

Commission on Sustainability



MICHIGAN CITY INDIANA

Thursday, June 8, 2023, 4:30 pm

City Hall, EOC Room Downstairs

Minutes

The meeting was called to order by chair Andie Jahnz-Davis at 4:35 p.m.

Michigan City Sustainability Commissioners: Tim Bauer (Assistant Chair), Michelle Basta, Laura Henderson (Secretary), Clarence Hulse, Andie Jahnz-Davis (Chair), Daisy Lee (Treasurer), Nancy Moldenhauer (Immediate Past Chair), Faye Moore, La'Tonya Troutman
Student Commissioners: Tristan Bogart, Bailey Chavis, Mary Cate Neary, Angela Reynolds
City Council Liaison: Bryant Dabney

- I Roll Call-- Present: Michelle Basta, Tim Bauer, Tristan Bogart, Bailey Chavis, Andie Jahnz-Davis, Laura Henderson, Daisy Lee, Nancy Moldenhauer, Faye Moore. Absent: Bryant Dabney, Clarence Hulse. Absent and excused: Angela Reynolds, Mary Cate Neary, LaTonya Troutman.
- II Approval of May 11, 2023 Minutes—Daisy moved for approval of the minutes, and Tim seconded. All voted in favor.
- III Welcome—Michelle Basta, Mayoral Appointment—Our new commissioner, Michelle Basta, arrived late even though she was not expected until next month's meeting. She introduced herself and was warmly welcomed by the other commissioners present.
- IV Project Teams
 - A **Solar Power Options for City Government**—Tristan Bogart [Launch of MC Electric Vehicle Charging Station Survey; solar panel array plan update for installation of solar panels at remaining buildings] –Tristan reports he has reported to Performance Services regarding which city departments have the land parcels of interest for possible solar arrays. He has communicated with Scott Belding regarding the revised consumer survey for his input before releasing the survey to the public.
 - B **Electric Municipal Vehicle Fleet**—Tristan Bogart & Bailey Chavis [Introduction, discussion, then vote of launching an exploratory project for MC Police Department]--Tristan and Bailey described their proposed project—an exploratory project involving a few electric vehicles in the Police Department squad car fleet. After a period of time, the trial would be assessed in terms of costs, savings, and driver satisfaction. In preparation, they would research how other police departments are doing with electric vehicles. The eventual hope is that this would lead to further adoption of vehicles with less or no emissions, cost savings, and increased environmental responsibility, both in the police department and hopefully in other city departments. Laura moved that the Commission approve this project, Daisy seconded. All voted in favor, none opposed.
 - C **Funeral Homes & Crematoriums with Plant a Tree Opportunity:** Bailey Chavis [update on Plant a Tree option; article for Facebook and press release] –Bailey will resend the story to Andie. She reports that one of the funeral homes does not explicitly offer the “plant a tree” option but refers clients to various florists. None of the florists offers an explicit “plant a tree” option but at least one might be open to it.

- D **Waste Reduction/"Garbology"**—Daisy Lee, Tim Bauer, Bailey Chavis, Angela Reynolds, & Mary Cate Neary [update on the progress of pilot project in Washington Park Beach which would include fun, colorful recycling collection containers of native species, like frogs; explore IDEM grant for recycling projects up to \$100,000; collaborative effort with Sacha Gee Burn of LP Co. Solid Waste District, Shannon Eason of MC Parks & Rec Dept., and Robin Kohn of MC. Public Art Committee; contact NIPSCO for potential funding will be approached when plan available; *Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory for carbon footprint reduction indicates MC and NWI are extremely high for sending trash to landfills instead of practicing reduction and recycling* <https://www.in.gov/idem/recycle/resources/indiana-community-recycling-grant-program/>] --no updates.
- E **Continue Promoting SolSmart Silver Designation with Partner Indiana University Resilience Cohort**— Laura Henderson, Tristan Bogart, Angie Reynolds, & Nancy Moldenhauer [to begin review of programs for missed points to apply for Gold Designation in 2024; what could we do to continue leveraging SolSmart Silver Designation besides getting logo posted on Michigan City Government website?; keep sharing our link "Getting Started with Solar" found on Sustainability Commission Michigan City Government website page: <https://www.emichigancity.com/1214/Sustainability-Commission> ; <https://solsmart.org/news/soul-power-equitable-solar-workforce-development-in-michigan-city-indiana/>] --Nancy suggested that the fall might be the best time to pursue the task of finding points for Gold Designation.
- F **Carbon Neutral Indiana (CNI)**—Andie Jahnz-Davis, Laura Henderson, Daisy Lee & Nancy Moldenhauer [Carbon Neutral Indiana's innovative book--entitled *Carbon Neutral Indiana: A Practical Guide to Climate Solutions*—available on line; exploring possibility of offering book discussion at Northwest Indiana Green Drinks in fall; who needs to schedule an assessment, get an update for their home to become carbon neutral, or set up a monthly contribution with Daniel Poynter, Executive Director and Founder of CNI? About: <https://www.carbonneutralindiana.org/book> ; Order: <https://store.carbonneutralindiana.org/>] -- Andie is working to schedule Daniel Poynter for a virtual book discussion in the fall.
- G **U.S Department of Energy's National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL)**—Ed Shinn, Tristan Bogart, Bailey Chavis, Laura Henderson, & Nancy Moldenhauer [Summary of various options we've considered from Nov. 2021 to Nov. 2022 to be reviewed; after discussion, need to schedule a 7th meeting as a Task Force with our consultant Scott Belding of NREL; continue to pursue solar array powered electric-vehicle charging stations in the planned newly reconfigured rectangular parking lot directly across from the zoo; zoo will pursue possibility of installing solar panels on their buildings; to be determined if any power from a solar panel array parking lot installation would potentially be shared with the zoo or other structures in Washington Park; *We are receiving FREE consulting, engineering, planning services for solar array installation, electric vehicle charging stations, and electronic device chargers for workstations at Washington Park, Beach, and Zoo. When completed, we will have choices to create a plan to submit for an extremely promising future with potential green energy funds provided by the Federal Government.*] -- Tristan and Bailey agreed to look at Scott Belding's summary with Nancy before she sends it out to the project team.
- H **NWI Climate/Resilience Action Planning Work Group**—Nancy Moldenhauer, Laura Henderson, & Andie Jahnz-Davis [Intern from Indiana University for roll out has been assigned to Kathy Sipple of Earth Charter Indiana, not NIRPC; best practices and model programs to reduce greenhouse gas emissions were created] -- Nancy reported that the intern from Indiana University has been assigned to Kathy Sipple of Earth Charter Indiana for roll out. NIRPC was involved in phase 1 (gathering information on best practices) but will not be involved with phase 2 (roll out).
- I **Soul Power**—Donnita Scully, Faye Moore, & Nancy Moldenhauer [Solar Panel Installers NABCEP Certified— 7 successfully completed with 2 to re-test; grant being written for Professional Installers which requires service hours, can do survey and design work, could start own company; additional grant to be written to install solar panels on roof of Hope Community Center; as with the first grant, Nancy will provide consultation services to strengthen submissions. *Job training and certification program for solar panel*

installation in partnership with NAACP LaPorte County, IBEW-531, Ivy Tech Valparaiso, WorkOne, Just Transition NWI, and MC Sustainability Commission; interested individuals can sign up here for future offerings: <https://www.laportecountynaacp3061.org/soul-power-project>] --no update

- J **Solar United Neighbors (SUN)**—Faye Moore & Nancy Moldenhauer [Dan Robinson is collecting names and contact information of interested persons for potential Round 3 of installation being offered possibly Fall 2023 at drobinson@solarunitedneighbors.org ; https://public.courts.in.gov/Decisions/api/Document/Opinion?Id=cXVRn9l4RRuo6Alo0z2K0A1N5fw-Ckt_Co-Uav-jyv8MF9JXl8sz_6h2_6XWAIK0 <https://www.solarunitedneighbors.org/indiana/> ; <https://www.solarunitedneighbors.org/indiana/go-solar/>] --Elle Salon now has solar panels. This may be the first solar installation in the Uptown Arts District.
- K **“Caught YOU Being Green” Engagement**—Andie Jahnz-Davis & Tim Bauer [Social media posts & press releases; Nora L. Schultz Memorial Tribute Award nominations now for July award; Climate Leadership Summit 8, co-sponsored event with Earth Charter Indiana, request ALL attend for Sustainability Round Table, Friday, Sept. 8th with opening event, Thurs., Sept. 7th, Indiana University Northwest; Drive Clean Indiana Annual Conference & Expo, Wed., Aug. 23rd, desire table of 10 again (?) with opening reception, Tues., Aug. 22nd]--Andie will be posting Bailey’s article soon. Andie is still accepting nominations for the Nora L. Schultz Memorial Tribute Award which will be awarded in July.
- L This year the Climate Leadership Summit 8 will be at Indiana University Northwest in Gary, on Friday September 8th with an opening event on the evening of Thursday September 7. Nancy reports that all members of the commission can come free of charge. There will be a round table on sustainability, which members are particularly encouraged to participate in.
- M The Drive Clean Indiana Annual Conference and Expo will be Wednesday August 23 at Blue Chip in Michigan City. Nancy would like to get a table for 10 as she did last year. Commissioners who plan to attend should send Nancy an email. There will also be an opening reception the night before.
- V **Vote**--Coal Plant Wastewater Standards (ELGs) Sign-On Letter with <https://cleanwater.org/>
Our organizations urge EPA to finalize the strongest possible wastewater treatment standards for steam electric power plants, as required by the Clean Water Act. We also urge EPA to finalize the proposed rule as quickly as possible and to require compliance with the new standards within three years. To achieve the Clean Water Act’s national goal of eliminating water pollution, facilities are required to use the most modern and effective pollution control technologies to treat wastewater, known as best available technology or BAT, before discharging into “Waters of the United States.” --Tim moved and Daisy seconded that the Commission sign on to this letter. The vote was unanimously in favor.
- VI **Commissioner Comments**—Laura read the following personal statement: “I know Nicole Messacar to be one who thinks and cares deeply about the environment and sustainability. So as a member of the Tree Board, I was delighted to participate in interviewing and then recommending her for the position of city arborist/forester. The entire Tree Board shared in my delight when she was approved by the Board of Works and then appointed to the position. The Tree Board looked forward to accomplishing much good for Michigan City’s dwindling tree canopy with her in that position, after that position had been empty for over two years. Trees provide so many usually uncounted benefits to the people in the city. So I am dismayed and disappointed to learn of her firing. I consider her firing to be a great loss to our city.” She also gave away a bumper sticker for Shirley Heinze Land Trust and offered to bring more if wanted. She also discussed Kathy Sipple’s drive to get many yards in NW Indiana certified as wildlife habitat by the National Wildlife Federation. With enough yards certified, NW Indiana (Lake, Porter, and LaPorte counties) can get regional certification, which is Kathy’s goal. She asked commissioners to certify their gardens, making any needed improvements to qualify, and distributed a few fliers. This can also be done through the NWF website, or by the link on the Sustainability Commission’s Facebook page. The cost is normally \$20, but Nancy noted that there is currently a 20% off sale. Laura also shared some printed information from Indiana Land Protection Alliance.
Nancy shared a number of packets of butterfly milkweed seeds.
Faye reported that Dunebrook is now partnering with Walker Street Garden and an event was held last Wednesday with the two groups. A box for seed swapping was painted, and books were given away to the children. She thanked Dunebrook for coming out to the event. She reports she is growing a garden there this year!

Andie introduced the new member of our Commission, Michelle Basta. She was welcomed by the group.

- VII **Public Comments**—Jenny Dimitrof introduced herself and Tara Duffy. They are from Porter and hope to form a Sustainability Commission in Porter. Tara has crafted a proposed ordinance which will be presented to the council on June 27. Tara thanked our commission for what she has learned from us. Nancy expressed the hope that they will attend the Climate Leadership Summit 8. Tara will be there. Bailey asked if they plan to include student commissioners. The answer is yes. Some of the minor issues with getting recommendations for student commissioners were discussed. Tara reports the idea of a sustainability commission in Porter has both strong grass roots support and strong council support.
- VIII **Announcements**—Daisy announced that Michigan City Pride Fest will be Saturday June 17 at Guy Foreman Amphitheater. The event is free. Food trucks will be there. Tristan announced that Unsalted No Sharks is hosting a beach clean-up on Saturday June 10 from 10 to 12, meeting at the Fish Camp parking lot. He also reported that Ford and GM will partner with Tesla in formatting their chargers to NACS. Andie announced the Singing Sands Festival at Washington Park this Friday, Saturday, and Sunday; and also, Gnomes' Day Out: a Fairy Festival, at Hawthorne Park in Porter, Saturday June 10 from 1-6 p.m.
- IX **Adjournment**—Laura moved and Nancy seconded for adjournment. The meeting was adjourned by chair Andie Jahnz-Davis at 5:34 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Laura Henderson, Secretary