

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE

November 19th, 2025 - MEETING MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: David Benac, Chair, Rachel Jondle, Vice-Chair, Stephen Romanelli, John Eric Kreuzer, Thomas Dewhirst, David DeBack, and Tressa Greschak

ABSENT: Reeta Chandler

STAFF: Carrie Soule (recording secretary)

OTHERS: Jamie McCarthy, Development Manager, Planning Division and Chris Broadbent, Solid Waste Coordinator, Public Services

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 (11/19/25)

Tressa Greschak made a motion to approve the Agenda with additions/amended: Asylum Lake/Stadium Drive project and under unfinished business the regulations on single-use plastic from Chair David Benac, was 2nd by Stephen Romanelli. With a voice vote, the motion was approved unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES for 09/17/2025

David Benac, Chair asked the Committee Members if there were any changes to the September 17th, 2025, meeting minutes. Rachel Jondle motioned to approve with 2nd by John Eric Kreuzer, all approved unanimously.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/PUBLIC COMMENTS: Chris Broadbent updated ECC Board on what the Waste team has been collecting. This year so far, they have collected over 3,000 cubic yards of leaves and added 365 new recycling carts, with the contract expiring in 2027.

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 – 3050 Oakland Drive project, storm drains, tanks and piping were approved. 433 Reed Ct, converting Brownfield and transferring ownership to the City of Kalamazoo, was approved. 3317/3329 S Burdick St, Build Storage unit was approved.

Air and Water Quality – Ms. Chandler – No update

Wildlife and Natural Resource Protection – Ms. Greschak and Mr. DeBack – No update, They are conducting inventory on wildlife, trees, and native grasses.

City of Kalamazoo Planning Commission – Ms. Jondle – Voted against rezoning of the Asylum Lake, Stadium Drive project.

Tree Committee – Mr. Dewhirst and Ms. Greschak (Alternate) – No update. MDNR has published a Michigan Community’s tree species selection guide, which may be of interest. It’s a 50-page document, and it’s available in PDF on the Michigan Department of Natural Resources website.

Asylum Lake Policy & Management Council – Mr. DeBack – The focus right now is around the lake, Paul MacNellis is some burns and tree planting.

Parks & Recreation Advisory Board – Open – John talked about September meeting, 30 parks have been adopted. Still having issues with missing or incorrect contact information, particularly with planting rules, watering access and self-coordination. Farmer’s Market is set to open. The Milham Park stream restoration is in phase two, it’s going out to bid and work should occur in December. Verberg park project is open for bid. They are also looking for a new member for the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board.

Kalamazoo River Watershed Council – Mr. Benac – They are looking for more help with events to clean the river.

Odor Task Force – Mr. Benac – No update

Waste Working Group – Mr. Romanelli – Chris Broadbent talked about a City collaboration between the Sustainability Planner, himself and other team members for an idea to pitch in the near future to present to the City Commission and ECC about a recycling drop off center. They successfully completed a pitch program in Lansing in October, which awarded \$5,000 Harvest grants. Looking into new funding opportunities coming up through EGLE in the near future.

Native Species & Urban Landscape – Ms. Jondle – Next month Justin Gish gave a Presentation/Introductory meeting in October with some Community Members about goals with native plants. Destiny, the My Healthy Climate Corp intern for the last year, about Invasive species poles, Woods Lake, worked with Oakland and Winchell Neighborhoods in conjunction with WMU to redesign Glen Park North, started Bio Blitzes at Jones Park and is hoping to continue into next year. Bio Blitz is removing invasive species and maintaining those areas, and educating the Community. WMU students are working on an App called iNaturalist, where you can look up which invasive plants are not safe for soil health and native plant gardens. Buzz in the Zoo was successful, replacing No Mow May. Looking for volunteers to Maintenance the Parks.

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

Jamie McCarthy – Sustainability: Next month Justin Gish will give a Presentation on IK 2035 to the group and update on where the City is in the process.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Recommend to the City to start regulations on deterring companies from using single-use plastic; exceptions can be made after the research is revisited for more information. Thomas Dewhirst motioned to table, with a 2nd by Rachel Jondle, and the motion was approved unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. ECC Board is looking for new officers in January: Chair, Vice-Chair or Treasurer.
2. Asylum Lake/Stadium Dr re-zoning project: Someone is trying to purchase the land and wants approval to rezone to Commercial. The Planning Commission voted against rezoning, but it will still be presented to the City Commissioners on December 15th. ECC drafted a letter recommending voting against the rezoning. The new owner was vague and brought no plan.

EVENTS:

CHECK PHONE LINES: Phone in caller, would like to see the letter we are sending to the City Commission concerning the Asylum Lake re-zoning project.

COMMENTS:

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 6:08 p.m.

