

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE

AUGUST 20th, 2025 - MEETING MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: David Benac, Chair, Stephen Romanelli, John Eric Kreuzer, Rachel Jondle, Thomas Dewhirst and Reeta Chandler

ABSENT: David DeBack and Tressa Greschak

STAFF: Carrie Soule (recording secretary)

OTHERS: Justin Gish

ROLL CALL:

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 pm.

ASSURANCE OF LIVE STREAMING (Facebook/YouTube)

The recording/Streaming of the meeting was confirmed, and community members joined via a link posted on the City's Facebook page.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA (08/20/25)

Committee Member made a motion to approve the Agenda and was supported. With a voice vote the motion was approved unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES for 06/18/2025

David Benac, Chair asked the Committee Members if there were any changes to the June 18th, 2025, meeting minutes. motioned to approve by Rachel Jondle with 2nd by Stephen Romanelli, all approved unanimously.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/PUBLIC COMMENTS:

COMMENTS BY OTHERS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS/COMMUNICATIONS:

David Benac asked if there were any comments on the phones. There were no callers.

REPORTS

Natural Features Protection (NFP) Review Board – Mr. Kreuzer – Working on an amendment to NFP; how many members. Approved Site Plan for 1400 Harrison, site of Graphic Packaging.

Air and Water Quality – Ms. Chandler – No water update. Air Quality, there was a Kickback and breathe event hosted at 313 N Burdick St, Wednesday the 27th of August, from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm, discussing the Canadian wildfires, and was open to the public.

Wildlife and Natural Resource Protection – Ms. Greschak and Mr. DeBack – No update

City of Kalamazoo Planning Commission – Ms. Jondle – Nothing to update

Tree Committee – Mr. Dewhirst and Ms. Greschak (Alternate) – Department of Public Services is going to be implementing effective immediately. The title is Hazardous Tree Removal. I'll give you just a brief overview of what this is. Basically, there are four trees that are causing a lot of problems: infrastructure, tree damage, specific tree species, and I'll mention those. Silver maple, Norway maple, Siberian elm, nonfruiting ornamental pear, calorie pear, and other non-fruiting pear cultivars. So all these trees are currently prohibited by the city of Kalamazoo code from being planted. But the issue is that there's an overabundance of these trees that have been planted in the past. They represent about 35% of the existing canopy. It's an aging canopy. And so, here are of their concerns that these specific tree species have and continue to be overrepresented in storm damage, tree failure events and component tree failure events, infrastructure damage, private property damage, and life safety incidents. So this represents about 7,000 trees within the city of Kalamazoo. So the purpose of this is not to go out and cut these all down, but as damage sustained in windstorms or through aging in the curb line right away. The city's policy going forward will be to remove them and replace them two-to-one with any of a whole list of trees that are listed in the city's tree manual. People can call 311 anytime and report any trees.

Asylum Lake Policy & Management Council – Mr. DeBack – There was a community clean-up up Saturday August 23rd at 10am, wrapping some existing trees with chicken wire to prevent the beavers from chewing down the hardwoods. Western's going to be doing work on the spillway trail due to some erosion issues.

Parks & Recreation Advisory Board – Open – Touched on the ongoing discussion and process from the Arcadia Creed Festival Place Redesign Committee. U can adopt a City Park and it just obligates you to do a couple of cleanups in that park each year. Contact Parks department or call 311 for more information.

Kalamazoo River Watershed Council – Mr. Benac – No update

Odor Task Force – Mr. Benac – No update

Waste Working Group – Mr. Romanelli – Next waste collection will be on October 25th from 10 am to 1 pm at Mayor's River Park. So far, recycling in general has collected 1,200 tons and they are expecting an increase. A number of new recycling bins have been delivered to households. Next Bulk trash pickup starts in September.

Native Species & Urban Landscape – Ms. Jondle – The Kalamazoo Area Wild Ones have a fall plant exchange on September 7th from 1 pm to 4 pm at Crane Park. You do not have to donate a plant to pick one up, Fall is a great time to plant native plants and trees.

Wellhead Protection Program Committee – Quarterly - Jean Talanda – No update

Justin Gish – Sustainability: Compost programs are continuing to grow, we now have bins for downtown residents. One at the Joyful shop, Oakwood neighborhood, and Stockbridge as well as throughout downtown Kalamazoo. Our last event was a great hit, 371 vehicles came through in about 3 hours to drop off material. Destiny is working on some invasive pools, which is listed on the City website. The City rain barrel sale is going on, if you are looking for a rain barrel or a composter that is listed on the City website as well, you can order and they will be dropped off at 322 Stockbridge later in August.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Elect Vice-Chair – We currently have to volunteers, asking members to see if we can recruit someone or if someone changes their mind, please email before next month's meeting. This position will need to be filled.
2. Vote on number of Committee members – There was a motion on the number of committee members up to 9 members, with 50% +1 being the quorum of the current number of members. Send for written approval to the City Commission. Motioned by Thomas Dewhirst and 2nd by John Eric Kreuzer with a unanimous vote.
3. Bylaw update Discussion – In the bylaws, there is a Secretary position listed as an Officer, responsible for bringing correspondence to the ECC Board and will act as 3rd person in line to run the meetings. If this position is not filled will it cause a problem? We will have more conversation on this subject. It was brought up that we change the time for the meetings to 5:30 pm, with room availability, and making sure the information is out for the public could also get confusing if we fluctuate. If we decide to change the meeting time to make it convenient for participants, it will be discussed at that time. We will revisit in December.

NEW BUSINESS: There was a Solarize event on Thursday. Solarize is a kind of bulk purchase solar program. We

held one last year. 12 people purchase solar panels in Kalamazoo, put them on their homes, and generate 52 kilowatts. We're looking to do that or better at this event. It was held at Bell's at 6:00 on the 28th of August, and then been working with some researchers at the University of Michigan, and they gave us climate projections for the city of Kalamazoo going forward. So if anyone's interested, it's on the city's website, it's under sustainability plans and reports, and you can look at the climate profile of Kalamazoo going into the future into 2059. The Great Lakes region at large shows kind of what the world will look like in the future.

EVENTS:

CHECK PHONE LINES: No phone calls

COMMENTS: NSF Certified water filters can be picked up by Kalamazoo residents at 415 East Stockbridge for a faucet or pitcher style.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:46 p.m.

