



CITY OF NOVI
Environmental Sustainability Committee Meeting
August 12, 2025, 4:30 p.m.
Mayor's Conference Room | Novi Civic Center | 45175 Ten Mile Road
(248) 347-0445

CALL TO ORDER: 4:32 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Council Members Gurumurthy, Heintz, and Smith

STAFF LIAISON: Danielle Mahoney, Assistant City Manager

ALSO PRESENT: Rebecca Runkle, Project Engineer
Katherine Oppermann, Recording Secretary

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion: Gurumurthy; Seconded: Heintz; Approved: 3:0

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – June 2, 2025 Minutes

Motion: Heintz; Seconded: Gurumurthy; Approved: 3:0

REMARKS FROM THE CHAIRPERSON - None

MATTERS FOR COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

1. Long-Term Goals

Chairperson Smith started by stating that having spent time looking through masterplans he doesn't think that the Committee is in the position to make something that detailed themselves.

He continued that the group knows what they want to do (emission reduction, reducing waste going into landfills, building sustainable practices, etc.) but that flexibility will be important over the next few years given national politics and the precariousness of grants, solar programs, etc. Councilmember Heintz agreed. Councilmember Gurumurthy thinks that the group is stuck on the approach phase and that they should research it further, working a little each meeting towards the framework and examining benchmarks from other cities. She thinks that the Michigan Green Communities platinum level is still a great goal and that they can look at shorter term goals that can impact that. She emphasized that they should keep the long-term in mind while doing short-term planning. Chairperson Smith agreed that even while "zigging and zagging" that they should always be mindful of their main pillars and goals. Councilmember Heintz agreed as well, to keep the goals in mind as signposts and that "we can do everything" with sufficient attention and planning.

Chairperson Smith stated that he has been struggling with the idea of sitting down and planning for steps, since you can take all the time in the world doing that and he

would rather take actual steps. Councilmember Gurumurthy acknowledged that every short-term effort may not tie into a long-term goal, but they can try.

Chairperson Smith suggested that each Committee member pick a few items that they are particularly passionate about to work proactively towards.

2. Short- and Medium-Term Projects

Chairperson Smith stated that he wants to continue to work on solar power as a project, despite the potential difficulty of funding. Councilmember Heintz suggested that even if rooftop installations become less feasible, they might look at portable emergency panels for smaller, short-term savings or other alternatives.

Councilmember Heintz will be working on the approach of a composting program, what might be most feasible be it food scrape bins across the city, a "Make Food Not Waste" model, etc. Chairperson Smith noted a recent trip to Boston where he saw that they offered a bi-weekly compost collection model. Engineer Rebecca Runkel shared that, from her research, Novi would need 5-6 large, enclosed compost bins as well as a provider to service them for a resident drop-off model. Assistant City Manager Mahoney asked Ms. Runkel if she has the time/ability to continue said research and Ms. Runkel said yes and also suggested that they could pursue an intern for the task.

Councilmember Gurumurthy is interested in pursuing community awareness and education on sustainability topics. She would like to look into options and potential platforms for that. Chairperson Smith suggested that starting with pollinators/bees could be a good option. Ideas for road clean-ups, tree planning opportunities, etc. were also suggested.

Chairperson Smith said that each member should start out and continue to work through Ms. Mahoney to link them with pertinent staff throughout the City for their projects.

3. Update on Ongoing City Actions

Chairperson Smith asked Ms. Mahoney for the update on ongoing City actions towards sustainability. She shared that she had translated things on their list to items already "in-flight" at the City level and entered them into the spreadsheet shared with the Committee. She noted that some of the items can from the energy audit which was completed and they are now working through alignment on implementation. She explained the challenges of some items such as installing water fountains/water bottle fillers at all parks when some park locations do not have direct City water connections. She also spoke on the City Attorney's current work on reviewing the woodland/wetland ordinances as well as existing avenues for education that they can leverage. Councilmember Gurumurthy thinks that it is amazing that so many of these things are already being done and thinks that they could better utilize the city webpage to show what is being done.

4. Sustainable Building Practices for Public Safety Buildings

Chairperson Smith stated that they have a generational opportunity to make sure that these new buildings are built with as many sustainable features and future-flexible features as possible. He wants to ensure they are looking at functionality, not just façade. Ms. Mahoney agreed and also stated that there are some best practices we already have, noting examples from the Department of Public Works build which was also built recently. Chairperson Smith appreciated that and also suggested that we consider heat pumps and irrigation improvements among other matters. Councilmember Heintz said that being ready for future improvements, even if they can't be added initially, should be considered. He suggested that the possibility of reuse or reutilization of building materials be considered as well as a deconstruction model (rather than demolition), citing a recent EGLE webinar on the topic. Chairperson Smith agreed, pointing out that the making of concrete is one of the bigger greenhouse gas emitters.

5. Shawood Lake

Chairperson Smith shared that he and Councilmember Smith had been talking to residents near the lake and that following these conversations and the recent City acquisition of a majority share of Shawood Lake that they are interested in pursuing further options for the body of water. He thinks that they should look at opening a 40x40 outlet to open water and noted that they will need to look into how to work with EGLE as a municipal entity.

He suggested that they do a small test plot through Savin Lake Services to remove water lilies/lily pads, and to recommend to City Council that PRCS work to come up with programming ideas for the lake, or to do both. Councilmember Heintz liked the idea of moving forward with both. Chair Smith noted that, should treatment be approved and successful that it may need to become a cyclical/annual process for upkeep. Councilmember Gurumurthy agreed and noted that everything would need to be clearly laid out in a plan should they move forward with it and that they should also consider other options beyond herbicide application. Councilmember Heintz said that we will need to know what PRCS proposes, and what the community supports so that they can be informed on how big or small the use will be. Chairperson Smith stated that they need to be sure that anything they do is more than just a "photo-op" and that it is backed by more substantive need and intent. Councilmember Gurumurthy said that she wants to see a full presentation to City Council on the matter showing all options, potentially integrated with PRCS and Savin Lake Services. Councilmember Heintz agreed and suggested that they get the "ball rolling" for best timing but that he thinks they need more information before proceeding with a formal motion beyond having staff look further into the matter.

REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS - None

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Residents Bill and Karla Halvangis and Mark Adams were present. Mr. Halvangis shared that they and other residents on Shawood Lake were already working with Savin Lake Services

and EGLE towards doing a treatment on the lily pads in their area of the lake. They shared their concerns of the current quality of the lake given the lily pad growth and how it blocks out the sunlight, potentially affecting microbes, other aquatic plants, and fish. Boating and fishing is made difficult due to the number of lily pads and they think that action on the lake should be taken seriously and, ideally, coordinated between the city and residents for maximum efficacy. Mrs. Halvangis noted that while she is not necessarily a fan of chemicals, they are the only effective means of treatment. She suggests they could be used as a 1st step and then other options examined for maintenance. Mr. Adams shared his recollections of growing up on Shawood Lake and noted that he thinks that a box culvert installed by the City in the 80s has affected the nature of the lake. He also noted that he thinks the City explore options to use the house on the island recently acquired by the City, as opposed to just demolishing it, that a water control structure may be needed on a section of lake that has leak in the shoreline, and that he believes anything north of 12 Mile in the City is typically ignored.

ADJOURNMENT: 5:56 p.m.

Motion: Heintz; Seconded: Smith; Approved: 3:0