



# **SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION**

**City Hall—Shared Vision Room, 3989 Central Ave NE**  
**Tuesday, February 10, 2026**  
**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 Carlson, Evenson, Jensen Christen, Groseth, Johnson, Leoni-Helbacka, Small

Staff present: Ursula Brandt, City Planner  
Liam Genter, City Forester/Natural Resources Specialist  
Zekima Rashid, MN GreenCorps Member

Members absent: Commissioners Kurek, LaPlante

Council Liaison: Mayor Amáda Márquez Simula

### **COMMUNITY FORUM**

No community members were present.

### **CONSENT AGENDA**

#### **1. Approve January 13, 2026 Regular Sustainability Commission Meeting Minutes**

MOTION: Move to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

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

### **BUSINESS ITEMS**

#### **2. GIS Mapping Update**

*Presenting Item: Zekima Rashid, MN GreenCorps Member*

GreenCorps Member Rashid provided an update about the proposed GIS mapping tool for the Sustainability Commission. Rashid stated that the initial proposed layers for the tool would be stormwater features including rain gardens and permeable pavement, pollinator gardens, certified green buildings, and community gardens. Rashid explained that she had access to the city's GIS system and was in the process of trying to gather the data and determine if it is up to date. Current maps of stormwater features are non-intuitive and some of them are very out of date. The current maps show the location of stormwater treatment without providing much additional information; Stormwater Specialist Drew Chirpich will be working to update the information on those sites to be included in the mapping tool. GreenCorps Member Rashid

explained that she was attending webinars and familiarizing herself with the software to create the GIS mapping tool. Rashid further stated that additional progress on the tool would be made before the next commission meeting. Rashid also met with the City of Minneapolis to talk about their efforts related to GIS mapping of sustainability initiatives. Rashid said that the meetings were productive and had provided city staff with good ideas about what to include in our mapping tool. Rashid said that Minneapolis would include a real time air quality monitoring dashboard with their tool and that a similar dashboard could be created to monitor and track progress on the Sustainability Commission's goals in Columbia Heights. Vice Chairperson Evenson asked if MnDOT did any air quality monitoring along their highways. GreenCorps Member Rashid said that she did not know the status of MnDOT air quality monitoring. Chairperson Jensen Christen said that the MN Pollution Control Agency or Department of Health could be sources of information about air quality. Chairperson Jensen Christen asked if the data was partially or fully available for the layers mentioned previously. Rashid replied that some of the data was available and ready for use, but that data for other layers needed updating and verification. Vice Chairperson Evenson asked if urban agriculture was included as a layer. Rashid replied that it had been included as a possible layer for the future.

## **BUSINESS UPDATES**

### **Staff Updates**

Planner Brandt provided an update about work on the 2050 Comprehensive Plan. Brandt said that a review committee comprised of residents and board and commission members would be created as part of the process. Brandt said that the council would like to include at least one volunteer from the Sustainability Commission to be members of the new review committee. Brandt said that an application was available currently for residents to volunteer to serve on the committee; the City Council will review the applications and select 5 community members to serve on the committee for the 2-year process. Chairperson Jensen Christen asked if the time commitment for the process was known currently. Brandt stated that it was too early in the process to know the full amount of time commitment. Chairperson Jensen Christen asked when the committee would start meeting. Brandt said that community engagement for the process would begin in April and the committee would start regular meetings by the end of the summer. Brandt elaborated that the committee members would be invited to the kickoff event and welcome at the community engagement events, but regular meetings would not begin until late summer. Brandt asked the commissioners to consider the request to volunteer and reach out to her with any further questions.

GreenCorps Member Rashid updated the commissioners on the GreenStep Cities process. Two additional best practices have been completed, leaving only the adoption of the Sustainable Purchasing Policy and one other best practice as necessary items to achieve step 3. Planner Brandt provided an update on the Sustainable Purchasing Policy, stating that Commissioner LaPlante had reached out and asked for help finishing the draft policy. Brandt said that the goal was to bring the final draft to the City Council in March for approval. March approval would allow for inclusion in the annual review of GreenStep status and promotion to step 3. Planner Brandt said that the final review for the commission would be at the March meeting of the commission.

Forester Genter told the commission about a new online tool available to see tree canopy coverage provided by the Arbor Day Foundation. Genter also stated that the Arbor Day Tree Sale would be back in 2026 and would launch in time for the next meeting. Genter encouraged the commissioners to publicize the sale and to purchase and plant trees for themselves. Vice Chairperson Evenson asked if any information about the importance of trees and canopy coverage had been included in the Sustainability Commission website. Genter recommended including a link to the Arbor Day Foundation which has a wealth of information about the value and importance of trees.

### **Subcommittee Updates**

### **Commissioner Updates**

Chairperson Jensen Christen reminded the commissioners with expiring terms that applications for another term on the Sustainability Commission were due on February 28. Commissioner Groseth informed the commission that she would not be applying for another term on the commission. Vice Chairperson Evenson said that she was unsure about another term on the commission, as did Commissioner Johnson. Commissioner Leoni-Helbacka said that she had already applied for another term on the commission.

### **Planning and Coordination**

Forester Genter told the commissioners that the city's Arbor Day celebration would be held on April 24, 2026. Genter invited the commissioners to attend the event if they were available. Genter said that the celebration would be held at Huset Park this year and that an elm tree would be planted to replace a mature elm that was removed for poor health in 2025. Genter provided a brief description of recent Arbor Day celebrations including past collaborations with area schools and the Sister Cities group. Mayor Márquez Simula elaborated on the Arbor Day celebration and encouraged the commissioners to attend.

Commissioner Groseth said that the initial work for the sustainable resources page had been completed by herself and Commissioner Carlson and posted to the commission Teams page. Commissioner Groseth asked the commissioners to review the initial list and make notes before any further work was done. Vice Chairperson Evenson said that it looks very good in terms of breadth of topics and organization. Commissioner Johnson asked where this page would live and Groseth replied that it would be on the Sustainability Commission website. Commissioner Carlson reviewed the current categories and asked the commission if the page would be better formatted as an FAQ page or as a list of resources. The commission generally agreed it would be best to have it as a list of resources rather than a series of questions and answers.

### **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