

City of Birmingham
Regular Meeting of the Environmental Sustainability Committee
June 23, 2025
Rooms 202-203
151 Martin Street, Birmingham, Michigan

Minutes of the regular meeting of the City of Birmingham Environmental Sustainability Committee held on June 23, 2025. The meeting convened at 5:30 p.m.

1) Roll Call

Present: Harvey Bell, Debra Horner, Joe Mercurio, Jess Newman, Sara Rubino, Trenton Chapman; Student Representatives Penelope Graves, Abhishek Thota

Absent: Lara Edwards

Staff: City Planner Aldred-Arens; Planning Director Dupuis, Assistant City Manager Fairbairn

2) Review of the Minutes

Motion by Mercurio

Seconded by Bell to approve the minutes from last time.

Motion carried, 6-0

VOICE VOTE

Yeas: Mercurio, Rubino, Chapman, Bell, Newman, Horner

Nays: None

3) Review of the Agenda

4) New Business

A. Leaf Blowers

PD Dupuis presented the item and answered informational questions from the ESC.

ESC members raised the following points during discussion:

- Two-stroke engines produce significantly more pollution than any automobile. The gases and particulates are not good to breathe in. It is also likely that most or all two-stroke engines operate in violation of the noise ordinance.
- A staged phase out, moving from banning two-stroke equipment to all gas-powered equipment, could likely be appropriate.
- Some sample ordinances create exceptions for equipment in instances where no comparable electric replacement exists for a piece of gas-powered equipment. This could be updated as technology improves.
- It may be necessary to grant exceptions for much larger properties, to begin. This could also be re-evaluated in the future.

- Ideas from other sample ordinances included a staged phase out with residential going first and commercial second, and/or allowed gas-powered equipment in an emergency.
- While this matter initially seemed less core to the ESC's mission, learning that gas powered lawn equipment contributes to approximately 5% of the United State's annual emissions clarified that introducing a phase out could have a significant, positive impact.
- The 5% figure is likely higher in a higher-income City where many residents contract out their lawncare. It would be helpful to know how much more significant a figure this may be in Birmingham. ICLEI might be able to assist Birmingham in that process.
- This effort could be productively combined with expediting naturalized landscapes, because it would reduce the need for moving in the first place.

B. Community Engagement Plan

CP Aldred-Arens and PD Dupuis presented the item and answered informational questions from the ESC.

ESC members raised the following points during discussion:

- Engagement was a significant priority for the City's sustainability efforts because no meaningful reduction in greenhouse gas emissions can occur within the City without resident participation.
- Some goals, such as ordinance revisions or certain policy changes, might be achieved without exhaustive community participation. Some goals necessitate community participation for achievement.
- The level of community participation required for each goal should be defined.
- Metrics should include who is being spoken to, what actions are undertaken as a result of those engagements, and what the carbon reduction, reduction in flooding, air quality, or other results of those actions are. These could be measured in part via surveys.
- Metrics should be devised for measuring 'diversity of input'.
- Resident engagement should be emphasized in this plan.
- The City recently gathered data on resident priorities for sustainability. New data should be compared to, and possibly integrated with, the data that is already available.
- These surveys will generally be convenience samples, not random samples.
- Possible 'shifts' in priorities across surveys may be more reflective of different respondents at different times than it may be of shifting priorities.
- The survey responses also may or may not reflect the priorities of the community, since the respondents will be self-selected.
- The ESC should be cautious not to overrepresent change with the survey outcomes.
- Community groups such as Scouting America or high school volunteers would likely be interested in helping serve and engage the community on these projects. The City could collaborate with a class of high school students to implement parts of the plan.
- Sustainable building certification programs would have some metrics that could be integrated into the plan.
- Requiring energy audits prior to the sale of a building might help encourage the reduction of carbon emissions from buildings.
- The SCAP had a list of groups Birmingham will be engaging with on these efforts. Defining what each engagement is expected to deliver would be helpful.

- Hiring a stormwater support specialist to engage the public on this high priority topic would be valuable.
- Targeting goals for different demographic subsets, such as businesses, single family homeowners, or renters, could be useful.
- The spelling of 'stakeholders' needed to be updated.
- Clarifying the difference between 'goals' and 'objectives' would be helpful.

Public Comment

Sam Surnow commented that the LEED certification process could provide some useful example metrics and that a community engagement program would likely lead the community in the right direction.

C. SCAP Gantt Chart

CP Aldred-Arens and PD Dupuis presented the item and answered informational questions from the ESC.

ESC members raised the following points during discussion:

- This is a significant effort.
- Any necessary engagement work should be signified by a different color on the chart for ease of tracking.
- Bringing monthly or regular check-ins to the ESC for ongoing items would be appropriate.
- There was interest lending ESC support towards the creation of the two recommended staff positions.

5) Miscellaneous Communications

A. FloodWise Communities Cohort

B. SOCRRA Recycling Magnet

The ESC briefly discussed the communications, as well as MDOT's Woodward Avenue Corridor Plan.

6) Open to the Public for Items Not on the Agenda

7) Adjournment

No further business being evident, the meeting adjourned at 7:02 p.m.



Summer Aldred-Arens, City Planner



Laura Eichenhorn, City Transcriptionist