



**SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION**  
City Hall—Shared Vision Room, 3989 Central Ave NE  
Tuesday, March 11, 2025  
6:00 PM

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**MINUTES**

**CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

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

Members present: Commissioners Evenson, Groseth, Jensen Christen, LaPlante, Leoni-Helbacka, Kurek

Staff present: Andrew Boucher, City Planner  
Liam Genter, City Forester/Natural Resources Specialist

Members absent: Commissioner Johnson

Council Liaison: Rachel James

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Motion by Commissioner Kurek, seconded by Evenson, to approve the minutes of January 14, 2025.  
Motion passed unanimously.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**NEW BUSINESS**

**1. Waste Reduction Challenge**

Planner Boucher shared a waste reduction challenge that was given to him by Jessie Davies, Refuse and Recycling Coordinator. Boucher reviewed the solid waste policy that was updated by council last year. Boucher discussed the goals laid out in the policy including increasing participation in organics collection and increasing the number of properties that opt for the small sized waste cart. The city's stated goal is to divert 75% of total volume from solid waste by 2030. The waste reduction challenge will provide educational resources to residents and give them the opportunity to sign up for curbside organics collection and smaller sized solid waste carts after watching informational videos about how to correctly participate in organics collection and recycling. Boucher stated that staff were looking for ideas from the commission about promoting the waste reduction challenge. Staff already plan to advertise the waste reduction challenge on the city website and through social media channels. Any member of a household will be able to sign up for the challenge through the website. Councilmember James asked if every other week collection with the small sized trash cart an option was currently and stated that she had not seen it on the distributed waste collection rate sheets. Commissioner LaPlante suggested that the cost savings for switching to a smaller sized trash can should be a primary point of messaging. Commissioner Evenson suggested a one-page fact sheet that shows the different size options,

pickup frequency, and costs to help residents make the right choices. Chairperson Jensen Christen stated that an additional pickup option for residents that opt for every other week collection to accommodate high waste volume events would be a good inclusion. Councilmember James noted that to qualify for every other week pickup option residents would have to go through training about proper waste sorting and recycling. James further stated that Anoka County has a recycling ambassador program with trained volunteers, including several residents of Columbia Heights. Planner Boucher suggested promoting the challenge at an Earth Day event like the cleanup event. Commissioner LaPlante suggested creating a resource for proper disposal of difficult items like printer cartridges. Planner Boucher mentioned that when he worked for the City of Shakopee there was a GIS layer maintained by Scott County that showed where many difficult and hazardous items could be properly recycled or disposed. Commissioner Evenson voiced support for a similar informative GIS resource for residents of Columbia Heights. Commissioner LaPlante also brought up the possibility of including education about upstream purchasing strategies like bulk purchases to reduce waste. Planner Boucher suggested that the commissioners should think about any specific promotional materials they would like to create and disseminate before the cleanup event. Commissioner Kurek suggested highlighting the services that residents already pay for with their waste collection, such as bulk item collection for things like mattresses. Commissioner Groseth brought up the electronics waste pickup service that is also included with collection service; for \$20 residents can have e-waste items collected at their address. Commissioner Kurek asked how trash dumping should be reported and mentioned seeing it in alleys before. Planner Boucher and Councilmember James stated that dumping reports should be made through the online report a concern form on the website. James further clarified that the city was moving to a new tracking system for complaints/concerns that were submitted through the system.

**2. 2025 GreenStep Cities Assessment**

Planner Boucher provided an update on GreenStep Cities status and the remaining necessary criteria to move to step 3. Commissioner Evenson commented that the city should pursue a comprehensive pedestrian and bike plan because the comprehensive plan does not address those transport modalities thoroughly enough. Evenson further commented that a comprehensive plan is needed to pursue funding for pedestrian and bicycle friendly infrastructure. Planner Boucher stated that achieving step 3 in 2025 is possible if city staff can update actions that have already been completed. Commissioner LaPlante pointed out that at least one action item under the community forests and soil best practice section had been completed but not reported. Commissioner Kurek asked if the Adopt a Drain program in Columbia Heights would qualify as a stormwater management best practice action item. Commissioners and staff agreed to review all best practices for actions that may have already been completed and report back at the next meeting. Commissioner LaPlante noted that the Youth Commission no longer existed, and the action item should not be marked as completed. Commissioner Evenson brought up the idea of working with the school district to engage youth in recycling and waste management best practices. Councilmember James noted that student members of the Key Club volunteer at the recycling center every Saturday and would be a great group of students to engage with.

**3. 2025 Sustainability Commission Goal Setting**

Planner Boucher stated that the city council would be conducting a goal-setting session in the coming months. Boucher elaborated that he would like the commission to conduct its own goal-setting session to help inform the city council goals. Boucher outlined a goal-setting process for

the commission that would take place over two meetings and help inform the city council goal-setting session. Boucher reviewed recent sustainable initiatives and actions taken by the city for the commissioners including the upcoming Energy Action Plan expected later in 2025. Boucher led the commissioners in a goal setting activity. Commissioners were asked to choose 3-4 initiatives or areas of priority for the commission to focus on in the next year and write them down. The ideas were then collected, discussed, and grouped by Boucher and the commissioners. Boucher explained that the ideas would be further refined over the next month and brought back at the next meeting for the second part of the goal-setting activity.

**4. Letter of Support for MN GreenCorps Host Site Application**

Planner Boucher reviewed a draft letter in support of the city's application to be a host site for a GreenCorps intern. Commissioner Groseth provided several grammar and punctuation corrections for the letter.

**5. Round Robin**

Councilmember James said that the interviews for open commission seats would be held soon and asked if the Sustainability Commission had any specific needs or gaps for her to keep in mind during the process. Commissioner Evenson noted that the commission currently had no men. Commissioner LaPlante commented that increasing diversity would be very welcome, as would adding more members with a passion for field work. Commissioner Groseth said that the council did a great job the first time and she was confident they would pick more excellent commissioners. Commissioner LaPlante related that she had been closely following the Central Avenue reconstruction project, including the meetings in Minneapolis. LaPlante reported on the most recent plan iterations and the community feedback she heard at a recent meeting she attended at Edison high school. LaPlante also provided an update on her work on the draft Sustainable Purchasing Program and her outreach efforts to Anoka County master gardener program and the school district.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Commissioner Evenson made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Kurek. The motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Liam Genter  
City Forester/Natural Resources Specialist