

# Commission on Sustainability



## MICHIGAN CITY INDIANA

Thursday, January 12, 2023, 4:30 pm

City Hall, EOC Room Downstairs

### Minutes

**Michigan City Sustainability Commissioners:** Tim Bauer, Laura Henderson (Secretary), Clarence Hulse, Andie Jahnz-Davis (Assistant Chair), Daisy Lee (Treasurer), Nancy Moldenhauer (Chair), Faye Moore, La'Tonya Troutman

**Student Commissioners:** Tristan Bogart, Bailey Chavis, Mary Cate Neary, Angela Reynolds

**City Council Liaison:** Bryant Dabney

Chair Nancy Moldenhauer called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

- I. Roll Call—Present: Tim Bauer, Tristan Bogart, Laura Henderson, Daisy Lee, Nancy Moldenhauer, Mary Cate Neary, La'Tonya Troutman. Absent and excused: Bailey Chavis, Andie Jahnz-Davis, Faye Moore, Angela Reynolds. Absent: Bryant Dabney, Clarence Hulse.
- II. Approval of December 8, 2022 Minutes—Tim moved and Daisy seconded for approval of the minutes. The vote for approval was unanimous.
- III. Project Teams
  - A. **Solar Power Options for City Government**—Tristan Bogart [solar panel array plan update for installation of solar panels at remaining city buildings as part of American Rescue Act Funding granted to municipal government]--no updates this month
  - B. **Funeral Homes & Crematoriums with Plant a Tree Opportunity:** Bailey Chavis [update on contact with Geisen-Carlisle headquartered in Crown Point via written communication for adding "Plant a Tree" memorial option]--no updates this month
  - C. **Waste Reduction/"Garbology"**—Daisy Lee, Tim Bauer, Bailey Chavis, Angela Reynolds, & Mary Cate Neary [explore preparation and timeline for next round of IDEM grant for recycling projects up to \$100,000; forwarded "Goby" fish photos with descriptions from Asia to Lora Fosberg, Art Manager, to inspire ideas for an artist commissioned native fish sculpture to collect recyclable plastic bottles and aluminum cans at Washington Park Beach; collaborative effort with Sacha Gee Burn of LaPorte County Solid Waste District, Shannon Eason of MC Parks & Rec Dept, and Robin Kohn of MC. Public Art Committee; contact within NIPSCO for potential funding will be approached when plan available; *Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory for carbon footprint reduction indicates Michigan City 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/>] --Daisy announced that Save the Dunes gave the Dorothy Buell Youth Environmental Award to MCAS 7<sup>th</sup> graders for their project of getting recycling containers in most of Michigan City parks. Captains Angela Reynolds and Frank Anderson were present to receive the award, a third captain was Keith Jackson. Daisy met with Parks Department's Shannon Eason, Ed Shinn, and Pat Voltz, and Sasha Gee Burns of LaPorte Co. Solid Waste District, regarding recycling at Washington Park

beach. Challenges with the idea of a large native fish sculpture and “feed the fish” recycling are: heavy storms may come up as far as this sculpture, cleaning of the fish sculpture, and unwanted critters might make use of it. Another possibility is smaller bins which could be painted like fish with fins added. Shannon is looking for grants both for materials and for a parks department intern who could focus on recycling at the parks. Regarding the recycling of food waste in the schools, Daisy Lee is moving ahead with her project at Barker Middle School by enrolling pig farmers willing to accept the food. Mary Cate Neary, of Marquette High School, has found contact information for a number of local pig farmers. Laura wondered if any of the hog farmers might have CAFO operations that might not use sustainable practices for animal waste management. The garbology team will look in to this.

- D. **Continue Promoting SolSmart Silver Designation with Partner Indiana University Resilience Cohort**— Laura Henderson, Tristan Bogart, Angie Reynolds, & Nancy Moldenhauer [desire to begin slow review of programs we may not have acquired points 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 mentioned that we can take our time with getting the Gold designation. She is interested if there are signs similar to the Bird City and Tree City signs that are around our town. La'Tonya will check with the Department of Energy Solsmart people to learn if such signs exist.
- E. **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*—is now available and can be ordered. 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/> ] --Faye got her book finally. Laura spoke about the on-line book discussions hosted by Daniel which offer an opportunity to meet people all over the state and encouraged others to sign up for the experience. Andie has also signed up for it. We may host a face-to-face book discussion among commissioners coming up at the Michigan City Public Library possibly during Earth Month.
- F. **U.S Department of Energy’s National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL)**—Ed Shinn, Tristan Bogart, Bailey Chavis, Daisy Lee, Laura Henderson, & Nancy Moldenhauer [Our next step is to contact NIPSCO to begin planning process for various options discussed so far. Held our 6<sup>th</sup> meeting as a Sub-Task Force on November 22nd at the Washington Park Zoo with our consultant Scott Belding of NREL including Jamie Huss, Washington Park Zoo Director, Ed Shinn, Washington Park & Recreation Department Superintendent, and Nancy. We will continue to pursue solar array powered electric-vehicle charging stations in the planned newly reconfigured rectangular parking lot directly across from the zoo. *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 funding to be provided by the Federal Government.*] -- Next step is to contact NIPSCO. Tristan and Laura will participate in the contact.
- G. **NWI Climate/Resilience Action Planning Work Group**—Nancy Moldenhauer, Laura Henderson, & Andie Jahnz-Davis [Sixth meeting was held on Thursday, December 15th, 1 pm, via Zoom. Best practices and model programs to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in a draft format were critiqued and expanded upon.] -- Laura and Nancy reported about the list developed by the intern of best practices and where they have been used and how to contact them. The group has applied for another intern for 2023.
- H. **Soul Power**—Donnita Skully & Faye Moore [NABCEP certification results from the November six-week Solar PV Associate training are 7 of the 9 passed the NABCEP the first time, other two failed by one and two

points, both are scheduled to retake the exam and will probably pass the second time around; *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> ] --In addition to the above, Nancy and the Commission recognized La'Tonya for imagining this project and spearheading its coming into being. La'Tonya recognized Donnita Skully for maintaining the program, and partners who helped in the starting, including Nancy Moldenhauer, Just Transitions NWI, and Denise Rabdul-Rahman. It was noted that the 7 who have already passed the exam already have obtained jobs in the field.

- I. **Solar United Neighbors (SUN)**—Faye Moore & Nancy Moldenhauer [Last week, unfortunately the Indiana Supreme Court issued their decision upholding the CenterPoint's no netting interpretation of the Excess Distributed Generation (EDG) net metering replacement, which the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission (IURC) approved in 2021, full opinion below; Nancy attended the 2022 Indiana Solar Congress, December 10th, in person; Dan Robinson is collecting names and contact information of interested persons for potential Rounds of installation being offered in 2023 at [drobinson@solarunitedneighbors.org](mailto:drobinson@solarunitedneighbors.org) ; Nancy's solar panel installation was completed in December as part of Round 1] <https://public.courts.in.gov/Decisions/api/Document/Opinion?Id=cXVRn9l4RRuao6Alo0z2K0A1N5fw-Ckt Co-Uav-jyv8MF9JXl8sz 6h2 6XWAIK0> <https://www.solarunitedneighbors.org/indiana/> ; <https://www.solarunitedneighbors.org/indiana/go-solar/> --La'Tonya, who attended SUN's Indiana Solar Congress 2022 in her role as Regional Communications Associate with SUN, talked about her experiences. It was hosted by Hampton Southeastern Schools in Fishers which has gone solar itself. Presentations at the Congress Included Donnita Skully on the Soul Power project, Zach Schalk and Dan Robinson of SUN, an individual on his personal experiences going solar, and the creation of a "Solar Bill of Rights" by the attendees. There were also great opportunities for networking with others doing similar work around the state. Commissioners were encouraged to look up the event on line. Nancy emphasized her big takeaway from the Congress was that we need more everyday people to be ambassadors for solar power. La'Tonya also spoke about the Indiana Supreme Court decision which allows Center Point to slash roughly in half the amount of money solar customers are given for power they send back to the grid. Full info at the links provided above. It is likely that the Indiana Supreme Court will decide similarly for all the other utilities in our state. La'Tonya asked for anybody who would like to share their solar story with her to help advance solar power in Indiana, at [ms.ltroutman@live.com](mailto:ms.ltroutman@live.com). La'Tonya will invite Dan Robinson to speak to the Sustainability Commission again this year. Video of Congress: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7yzFgrAlvCQ>
  - J. **"Caught YOU Being Green" Engagement**—Andie Jahnz-Davis & Tim Bauer [Upcoming social media posts; Update on Earth Month Extravaganza 2023, Saturday, April 29th, Krueger Memorial Hall]--Andie not present but sent a brief report: she is coordinating with Tim on the Earth Month Extravaganza plans, drawing up a list of potential participants and will soon start contacting them. Commissioners are invited to let her know of other potential participants who were not there last year but perhaps should be.
- IV. **Commissioner Comments**—Tim asked if anything had been heard from Larry Zimmerman and his partner regarding hybrid cemeteries. Nancy replied that their tour is probably not completed yet, and she expects to hear from them when it is. —Nancy shared that tomorrow is the last day to submit comments on the proposed NIPSCO rate increase. The Indiana Office of Utility consumer Counsellor portal for comments can be reached by googling NIPSCO electric rate case 2022-2023. It can also be reached through the Citizen's Action Community Campaign.
  - V. **Public Comments**--none
  - VI. **Announcements**—Nancy and La'Tonya announced Renewable Energy Day 2023 in Indianapolis on Thursday January 26th. SUN and Faith in Place are partnering on this event, and Michigan City Sustainability Commission is a sponsor. Details can be found on the Solar United Neighbors website. Laura announced Shirley Heinze Land Trust's virtual winter tree identification workshop on Thursday January 19 at 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Following

in a few days will be several in person tree ID walks, at Meadowbrook, Barker Woods, and Lydick Bog nature preserves. Details on registration are at the Shirley Heinze Land Trust website.

- VII. **Adjournment**—Laura moved and La'Tonya seconded for adjournment. All voted in favor, none opposed. The meeting was adjourned by Chair Nancy Moldenhauer at 5:34 p.m.