



CITY OF NOVI
Environmental Sustainability Committee Meeting
February 9, 2026, 5:30 p.m.
Council Conference Room | Novi Civic Center | 45175 Ten Mile Road
(248) 347-0445

CALL TO ORDER: 5:32 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Council Members Gurumurthy, Heintz, and Smith

STAFF LIAISON: Danielle Mahoney, Assistant City Manager

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – January 7, 2026 Minutes

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

REMARKS FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

MATTERS FOR COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

1. *My Green Michigan* Food Scrap Collection/Composting Proposal

Councilmember Heintz started the discussion by stating that, as they come to a consensus for the approach for a composting pilot program to bring before council, that he would ideally like to include individual household bins (small, approx. 5lb). He thinks this would speak well to Novi's goal of being a leader, being a best place to live. He also wants to consider how they will measure the success of a composting program and how they can ensure that they get the proper level of support.

Councilmember Gurumurthy stated that she likes the proposal that *My Green Michigan* provide and that when they prepare their presentation for the rest of City Council they should have: 1. A Problem Statement, 2. The Right Approach. She would also like for the Committee to visit an existing composting location so that they can understand and speak on it more tangibly and speak to at least one other City using the program. She agreed that they need to clearly define the pilot and what data will need to be gathered and what a success outcome will be.

Ms. Runkel noted that they will not have a fellow until August so they may want to hold off until we have one to move forward. This fellow could support the Committee as far as making a presentation, contacting other communities, and working on potential use measurements.

Chair Smith commented that he wonders if the cost of the pilot could be absorbed as part of the planned user fee rate for recycling processing costs/service-related expenses.

Councilmember Heintz asked if they will be moving to get approval for the pilot program before June. Assistant City Manager Mahoney said that they should be mindful of the role of the Committee to make recommendations to City Council and suggested that some next steps could include speaking with their contact in the City of Farmington, considering delegating some tasks to the Graduate Management Analyst, consider summer as a good start time for the pilot, and to be sure to talk about the program in upcoming budget discussions. Councilmember Heintz appreciated the suggestions but said that he doesn't want to overthink it, just move forward with starting the program, seeing the results, and then making any needed adjustments from there. Ms. Mahoney noted that pitching the pilot at a lower cost, such as \$5,000 would be a good choice, Chair Smith agreed noting that a lower cost would make it an easier sell that wouldn't be held up by budget issues. Councilmember Gurumurthy also agreed that she is a strong advocate for moving forward with the pilot so that they can use it to gather data to then bring back to Council as a strong case for continued, potentially more robust service.

Councilmember Heintz shared that he has been working on a presentation for City Council already and that he is gathering supporting points such as quantitative data from My Green Michigan. Chair Smith said he would like to see data from the cost of using a program like the one in Wixom too so that they can compare options. Ms. Mahoney noted that they do have data already for solid waste and recycling that is provided by RRRASOC and agreed that since Wixom has been moving along on their food scrap program, they may have some good data points that could be utilized. Chair Smith also commented that they might consider Household Hazardous Waste days could demonstrate the number of residents that are willing to take an extra step to properly dispose of certain waste items

For next steps the Committee determined that they would like to make their proposal to City Council in late March and that they should talk informally to their fellow Councilmembers ahead of that presentation. A formal motion for a recommendation will be necessary once they are ready to approach Council for Action. Councilmember Gurumurthy suggested that they draft the presentation and review it as a group for any edits and Councilmember Heintz agreed to make the initial draft.

The Committee also briefly discussed creating a resident survey regarding composting, a short survey of approximately 2 – 5 questions. Ms. Runkel made some potential question suggestions such as:

- a. Do you currently compost (either at home or through a paid service)?
- b. Would you start composting if the City provided a means to?
- c. Would you be willing to drive to a designated facility in the City to drop off your compostable materials?

Chair Smith and Councilmember Gurumurthy both agreed that a survey of this nature could provide good insight and also serve as a low level “what to expect soon” advertisement for the program.

2. Arbor Day 2026 Planning

Chair Smith said that he would like the Committee to do another tree planting at the upcoming Arbor Day Celebration, perhaps up to five trees. Councilmember Gurumurthy suggested reaching out to the other Councilmembers to see if they would also like to participate. Ms. Runkel briefly showed the Committee some materials and giveaways they could use at their table for the event.

Councilmember Gurumurthy suggested that a “Bingo Card” (“Enviro-Bingo”) for residents be formulated and ideally ready for distribution by Arbor Day. It could be set up so that a completed card earned them some kind of environmentally friendly gift.

3. Invasive Species Removal

Chair Smith said he would like for us to give information to residents regarding invasive species to be aware of. He also suggested that the City consider the removal of the invasive (but formerly popular landscaping element) Bradford pear trees on City property, perhaps using the tree fund if feasible. He also noted his deer concerns, voicing his opinion that at the level they are present in represents a kind of invasiveness, and also that they are very destructive to area plants.

Councilmember Heintz wondered if there might be a way to make funds available to residents to help with the removal of invasives on non-city property. Ms. Oppermann noted that there have been some recent uses of the Neighborhood Entryway Enhancement Grant Program that included the removal of invasives, but that this program is limited to subdivisions/HOAs with entryways on public Right-of-Ways. He also agreed that an informational guide on recognizing and proper methods for removing invasive species would be a good idea. He also suggested that the guide could also include recommended alternatives for replacing former commonly used invasive plantings (like Bradford pears). Ms. Mahoney agreed and said that she would get more information from City Landscape Architect Rick Meader.

4. Additional Discussion

The Committee also briefly discussed some other future efforts that they might consider such as collaborating with MSU Tollgate, a recycling bin audit of City properties/facilities, a speaker series with the Library, that a hashtag be created to promote their efforts on socials, and some collaboration with the PRCS Nature.Nurture.Novi programming. Councilmember Heintz noted an upcoming Urban Biodiversity talk that would be given in Macomb and wondered if there might be an opportunity to bring the same speaker to Novi while they are in town. Councilmember Gurumurthy expressed her admiration of the Sustainability Calendar from Holland, MI, pointing out programs like the Green Commute Week.

REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS

PUBLIC COMMENT - None

ADJOURNMENT: 6:26 p.m.

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