirpich, Stormwater Specialist
Zekima Rashid, GreenCorps Member

Members absent: Commissioners Coveyou and Small

Council Liaison: Mayor Amáda Márquez Simula

COMMUNITY FORUM

No community members were present.

BUSINESS ITEMS

1. 2026 Goal Setting

Presenting item: Liam Genter, City Forester

Forester Genter addressed the commissioners and explained that the primary activity for the meeting would be a goal-setting activity. Genter said that the goal setting would allow the commission to focus its time and efforts on projects of particular importance or interest. As a starting point for the activity staff assembled a list of best practices from GreenStep Cities for the commissioners to review and gain inspiration from. Genter stated that one overall goal for the commission for the near term was achieving GreenStep Cities step 4 status and asked GreenCorps Member Rashid to give a brief overview of what that entailed. Rashid said that GreenStep Cities step 4 was mostly about monitoring baseline data on various best practices, and that step 5 involved reporting on improvements in the monitored areas. Chairperson Jensen Christen said that although step 3 had already been achieved, there were still many worthwhile practices to choose from in that step. Commissioner LaPlante said that the new commissioners should not feel limited to choose from the list. LaPlante further stated that she felt the commission should focus on more action items, which will aid in community outreach by giving accomplishments to talk about. Commissioner Nelson asked if any new policy development was in process by the commission. Chairperson Jensen Christen said that no policies were currently under development, but various outreach projects were still in process,

including a sustainable resources webpage for residents of the city. Commissioner LaPlante brought up the Green To-Go policy as an idea that had been discussed but not pursued by the commission in the prior term. LaPlante stated that she was interested in more outreach and collaboration with the business community in general, not just food packaging materials. Chairperson Jensen Christen asked if the Parks Master Plan was going to be completed in conjunction with the Comprehensive Plan update. Forester Genter replied that the process was underway, and that the plan should be prepared within the next year. Chairperson Jensen Christen said that because the Parks Master Plan was already being worked upon by other groups it should not be a focus of the Sustainability Commission. The commissioners spent the next twenty minutes of the meeting working on generating and organizing goals into groups. The commissioners used sticky notes to generate ideas and goals which were then grouped under the best practices generated from the GreenStep Cities list. After the commissioners had finished generating their ideas they were read aloud and compiled into a master list. Forester Genter suggested that the list be compiled and shared on the commission's Teams page for commissioners to spend time thinking about and prioritizing goals. Forester Genter stressed that the commission needed to limit its scope to be effective on the goals that it chooses to pursue. Forester Genter asked the commission what they thought a reasonable number of goals for the year was. Chairperson Jensen Christen suggested that focusing on three or so goals would be a manageable number for the year, depending on the size of the group working on each goal. Commissioner LaPlante asked if the commission could have a priority space in the City's newsletter for articles. Forester Genter stated that he would bring it up with the Communications department and negotiate on behalf of the commission. The commissioners discussed different forums and styles of outreach to engage the community, including lecture series, town hall style forums at local businesses, and highlighting businesses that already have sustainable practices in place. Stormwater Specialist said that Central Mix was a good candidate for a business to highlight; they received a waste reduction grant and have many great practices in place. Stormwater Specialist Chirpich said that staff were looking to recruit one or more commissioners to be in a video promoting the Waste Reduction Challenge and asked if any commissioners were interested. Commissioner Woods said that she would be willing to be in the video, and commissioner LaPlante said she would also be interested. Forester Genter asked if the commissioners wanted more time to review the goals and prioritize them. Chairperson Jensen Christen said that more time to consider the goals would be good and suggested that commissioners return to the next meeting with their top 3 goals/priorities for the commission to work on. Mayor Márquez Simula stated that she was part of the group Art to Change the World which collected trash and used it to create art, and thought the commission should consider similar projects. GreenCorps Member Rashid asked the group if they would be interested in pursuing the Community Energy Resource Teams (CERTS) program certification. Rashid said that the training had recently changed and now included a self-paced video module that commissioners could watch on their own time, as well as an activity that could be completed as a group. The commissioners generally agreed that it would be a good thing to complete and would help with community outreach and executing the Energy Action Plan. GreenCorps Member Rashid said that it would be very helpful in giving tools and tips for successful outreach about energy efficiency and sustainability. Commissioner Nelson asked if the group wanted to put a timeline on completing the individual modules. Commissioner Matson-Brady asked how long the training would take. Rashid responded that it was 2-3 hours

for the individual portion. The group generally agreed to complete the individual modules by the next meeting in June.

2. Consideration of a Monarch Pledge Reporting Subcommittee

Commissioner Nelson said that she met with the mayor about taking on some of the reporting requirements for the Mayor's Monarch Pledge. The reporting work includes collecting information from the community, partners, organizing the information, and documenting and uploading the information to the website. Nelson said that this was an ongoing pledge that would require annual reporting which would be best served by a dedicated subcommittee of the commission. Nelson stated that she was happy to lead the initial efforts but wanted to recruit more commissioners for the subcommittee. Commissioners Matson-Brady and Leoni-Helbacka said that they would be interested in joining the subcommittee and help with the efforts.

MOTION: Motion to create the Monarch Pledge Subcommittee was made by Chairperson Jensen Christen and seconded by Commissioner Leoni-Helbacka. The motion passed unanimously.

BUSINESS UPDATES

Staff Updates

Forester Genter stated that the Arbor Day Tree Sale had recently been completed and the vast majority of the trees were sold to community members.

GreenCorps Member Rashid attended a Partners In Energy event and received an award on behalf of the community for their participation in the program. Rashid also tabled at a family resource fair at Valley View Elementary school and passed out fliers and information about energy efficiency resources available to residents. Rashid also provided an update on outreach to landlords in the city, including outreach about the Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing Program and the Multi-Family Building Efficiency Program. Rashid also said that the GreenStep Cities program is holding an event Tuesday, June 9, at 4 pm, and that she would post the information to the commission's Teams page if anyone was interested in attending.

Subcommittee Updates

Commissioner Woods joined the Events subcommittee, and Commissioners Matson-Brady, Carlson, and Nelson joined the Invasive Species subcommittee. The Invasive Species subcommittee will be holding a invasive plant removal event for volunteers focused on garlic mustard on Saturday, June 6 at Silver Lake Beach Park.

Commissioner Updates

Commissioner LaPlante said that she would be attending the GreenStep Cities conference with Councilmember Buesgens to receive the step 3 recognition. Commissioners Leoni-Helbacka and LaPlante attended a cleanup event at Blooming Heights garden located at the school.

Planning and Coordination

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Leoni-Helbacka made a motion to adjourn, and Commissioner LaPlante seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Liam Genter
City Forester/Natural Resources Specialist