

Agenda

Environmental Concerns Committee



City of Kalamazoo

Wednesday, April 15, 2026

4:30 PM

City Commission Chambers – 241 West South Street

A. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

B. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

(Action: Motion to approve the agenda)

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approval of the minutes from the Environmental Concerns Committee meeting on March 18, 2026 **(Action: Motion to approve)**
 - a. March minutes
2. Approval of the minutes from the Environmental Concerns Committee meeting on February 18, 2026 **(Action: Motion to approve)**

D. COMMUNICATIONS

1. City of Kalamazoo Sustainability Updates
 - a. City of Kalamazoo held a recycling demonstration event at the Creamery (1101 Portage Street) on March 11th.
 - b. City of Kalamazoo supported the Michigan Waterways Stewards invasive species removal and trash clean up on March 28th, 2026.
 - c. City of Kalamazoo held a plogging event on April 11th in downtown Kalamazoo.
 - d. City of Kalamazoo will hold their recycling drop-off event on April 25th from 10am-1pm at Mayors' Riverfront Park.

- e. Buzz in the Zoo Kick off will be held in partnership with the Audubon Society of Kalamazoo at their World Migratory Bird Day Celebration on May 16th from 9am-2pm at Upjohn Park.
- f. City of Kalamazoo will hold a scrap tire drop-off event on June 9th from 1pm-7pm. Registration required.

E. PUBLIC COMMENTS

F. REPORTS

- 1. Natural Features Protection Review Board
- 2. Air and Water Quality Report
- 3. Wildlife and Natural Resource Protection
- 4. Planning Commission
- 5. Tree Committee
- 6. Asylum Lake Policy & Management Council
- 7. Parks and Recreation Advisory Board
- 8. Kalamazoo River Watershed Council
- 9. Odor Task Force
- 10. Waste Working Group
- 11. Native Species & Urban Landscape

G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- 1. New member interview.
- 2. Subcommittee Restructuring
- 3. Green Zoning/Space Preservation Report
- 4. Recommendation to Kalamazoo City Commission regarding ECC participation in Asylum Lake management by Kalamazoo County.

5. Recommendation to Kalamazoo City Commission regarding the fire at 1525 King Highway.

H. NEW BUSINESS

I. PUBLIC COMMENTS

J. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

K. ADJOURNMENT

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Get news, information, and alerts from the City of Kalamazoo. Sign up at www.kalamazoocity.org/connect, follow @KalamazooCity on Twitter, and search for The City of Kalamazoo on Facebook.

Agendas for the regular meetings of the Kalamazoo City Environmental Concerns Committee are available on the Internet at: www.kalamazoocity.org. You may also use the QR Code below to access agendas and agenda packets.



QR Code to Access the Agenda & Agenda Packet Use the camera on your phone or mobile device to scan the QR Code and then follow the instructions that appear on your screen.

The link will take you to <https://kalamazoomi.portal.civicclerk.com/> where you can view the meeting agendas and agenda packets.

The Kalamazoo City's Environmental Concerns Committee meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 4:30 p.m. in the City Commission Chambers at City Hall. These meetings are streamed live on the Public Media Network (channel 190 for Charter customers, channel 99 for U-Verse customers) and on the City's [Facebook page](#) and [YouTube Channel](#).

Public Comments at this meeting may either be made in person or by calling 1-888-382-9556 during the Public Comment periods.

Environmental Concerns Committee Meeting Minutes

March 18, 2026, 4:30 p.m. | City Hall, 241 W South Street

MEMBERS PRESENT: David Benac, Chair, Rachel Jondle, Vice-Chair, Stephen Romanelli, John Eric Kreuzer, Thomas Dewhirst, David DeBack, Reeta Chandler, Luke Zimmer

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

CITY STAFF PRESENT: Justin Gish, Kiana Jones (Recording Secretary)

OTHERS PRESENT: None

A. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL:

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m. by Chair David Benac

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.

B. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

THE CHAIR REQUESTED AN AMENDEMENT TO THE AGENDA TO INCLUDE COMMITTEE STRUCTURES UNDER UNFINISHED BUSINESS. DIRECTOR JONDLE MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS AMENDED. MOTION WAS SECONDED BY DIRECTOR DEWHIRST.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

DIRECTOR BENAC MADE A MOTION TO POSTPONE THE APPROVAL OF THE FEBRUARY 26 MINUTES TO THE APRIL MEETING, AT WHICH THE COMMITTEE WILL REVIEW AND APPROVE BOTH FEBRUARY AND MARCH RECORDS. A MOTION WAS MADE BY DIRECTOR BENAC AND SECOND BY DIRECTOR JONDLE.

D. COMMUNICATIONS

THE FOLLOWING COMMUNITY MEMEBERS PROVIDED TESTIMONY REGARDING ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERS

- MOLLY MECKLENBURG (EAST SIDE) EXPRESSED GRAVE CONCERNS REGARDING THE MARCH 10TH FIRE AT KALAMAZOO METAL RECYCLERS. SHE REPORTED 10 HOURS OF BLACK SMOKE AND DANGEROUSLY HIGH AQI LEVELS ON PERSONAL MONITORS. SHE QUESTIONED THE LACK OF TRANSPARENCY REGARDING THE COMPOSTIOTN OF THE BURNING DEBRIS AND CALLED FOR MORE RIGOROUS INDUSTRY COMPLIACE MONITORING.
- JEN WHALE (PEACE House) QUESTIONED CITY ACCOUNTABILITY FOR INDUSTRIES SITUATED ALONG THE RIVER. SHE NOTED THAT 1.3 MILLION GALLONS OF WATER WERE USED FORO THE FIRE SUPPRESSION AND INQUIRED WHETHER THE FACILITY'S RETAINING PONDS WERE SUFFICIENT TO PREVENT CONTAMINATED OVERFLOW INTO THE RIVER. SHE REPORTED THAT RESIDENTS DOWNWIND ARE EXPERIENCING HEALTH ISSUES, SPECIFICALLY SORE THROATS.
- AMY Kuritzky (PHD STUDENT, AIR POLLUTION) CRITIQUED THE MUNICIPAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE,

CHARACTERIZING THE MONITORING OF PM 2.5 AND OIL SHEENS AS THE BARE MINIMUM. SHE EMPHASIZED THE NECESSITY OF SPECIATED ANALYSIS TO IDENTIFY HEAVY METALS AND VOLATILE ORGANIC COMPOUNDS. SHE SUGGESTED THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A RESIDENT NOTIFICATION APPLICATION FOR HEALTH-RELATED ALERTS.

- Katie Meyer Teper (Oshtemo Township) INTRODUCED HER PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND IN ENVIRONMENTAL BIOLOGY AND ZOOLOGY. SHE EXPRESSED AN INTEREST IN CONTRIBUTING HER EXPERTISE TO THE COMMITTEE'S INITIATIVE DESPITE HER NON-RESIDENT STATUS.

E. ANNOUNCEMENTS/PUBLIC COMMENTS

- a. No comments were received from the audience or the live stream call-in line.

F. REPORTS

1. Natural Features Protection Review Board
 - a. The subcommittee reported the election of Director Fredrickson (landscape architect) as Chair and Director Stemple as Vice Chair. The NFP annual report highlighted the preservation of wetlands, water resources, trees, floodplains, and habitat corridors. Discussion followed regarding the phrase "to the extent possible" on site designs, with members expressing concern that such language may prioritize economic development over natural resource conservation.
2. Air and Water Quality Report
 - a. Reeta Chandler summarized a GAP analysis conducted by DR. Benny Gerler of the institute for Public Scholarship. The analysis identified census tracts requiring priority monitor placement based on the following vulnerable populations.
 - Youth (Under 5 years of age)
 - Seniors (Over 65 years of age)
 - Race (Black Residents)
 - Socioeconomic Status (Medium household income below \$44,296)
3. Wildlife and Natural Resource Protection
 - a. The committee reviewed correspondence from Rick Zichterman regarding deer population management. Deliberation followed concerning the distinction between "culling" and "exclusion" strategies. It was noted that culling often results on a "spring back" effect where populations rapidly rebound, necessitating a consideration of exclusion for long-term management.
4. Planning Commission
No reports
5. Tree Committee
No reports
6. Parks and Recreation Advisory Board
 - a. Updated were provided on trout habitat restoration at Milham Park (Portage Creek dredging) and budget approvals for playground equipment at Verberg Park. The subcommittee continues to seek "park adoptees" for community-led stewardship.
7. Kalamazoo River Watershed Council
No reports

8. Odor Task Force
No report
9. Waste Working Group
 - a. No report
10. Native Species & Urban Landscape
 - a. Subcommittee will hold its inaugural meeting next month

G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Committee Restructuring

- a. At the request of the Chair, the proposal to reorganize subcommittees will be resent to all members. The objective is to create a smoother reporting structure with broader, more productive subcommittees. Discussion is scheduled for the April meeting.

2. City Sustainability Report

Justin presented the 2024 Greenhouse Gas (GHG) and Sustainability update

a. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- The city has identified 65% of non-copper/lead supply lines towards its 2032 goal of 75%

b. Water Conservation

- Last year, 27 rain barrels were sold. The city is now partnering with the Kalamazoo River Watershed Council to expand the rain barrel program for 2026.

c. Emissions Date

- Municipal operations emissions are 82% electricity-related (Scope 2). Enrolling in the Renewable Energy Certificate program is projected to reduce the city's carbon footprint from 36,000 to 8,000 metric tons. Direct emissions from fuel and natural gas (Scope 1) are being addressed through fleet and building improvements.

d. Biodiesel Program

- Heavy machinery and snowplows utilized a B11 mix in 2024, are currently using B17, and have a target of B20 for the following year.

e. Waste Management

- An EPS (Styrofoam) recycling event is scheduled for April 25th. It was noted that coffee cups are now recyclable as they consist of virgin paper with long fibers, which are highly desirable for the recycling process.

3. Green Space Preservation

- Deliberation followed regarding the creation of a "Green Zoning" classification for public and private land. Luke Zimmer and John Kreuzer were assigned to research municipal examples and evaluate the benefits and procedural hurdles of such designations.

H. NEW BUSINESS:

1. Appointment of Associate Members

- The Committee recognized the value of external technical expertise in environmental biology.
Director Jondle made a Motion to appoint Katie Meyer Teper as a non-voting Associate Member of the ECC, seconded by Director Dewhirst

2. Action Items: Kalamazoo Metal Recyclers Fire Response

- The Committee discussed the inadequacy of current monitoring protocols. City Commissioner Jeanne Hess reported that while Egle found no issues with contaminated runoff as of the previous week, Committee members emphasized the need for more granular data. Associate Member Katie Meyer

Teper recommended “surface wipe sampling” and “soil testing” within a five-mile radius to detect lithium-ion contaminants or heavy metals that may have settled after becoming airborne.

Director Dewhirst made a Motion to draft and forward a communication to the City Commission recommending

- A public statement regarding the status and stage of the fire investigation
- A speciated analysis of air and water toxins beyond PM 2.5 and oil, specifically monitoring VOC’s, particulates, and heavy metals
- A formal plan for improved resident communication during emergencies and protocol for long-term environmental monitoring of affected areas

Motion seconded by Director Deback

I. PUBLIC COMMENTS

- a. Iris Potter (Kalamazoo River Protectors) cited the context of the 2010 Enbridge spill and expressed support for the city to institute fines against businesses that pollute the river.

J. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

- a. None

K. ADJOURNMENT

- a. The meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Environmental Concerns Committee Meeting Minutes

February 18, 2026, 4:30 p.m. | City Hall, 241 W South Street

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

CITY STAFF PRESENT: Justin Gish, Kiana Jones (Recording Secretary)

OTHERS PRESENT: Mike Stout, Luke Zimmer

A. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL:

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m.

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.

B. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

RACHEL JONDLE, SECONDED BY THOMAS DEWHIRST, MOVED TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS PRESENTED. WITH A VOICE VOTE THE MOTION PASSED.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RACHEL JONDLE, SECONDED BY JOHN KREUZER, MOVED TO APPROVE THE NOVEMBER 2, 2026 ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE MINUTES AS PRESENTED. WITH A VOICE VOTE THE MOTION PASSED.

D. COMMUNICATIONS

E. ANNOUNCEMENTS/PUBLIC COMMENTS

- a. No comments were received from the audience or the live stream call-in line.

F. REPORTS

1. Natural Features Protection Review Board
 - a. John Kreuzer reported that, at their January meeting, the NFP Board denied a variance request for slopes related to a proposed multi-family duplex development regarding four parcels on W Cork Street.
2. Air and Water Quality Report
 - a. No report
3. Wildlife and Natural Resource Protection
 - a. No report

4. Planning Commission
 - a. Rachel Jondle noted a streamlining of ordinance language was shifting from Appendix A to Chapter 50.
5. Tree Committee
 - a. Thomas Dewhirst reported that Consumers Energy is conducting canopy trimming to prevent storm damage. The committee approved tree removals for sidewalk construction on Kilgore Road and Portage Street
6. Parks and Recreation Advisory Board
 - a. No report
7. Kalamazoo River Watershed Council
 - a. Bella Baez has taken over the role from Doug Mclaughlin.
8. Odor Task Force
 - a. No report
9. Waste Working Group
 - a. No report
10. Native Species & Urban Landscape
 - a. No report

G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Bylaw Updates
 - a. Proposed changes are currently being reviewed by the city's legal department
2. Single-Use Plastics
 - a. Discussion remains paused to allow for further research

H. NEW BUSINESS:

1. Election of officers by ballot
 - a. David Benac was re-elected as Chair
 - b. John Kreuzer was elected as Vice Chair, replacing Rachel Jondle.
2. 2026 Meeting Dates –
 - a. Proposed dates for the third Wednesday of each month were distributed. The committee discussed moving future meeting times 30 to 60 minutes later to increase inclusiveness for working members, however, this will require a bylaw update.
3. Introduction to Mike Stout of Michigan Waterways Stewards
 - a. Mike Stout of Michigan Waterways Stewards announced a community cleanup event on March 26th focused on litter removal and invasive species eradication along the Kalamazoo River.
4. Meet Luke Zimmer, applicant to the committee
 - a. The committee interviewed Luke Zimmer, including a discussion of his interest in noise pollution and his background with National Geographic. The committee unanimously recommended his appointment to the City Commission.

5. Evaluation of subcommittees
 - a. The Chair proposed streamlining subcommittees into broader topical categories to ensure more consistent updates. Members will review the proposal for a vote next month.

6. The potential transfer of Asylum Lake Preserve from WMU to Kalamazoo County
 - a. Extensive discussion occurred regarding the potential transfer of management and ownership of the Asylum Lake Preserve from Western Michigan University to Kalamazoo County. Members expressed concern over maintaining the property's status as a preserve rather than a park.
 - B. A MOTION WAS MADE BY THOMAS DEWHIRST AND SECONDED BY DAVID DEBACK TO REQUEST THAT THE KALAMAZOO CITY COMMISSION CONTACT WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY AND KALAMAZOO COUNTY AND REQUEST AN ECC PRESENCE ON ANY COUNCIL OR MANAGEMENT BOARD THAT IS DIRECTLY SUPERVISING THE ASYLUM LAKE PROPERTIES THAT LIE WITHIN THE CITY OF KALAMAZOO. WITH A VOICE VOTE, THE MOTION PASSED, WITH RACHEL JONDLE ABSTAINING.

7. The Amateur Sports Complex being proposed, the NFP Board approval of cutting more woodland and the zoning board of appeals denying a variance.
 - a. A brief mention of a proposed development in Oshtemo Township that may impact city property was moved to next month's agenda.

8. How does the City of Kalamazoo factor our remaining green spaces into decisions? Particularly as it relates to the statements of Climate Emergency and Sustainability?
 - a. This item was moved to next month's agenda.

9. City of Kalamazoo Sustainability Report
 - a. This item was moved to next month's agenda.

I. PUBLIC COMMENTS

- a. No comments were received from the audience or the live stream call-in line.

J. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

- a. Chair Benac reminded everyone of Kalamazoo Earth Day events.

K. ADJOURNMENT

- a. The meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.