

Environmental Concerns Committee Meeting Minutes

April 15, 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

DIRECTOR JONDLE MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE AGENDA SECONDED BY DIRECTOR DEBACK

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

DIRECTOR JONDLE MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE MINUTES FROM FEBUARY AND MARCH SECONDED BY DIRECTOR DEBACK

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. The March 24th meeting focused on the Westgate Sports Complex project at 1617 N Drake. Phase 1 was approved after the site layout was redesigned to meet the mandatory 25% woodland cover requirements. Phase 2 will undergo further site plan review.
2. Air and Water Quality Report
 - None
3. Wildlife and Natural Resource Protection
 - a. No report
4. Planning Commission

At the March 25th meeting new member nominations were approved. On April 8th special use permits

were approved for transitional housing at 912 and 915 Washington Ave and a new Quick Trip gas station at 3810 East Cork Street.

5. Tree Committee

No reports

6. Asylum Lake Policy & Management Council

The board discussed the transfer of management and ownership of the Asylum Lake from WMU to Kalamazoo County. The county has agreed to maintain current conservation restrictions. The transfer includes a \$2.3 million endowment fund for lake operations, the committee noted that the county oversight might offer more transparency through elected officials.

7. Parks and Recreation Advisory Board

The department is currently facing staffing shortages and is proposing budget changes to consolidate part-time positions into full-time roles. Park attendance is reportedly up.

8. Kalamazoo River Watershed Council

The council is seeking donations of used kayaks and canoes for youth programs. A trailer and boat repair event is scheduled for April 30th.

9. Odor Task Force

No report

10. Waste Working Group

a. No report

11. Native Species & Urban Landscape

a. No report

G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. New Member Interview

The committee interviewed Katie Bloom, a resident of the Winchell neighborhood. Mrs. Bloom detailed her extensive background in environmental advocacy, including leading a lake restoration task force in South Dakota and her early involvement in community recycling.

DIRECTOR DEBACK MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE NEW MEMBER AND RECOMMEND HER APPOINTMENT TO THE CITY COMMISSION SECONDED BY DIRECTOR JONDLE

2. Subcommittee Restructuring

The board discussed a proposal to reorganize subcommittees into two categories, liaisons to observe governmental boards like Planning or Parks and working groups to handle specific thematic projects. This aims to better align these groups with Community Sustainability Plan and to be more proactive in site plan reviews.

3. Green Zoning/Space Preservation Report

Recommendations regarding ECC participation and fire safety were finalized and sent to the City Commission for their upcoming meeting on April 20th.

H. NEW BUSINESS:

None

I. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

J. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Kalamazoo County is working on a new materials management plan; a public meeting is scheduled for May 20th to discuss composting. The city's composting pilot program continues to distribute countertop

containers for food scraps at sustainability events. Citizens were encouraged to use 311 for questions regarding city functions or code enforcements.

K. ADJOURNMENT

- a. The meeting adjourned at 5:27 p.m.