



Sustainability Commission

Regular Meeting

Minutes

335 South Broadway
De Pere, WI 54115
www.deperewi.gov

Tuesday, November 11, 2025

5:30 PM

Council Chambers/Virtual

I. Call to Order

1. Roll Call

II. Public Comment on Matters not on the Agenda. Comments made during the public comment period shall pertain only to matters under the jurisdiction of the Sustainability Commission. §6-3(f) DPMC

None

III. Items

1. Approval of the October 14, 2025 Sustainability Commission Meeting Minutes

Aldersperson Nelson moved to approve the October 14, 2025 Sustainability Commission meeting minutes, seconded by Commissioner Lawton. Upon vote, the motion passed unanimously.

RESULT:	Passed (UNANIMOUS)
MOVER:	Casey Nelson
SECONDER:	Randall Lawton
AYES:	Emily Henrigillis, Randall Lawton, Rachel Leonard, Casey Nelson, Jonie Panick, Nicole Slavin, Carmen Van Schyndel

2. Discussion on Composting Education with Mary Swifka of Wild Ones

Commissioner Van Schyndel stated that she had received Mary Swifka's name from Betty Marovich. Ms. Marovich attended a presentation by Mary Swifka at Mosquito Hill that she thought would be beneficial for the Sustainability Commission. Commissioner Van Schyndel reached out to Ms. Swifka, and said she was willing to do an educational series of presentations for the commission. Commissioner Van Schyndel asked if Ms. Swifka would give a brief summary of her presentations to the commission.

Mary Swifka from Wild Ones was present online to give a brief summary of the presentations that she offers. Ms. Swifka explained that she has been a long time member of Wild Ones, which is a national organization with a goal of informing people about composting, natural landscaping, and gardening with native plants. Ms. Swifka is the program chair for the Fox Valley Area and stated the presentations usually provide a science background of what composting is and how it is done, along with explaining the difference between green and brown materials and acceptable and unacceptable materials for composting. Usually she brings a sample of the different types of composting equipment available, along with providing a list of dos and don'ts to help the composting run smoothly. She also highlights how to use the compost once it is done. Ms. Swifka also stated that all presentations can be tailored to the attendees of the program.

Commissioner Van Schyndel stated this information will be brought back to the commission to see if this is something that the commission wants to move forward with.

Discussion only. No action necessary.

Chase Kuffel, Assistant City Engineer, requested that item 11 on pollinator gardens be moved up in the agenda because there is an individual in the audience to speak on the item.

3. Discussion on Winter Salt Week 2026

Chase Kuffel, Assistant City Engineer, stated that Commissioner Henrigillis requested this item to be placed on the agenda highlighting winter salt week, which is January 26th - 30th, with the intent of raising awareness of salt pollution.

Commissioner Henrigillis stated that the cups have been made, and now the commission needs to figure out how to provide more education to the residents. She stated that today there was a pre-salt week discussion that De Pere Public Works was a part of, which highlighted what homeowners and municipalities can do to limit salt use. Salt use pollutes water, with 1 teaspoon polluting 5 gallons of water permanently.

Alderson Nelson questioned what the cups were. Commissioner Henrigillis stated that the commission ordered cups that show the amount of salt that should be used to salt driveways and sidewalks. The cups bring awareness to residents and can be picked up at the MSC.

Commissioner Leonard suggested that the cups be distributed to local businesses that can give them out to residents that purchase salt. She agreed to spearhead contacting and distributing the cups to the De Pere True Value.

Discussion only. No action necessary.

4. Discussion on Native Landscaping around City Storm Water Detention Ponds

Chase Kuffel, Assistant City Engineer, stated that the commission requested information regarding the required native landscaping around the city storm water ponds. The special provisions of what is required per city projects are included in the packet and specifically require Mesic Prairie plantings. This mixture creates a natural buffer around the ponds, and keeps geese out of the ponds. The plantings should not be mowed as it takes a while to get established.

Discussion only. No action necessary.

5. Consideration and Possible Action on Reid Street Banner Initiative Advertising

Chase Kuffel, Assistant City Engineer, stated that the Reid Street banner was discussed at both the July and September commission meetings. Betty Marovich, previous Administrative Assistant, put together four options that could be used for the banner, using the slogan "Don't be a Grinch, Use Only a Pinch" to help reduce salt usage on city sidewalks and driveways.

Alderson Nelson questioned the wording of polluting water "forever."

Chase Kuffel recommended eliminating the QR code from the banner and possibly adding a link to the city website. Mr. Kuffel also stated that the legal department will need to be consulted to see if the Grinch images can be used.

Commissioner Leonard moved to approve option 1 with the elimination of the QR code and adding a link

to the city website, pending legal approval, seconded by Commissioner Slavin. Upon vote, the motion passed unanimously.

RESULT:	Passed (UNANIMOUS)
MOVER:	Rachel Leonard
SECONDER:	Nicole Slavin
AYES:	Emily Henrigillis, Randall Lawton, Rachel Leonard, Casey Nelson, Jonie Panick, Nicole Slavin, Carmen Van Schyndel

6. Discussion on Sustainable Educational Series

Chase Kuffel, Assistant City Engineer, stated that prior to Betty Marovich's departure, she put together the attached list of potential sustainable education topics. The potential list was discussed with the following being the preferred topics: composting, natural landscaping, bats, and the green roof.

Comissioner Leonard mentioned the idea of partnering with the Mulva Center and possibly using their space.

Commissioner Henrigillis mentioned that the Nelson Family Pavilion, library, or the Locktenders House would be potential sites as well.

Aldersperson Nelson questioned if these could be tied into another city event like the Farmers Market or the beer gardens. Mr. Kuffel explained that these presentations would be more formal in nature, and be an actual sit-down presentation of the topic.

Mr. Kuffel stated he will bring the topic back to the commission with some venue options.

Discussion only. No action necessary.

7. Discussion on Sustainability Commission Work Plan

Chase Kuffel, Assistant City Engineer, stated that the work plan has been updated after the last discussion. The clean energy initiative has been updated, showing the commission is now working toward participating in the Green Tier Legacy Communities. Also, other initiatives were updated where commissioners have agreed to spearhead the initiative.

8. Consideration and Possible Action on Initiative Prioritization - Adopt-a-Drain

Chase Kuffel, Assistant City Engineer, stated that this topic was tabled at the last meeting as Commissioner Henrigillis was excused from the last meeting. This item is being brought back to discuss promotional items for the program. Past discussions on the program are included in the packet of information, with two popular suggestions being silicone bracelets and signage.

Commissioner Van Schyndel stated that at the past meeting there was a lot of discussion on the tiered recognition program, referral program, and the possibility of an annual recognition event. The commission would like to find a way to incentivize residents who actually clear the drains and not just sign up for the program.

Commissioner Henrigillis questioned if a winner was chosen for the rainbarrel. Mr. Kuffel explained that the rainbarrel was shipped to Florida, so it had to be reordered. Once the rainbarrel arrives, a winner will be chosen.

Commissioner Henrigillis stated that she likes the idea of a recognition event, where a speaker could possibly be brought in. She questioned how many inlets have been adopted. Mr. Kuffel stated that he believes that there are around 30 inlets adopted, with around 8–12 adoptees.

Commissioner Leonard suggested that part of the promotional items could be a card that could be dropped off at area businesses. Instead of businesses adopting a portion of a highway to clean, they could adopt a drain close to their business. Commissioner Leonard agreed to develop a promotional card that could be delivered to local businesses.

Mr. Kuffel stated that there are start-up kits still available to be given out at the Municipal Service Center.

Discussion only. No action necessary.

9. Discussion on Initiative Prioritization - Composting

Chase Kuffel, Assistant City Engineer, stated the composting numbers have been updated. Currently, there is a steady 26 participants of the program, where we started out at 62. This decrease is not due to the requirement of the W-9 form, it is just a lack of participation.

Commissioner Van Schyndel stated she has done some research on resources that are out there for residents and came across an organization called AROW. When reaching out to AROW, Commissioner Van Schyndel found out they work closely with Festival Foods and was able to connect with the individual there. This individual stated that Festival Foods composts all of their pre-consumer food waste, and she is interested in finding out more of what their program looks like. Also, UWGB has a food composter. Commissioner Van Schyndel stated there are updates or changes to this initiative, just more research needs to be completed.

Discussion only. No action necessary.

10. Discussion on Initiative Prioritization - Clean Air Initiative

Chase Kuffel, Assistant City Engineer, stated he has nothing new about this initiative.

Discussion only. No action necessary.

11. Discussion on Initiative Prioritization - Pollinator Gardens / Planned Natural Landscapes

Chase Kuffel, Assistant City Engineer, requested that this item be moved to after item 2 on the agenda because there is an individual in the audience to speak on the item.

Alderson Nelson stated that with the No Mow May program being eliminated in the city, we have been discussing options on how to promote pollinators in De Pere. Alderson Nelson stated he has been talking with Eben Erhard of the Beautification Committee, and they came up with an idea of preparing a list of five plants that would be great for pollinators that could be given to residents, guiding them on what plants work best and possibly incentivizing them for creating pollinator gardens. Also, in the future, mapping out places that have great pollinator gardens and the potential flight patterns of the pollinators could be implemented.

Alderson Nelson moved to open the meeting to public comment at 5:55 pm, seconded by Commissioner Slavin. Upon vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Eben Erhard explained that this program is something that has evolved over time. When the city dropped

the No Mow May program, the new policy was to allow residents to grow tall blooming plants, which is extremely vague. Mr. Erhard stated he is involved in a pollinator corridor group and many of the surrounding communities that dropped No Mow May were looking for alternative programs. This is how the Five for Flyers (bees, birds, hummingbirds and butterflies) program came about. The program is homeowner-based, doesn't cost the municipality much money, it is easy to market, and it is easy for the homeowner. The program would list five plants that are native to the area, easy to grow, are non-aggressive spreaders, and that bloom for a long period of time that are good for the flyers. The five plants that are suggested are butterfly weed, meadow blazing star, purple coneflower, smooth penstemon and rattlesnake master. To implement the program, the city could first just publish the recommended list. To add to the program, the city could provide homeowner signage to promote it. To further enhance the program, the city could provide kits to homeowners and plant gardens in city open spaces. Mr Erhard stated that the commission could work with retail suppliers to try to get them to stock the plants and incorporate signage for them, and stated he would be willing to work with the suppliers. The program could also be expanded in the future to add five annuals for flyers and more. Any native planting is great, and this program would give residents some education and provide direction without costing a lot.

Commissioner Leonard stated she loves this program to replace No Mow May and would love to be able to track on a map what the residents are planting in their home gardens. The commission has funds available to print out signs for the program.

Mr. Erhard gave information on what the City of Green Bay is doing, stating they are providing pollinator kits to their residents. They prepared 200 kits with 15 plants per kit, as well as signage for the garden as part of their pollinator corridor. They also have planted gardens in city parks that include signage that people can look up to see the flight path of the flyers. They are also trying to develop a pollinator garden map, but are running into problems with incorrect data entered.

Commissioner Van Schyndel questioned if the five recommended plants are readily available in stores. Commissioner Henrigillis stated they are not available in big box stores, but stores that sell native plants.

Commissioner Slavin stated that she really likes the program. It can be implemented with little to no cost and can be built upon.

Commissioner Lawton shared that he put in a pollinator garden a year ago. He shared the list of plants with the individual that helped install his garden. He stated that the five listed plants have limitations and only flower in the summer and suggested that plants be included on the list that flower in early spring and into fall. Mr. Erhard stated that when developing the program he looked for simplicity and picked only five plants. The program could be enhanced to also list late bloomers, but a lot of late bloomers also spread aggressively.

Commissioner Slavin moved to close the meeting to public comment at 6:14 pm, seconded by Commissioner Lawton. Upon vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Aldersperson Nelson stated that he thinks signage is very important to go along with the pollinator gardens.

Commissioner Henrigillis provided a brief summary of the planned natural landscape topic. She prepared the enclosed flyer to bring awareness of some common invasive species that are found in landscaping and provided alternatives that could be planted instead.

Commissioner Leonard suggested adding disposal tips for the invasive species and why the plant is

considered an invasive species.

Chase Kuffel, Assistant City Engineer, stated this item will come back as an action item at the next meeting.

Discussion only. No action necessary.

12. Discussion on Initiative Prioritization - Green Energy

Chase Kuffel, Assistant City Engineer, stated that the last update was that the Commission is going to be working on the Green Tier Legacy Community.

Commissioner Leonard gave an update on the research she has completed on the Green Tier initiative. She stated that she review the City of Green Bay's work plan and what they use for reporting their energy usage. Green Bay uses an EPA worksheet that looks at an energy resource mix at a regional level. WPS has a more specific energy resource mix that can be utilized online. Commissioner Leonard also stated that the City of Eau Claire utilizes a computer program that provides yearly reporting that provides a ton of data and a lot of tech support. This program might be a good option for the commission to consider, which would be much more economical and could be utilized for other initiatives. Commissioner Leonard feels it might be a good idea to have this company provide a presentation on what the program is, how much it costs, and how it can be used for the commission initiatives.

Mr. Kuffel stated that the commission will not be going through with the RFP process for this initiative and will instead be looking for other groups that can provide help.

Discussion only. No action required.

13. Consideration and Possible Action on Canceling the December 9, 2025 Sustainability Commission Meeting

Chase Kuffel, Assistant City Engineer, stated that in previous years, the commission has elected to cancel the December meeting due to holiday schedules.

Aldersperson Nelson moved to cancel the December Sustainability Commission meeting, seconded by Commissioner Panick. Upon vote, the motion passed unanimously.

RESULT:	Passed (UNANIMOUS)
MOVER:	Casey Nelson
SECONDER:	Jonie Panick
AYES:	Emily Henrigillis, Randall Lawton, Rachel Leonard, Casey Nelson, Jonie Panick, Nicole Slavin, Carmen Van Schyndel

IV. Future Agenda Items

None

V. Adjournment

Commissioner Van Schyndel moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:51 pm, seconded by Commissioner Slavin. Upon vote, the motion passed unanimously.

RESULT:	Passed (UNANIMOUS)
MOVER:	Carmen Van Schyndel

SECONDER: Nicole Slavin
AYES: Emily Henrigillis, Randall Lawton, Rachel Leonard, Casey Nelson, Jonie Panick, Nicole Slavin, Carmen Van Schyndel

Respectfully submitted,
Grace Lahtela