



SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION

City Hall—Shared Vision Room, 3989 Central Ave NE

Wednesday, April 15, 2026

6:00 PM

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Jensen Christen at 6:00 p.m.

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

Staff present: Ursula Brandt, City Planner
Sara Ion, City Clerk
Liam Genter, City Forester/Natural Resources Specialist
Drew Chirpich, Stormwater Specialist
Zekima Rashid, MN GreenCorps Member

Members absent: Commissioner Carlson

Council Liaison: Mayor Amáda Márquez Simula

COMMUNITY FORUM

No community members were present.

CONSENT AGENDA

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

MOTION: Move to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

Motion to approve by Commissioner LaPlante, seconded by Chairperson Jensen Christen. The motion was approved unanimously.

BUSINESS ITEMS

2. Sustainability Commission Introduction and Orientation

Presenting Item: Sara Ion, City Clerk

City Clerk Sara Ion welcomed the new commissioners and said that their term would be for three years. Clerk Ion also explained that the commissioners would be eligible for a second three-year term, after which they would have to serve on another board or commission. Clerk Ion described open meeting law, telling the commissioners that as a body they are part of the city organization and subject to meeting laws if a quorum is present in any setting. Ion explained to the commissioners that regular social interactions did not apply, but that all official business needed to be discussed in an open meeting setting. Clerk Ion told the commissioners that she and all staff were available to answer questions and help the commission be as

successful as possible. The commissioners took turns introducing themselves and described their backgrounds and interests in sustainability. Staff members and the Mayor also introduced themselves and described their background and experiences with the committee and sustainability initiatives more broadly. Chairperson Jensen Christen stated that after hearing the backgrounds of all the commissioners she was very excited for the term ahead and thought the group would have many accomplishments.

3. Election of Sustainability Commission Officers

Presenting Item: Ursula Brandt, City Planner

Chairperson Jensen Christen said that the Vice Chairperson role of the commission was currently empty, having been filled by Sara Evenson, who was no longer serving. Jensen Christen stated that she was currently serving as the Chairperson and Planner Brandt explained that Forester Genter served as the Secretary of the commission. Chairperson Jensen Christen explained that the main responsibility of the chairperson was to run the meetings, and that the primary responsibility of the Vice Chairperson was to run the meetings in the absence of the chair. City Clerk Sara Ion explained to elect officers a commissioner would have to make a motion nominating an officer; the motion would need to be seconded and passed by a majority of the commission. Commissioner LaPlante made a motion to nominate Jensen Christen as the Chairperson. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Nelson and approved unanimously by the commission. Chairperson Jensen Christen asked if any commissioners were interested in serving as the Vice Chairperson. Commissioner Coveyou said that she would be comfortable serving in the Vice Chairperson role. Chairperson Jensen Christen made a motion to nominate Commissioner Coveyou as Vice Chairperson; the motion was seconded by Commissioner Matson-Brady and approved unanimously. Chairperson Jensen Christen asked what the primary responsibilities of the Secretary of the commission were. Forester Genter replied that taking the meeting minutes was the primary responsibility of the Secretary. Commissioner Leoni-Helbacka nominated Forester Genter as the Secretary of the commission; the motion was seconded by Commissioner Coveyou and approved unanimously.

MOTION: To nominate Commissioner Jensen Christen as Chairperson of the commission. Seconded by Commissioner Nelson and approved unanimously.

MOTION: To nominate Commissioner Coveyou as Vice Chairperson of the commission. Seconded by Commissioner Matson-Brady and approved unanimously.

MOTION: To nominate Forester Genter as Secretary of the commission. Seconded by Commissioner Coveyou and approved unanimously.

4. Sustainability Commission Accomplishments

Planner Brandt asked the returning commissioners to describe the sub-committees of the commission and their functions. Chairperson Jensen Christen explained that the commission had three sub-committees currently, and that the sub-committees can have up to four members. Commissioner LaPlante said that the sub-committees served as a way for commissioners to work more in depth on projects outside of the regular monthly meetings.

Chairperson Jensen Christen said that the first sub-committee was Invasive Species and Commissioner Leoni-Helbacka explained that the sub-committee had applied for and received a grant from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture to buy equipment and host volunteer invasive plant removal events at parks. Leoni-Helbacka said the sub-committee was going to continue to be active and host volunteer events and was looking for new members. Chairperson Jensen Christen said that Sustainable Collaborations was another sub-committee and explained that the goal was to seek out partnerships in the community with various organizations to accomplish commission goals. Commissioner LaPlante said that the Sustainable Collaborations sub-committee had helped apply for the GreenCorps program, which resulted in GreenCorps Member Rashid coming to the city for a term of service. LaPlante described various other organizations the sub-committee had reached out to and future goals of working with the school district. Chairperson Jensen Christen said that commissioners could serve on multiple sub-committees if they chose. Commissioner LaPlante described the Events sub-committee, saying that it was a large overarching goal of the commission to be more present at community events. LaPlante said that the Events sub-committee was mainly dedicated to logistics and tabling at city events, but that there was desire to host more events. Commissioner LaPlante told the commission that new sub-committees could be formed if there was interest.

Planner Brandt said that the next item for consideration was a list of accomplishments of the Sustainability Commission to date. The idea was to let the new commissioners know what the commission had been working on and get a feel for what work had already been accomplished. Planner Brandt asked commissioners to add any accomplishments that had been inadvertently overlooked in the creation of the list. Previous accomplishments included in the list were the adoption of the Complete Streets Policy, the Partners in Energy Action Plan adoption and kick-off celebration, the Invasive Species Volunteer Support Kit, the creation and adoption of a Sustainable Purchasing Policy, the successful recruitment of a GreenCorps member, completion of GreenStep Cities Step 3, and the creation of a sustainable resource page for the website. The accomplishments were described by staff and commissioners most involved in the specific projects. Commissioner LaPlante added that discussions with the Minnesota Department of Transportation about the upcoming Central Avenue reconstruction project was another major item of note for the previous term of the commission. Planner Brandt said that this list was intended to help familiarize the new commissioners with the prior work of the commission and help inspire ideas for the current term. Brandt said the plan for the next meeting of the commission was to hold a goal setting session to help focus the work of the commission. Chairperson Jensen Christen said that the GreenStep Cities website had a great list of ideas to help inspire commissioners and aid in goal generation.

BUSINESS UPDATES

Staff Updates

Native Vegetation Contract

Forester Genter said that in collaboration with Stormwater Specialist Chirpich a contract for the maintenance of native plant communities at five different green stormwater infrastructure sites had been created and submitted to qualified contractors. Landbridge Ecological was recommended to the City Council by staff to receive the contract based on the low qualified bid. The contract will cover a three-year period and includes three Integrated

Plant Management at each site per year, as well as a controlled burn on a four-year interval and a dormant mow on a four-year interval. Commissioner LaPlante asked what sites were covered in the contract. Forester Genter replied that the sites included the Silver Lake Boat Landing, several rain gardens along 37th Ave, Zurich Pond at Huset West park, Prestemon Park, and Ramsdell Park. Forester Genter said that the city had plans to restore more areas with native plant communities and include those areas under management in the future. Commissioner Nelson asked if the iron-enhanced sand filter at Silver Lake Boat Landing was included for plant management or if there were plans to plant in it. Forester Genter stated that the iron-enhanced sand filter had been included in the contract for control of plants, specifically volunteer trees that grow around the edges. Commissioner Nelson asked if there were plans to add seeds or plugs to the rain gardens included in the contract. Forester Genter replied that the rain gardens were installed two years previously and the plants that were planted initially have been very successful so far. Genter said that there were no specific plans for additional planting in the rain gardens, but that they would be monitored and more plants added as necessary.

Planner Brandt told the commission that the city had begun the process of preparing the next Comprehensive Plan for the city and provided a brief description of the near future of the process. Brandt also stated that staff had applied and interviewed for another GreenCorps Member because GreenCorps Member Rashid's term would be ending in September. Chairperson Jensen Christen asked if the function of the new GreenCorps Member would be similar to the role served by GreenCorps Member Rashid. Planner Brandt replied that the city had specifically applied for GreenStep Cities step 3 goals when applying previously, and that the goal this time was GreenStep Cities step 4.

Subcommittee Updates

Commissioner Leoni-Helbacka said that the Invasive Species subcommittee would be holding the first volunteer invasive plants clean up event of the year on June 6, 2026, at Silver Lake Beach Park. The event will run from 10am-12pm and will focus on pulling garlic mustard.

Commissioner LaPlante said that the Events subcommittee had several updates for the commission. LaPlante said that the city's Arbor Day Ceremony would be held on Friday, April 24, at Huset Park East. LaPlante also said that on Saturday, April 25, the Central Ave trash cleanup would be happening, and the city-sponsored paper shredding event would also be on the same day at the Library. GreenCorps Member Rashid said that she would be tabling with other staff at an event happening at Valley View Elementary in May, focusing on promoting Partners in Energy resources for residents.

Commissioner Updates

Commissioner LaPlante related that the Sustainable Purchasing Policy had been approved at the previous City Council meeting and following that approval the city had applied to receive GreenStep Cities step 4 status.

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