



SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION

City Hall—Shared Vision Room, 3989 Central Ave NE

Wednesday, September 9, 2026

6:00 PM

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chairperson Coveyou at 6:01 p.m.

Members present: Commissioners Carlson, Coveyou, LaPlante, Leoni-Helbacka, Matson-Brady, Nelson, Small

Staff present: Ursula Brandt, City Planner
Liam Genter, City Forester/Natural Resources Specialist
Jesse Davies, Refuse and Recycling Coordinator
Zekima Rashid, GreenCorps Member

Members absent: Commissioner Jensen Christen

Council Liaison: Mayor Amáda Márquez Simula

COMMUNITY FORUM

No community members were present.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approve the August 12, 2026 Regular Sustainability Commission Meeting Minutes

MOTION: Move to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

Motion to approve by Commissioner LaPlante, seconded by Commissioner Leoni-Helbacka. The motion was approved unanimously.

BUSINESS ITEMS

2. City Solid Waste Policy

Review changes to the City's Solid Waste Operating Policy and make recommendations.

Presenting item: Jesse Davies, Refuse and Recycling Coordinator

Coordinator Davies reviewed the City's Solid Waste Operating Policy (SWOP) with the commission in detail, including all proposed updates to the policy. The most recent update to the SWOP by the City Council was in 2024. Changes to the policy included a 5-year limit on contract length by service providers, changes to language to expand curbside recycling, and ensuring waste cart have labels that are useful for English as a second language residents. Davies also described changes to the policy to bring City practices in line with Met Council and state requirements for waste collection, composting, and recycling. Other changes to the policy

include eliminating the charge for residents to participate in curbside organics collection. Other described changes will help to identify and intervene in cases of repeated contamination of recycling to help improve the quality of the City's recycling program. Davies also reviewed a list of solid waste reduction strategies from Anoka County and the Met Council that apply to the City of Columbia Heights and described the City's efforts in regard to the specific strategies outlined. Commissioner LaPlante asked if the waste haulers were able to measure the quantity of waste collected and whether the City had access to the data. LaPlante stated that the information would provide a means to create and track quantitative reduction goals. Commissioner Leoni-Helbacka commented that the information would be very helpful for community engagement and tabling at events. Coordinator Davies said that the information does exist and gets compiled every year in an annual report, but he did not have the numbers in front of him presently. Commissioner Matson-Brady asked if the SWOP addressed commercial buildings and businesses or only residential buildings. Coordinator Davies replied that commercial and business waste was handled at the county level in MN and further explained that Anoka County had extensive resources to help businesses with waste reduction, refuse, and recycling. Commission Nelson asked if the City had a voice in the county waste policy update process. Coordinator Davies replied that the County did have an extensive outreach process when they updated their plan, including meeting with local councils, public meetings, and other outreach processes. Commissioner Carlson asked if Anoka County was on a triennial waste policy update schedule. Coordinator Davies replied that they were required to make updates at least every 6 years.

3. Certification Project Update/Costume Swap/Truck or Treat

Follow up on discussion items from last meeting

Commissioner Nelson described the process of putting together the capstone form for the final project for the group to complete the CERTS ambassador program. Nelson noted that the group would focus on home energy kits, home winterization tips, fix-it clinics, Waste Reduction Challenge, and organics collection participation. Nelson also went through the application questions and solicited the other commissioners' thoughts about the answers to the questions. The group thanked Commissioner Nelson for taking the lead on the capstone project and discussed logistics for the upcoming Costume Swap event. Commissioner LaPlante showed and described a reusable outreach kit she created for community engagement events.

4. Climate Resiliency Hubs

Continued discussion

Item tabled until a future meeting because of limited time.

5. Sustainability Page on City Website

Discussion of updates to the Sustainability page

Item tabled until a future meeting because of limited time.

BUSINESS UPDATES

Staff Updates

Planner Brandt told the commission that representatives from the GreenStep Cities program would be at the October 14 City Council meeting to present the City with their Step 3 award and recognition. City Council and the City Manager invite and request the presence of all available commissioners to attend and be recognized for their important role in the process. Brandt also told the commission that the new GreenCorps Member would be starting for the City on September 28 and would hopefully be attending the October Sustainability Commission meeting.

Subcommittee Updates

Commissioner Leoni-Helbacka told the commission that a volunteer invasive species control event would be held at LaBelle Park on Sunday, September 13 and on Sunday, October 11. All are invited to attend and participate in the last 2 events of 2026.

Commissioner Matson-Brady told the commission that she had reached out to the Library on behalf of the Monarch Pledge subcommittee to start a conversation about creating outreach kits to help residents with pollinator gardens and other ways to engage adult audiences in the City.

Commissioner LaPlante related that the Sustainable Collaborations subcommittee had met to further discussions about

Commissioner Updates

Planner Brandt related that Commissioner Woods had resigned from the commission. Commissioner Coveyou related to the commission that she would be moving out of the City and that October would be her last month on the commission.

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

