

City of Birmingham
Regular Meeting of the Environmental Sustainability Committee
August 25, 2025

Rooms 202-203
151 Martin Street, Birmingham, Michigan

Minutes of the regular meeting of the City of Birmingham Environmental Sustainability Committee held on August 25, 2025. The meeting convened at 5:30 p.m.

1) Roll Call

Present: Committee Members Lara Edwards, Debra Horner, Joe Mercurio, Jess Newman, Sara Rubino, Trenton Chapman

Absent: Committee Members Harvey Bell; Student Representatives Penelope Graves, Abhishek Thota

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

2) Review of the Minutes – June 23, 2025

Motion by Bell

Seconded by Horner to approve.

Motion carried, 7-0

VOICE VOTE

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

Nays: None

3) Review of the Agenda

4) New Business

A. Community Engagement Plan – Final Review

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

ESC members raised the following points during discussion:

- The Plan looked great.
- For 'Sustained Engagement' under 'Metrics', staff should devise ways of tracking repeat engagement. The process of tracking repeat engagement should be streamlined as much as possible so as not to create too much work for staff.
- A couple of typographical errors were noted for correction.

Motion by Edwards

Seconded by Rubino to adopt the community engagement plan with the changes recommended today on 8/25, and to share the finalized version with the Commission.

Motion carried, 7-0

VOICE VOTE

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

Nays: None

B. GPLE & Leafblowers – Study Session

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

ESC members raised the following points during discussion:

- References to lawn equipment could be changed to landscaping equipment.
- It was not clear that maintaining the City's golf courses aligns with the City's sustainability plan. It could make sense to have the users of the City's golf courses pay the cost of maintaining the golf courses via electric equipment.
- A longer phase-out for the City's golf courses could occur over time – maybe until 2035 – or the ESC could agree to reevaluate how the golf courses are maintained at a later date.
- Most residents are not likely enthusiastic about financially supporting the City's golf courses.
- Whether to exempt residential properties of a certain size should be considered. Open space or pervious/impervious could be two other factors considered.
- Working to ban gas-powered lawn equipment would be worthwhile, even if it ends up being postponed. It ties in well with the goal of increasing naturalization of lawns within the City.
- If the goal date of banning gas powered equipment is pushed out closer to 2035, there may be opportunities for municipal, county, or regional cooperation. This could increase the likelihood that landscaping companies find it more profitable to transition to electric instead of potentially ceasing services in Birmingham.
- Large, fallen trees may require the use of gas-powered equipment.
- A communication plan for letting landscaping companies know about any future changes would be necessary.
- The City could consider implementing a buyback of gas-powered equipment to encourage the transition. It is worth acknowledging that costs of transitioning from gas to electric equipment might be a challenge for some residents.
- The City could also consider implementing a fee to continue the use of gas-powered equipment.
- In some cases, preemptive exemptions could be appropriate. If an exemption process is implemented, there could be an associated filing fee. Then that filing fee could be put towards buybacks of gas-powered equipment, purchases of electrical equipment, carbon offsets, or other options.

- The prices of gas-powered equipment for a crew of five could be determined, in order to help inform a potentially appropriate fee for continuing to use gas-powered equipment.
- It would be necessary to determine whether some of these options would be realistic for the City.
- Staff should return with the beginnings of a package of proposed ordinance updates that align with this topic.
- Like a potential sustainability fee, other potential carbon-reduction fees could be discussed at future meetings.

C. Sustainability Fee – Study Session

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

ESC members raised the following points during discussion:

- A sustainability-related fee is a great idea, and is firmly within the wheelhouse of the City's sustainability goals.
- These funds would be spent in part on a stormwater analyst and a sustainability director, both of which are priorities for residents and are broader applications than just carbon reduction.
- 'Resiliency fee', 'Transportation fee', or 'Sustainability fee', or would be some potential options if the fee was titled.
- The fee would not necessarily be broken out on a bill. It may not be necessary to title the fee.
- Small businesses that validate parking would also be paying the 4% fee. That said, it is important to note that the first two hours in the structures are free.
- The impact of this fee would be borne more by shoppers and commuters, and less by residents. Many residents would be able to walk into the downtown.
- It would be interesting to hear examples of revenue-generating fees like this beyond New York City.

D. Single-Family Stormwater Management – Study Session

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

ESC members raised the following points during discussion:

- Aiming for homeowners to manage the first flush of runoff might be easier to understand.
- While there is some amount of pollutants in the first flush, each homeowner would only be managing the runoff from their property.
- It might be useful to determine whether the first flush or 90th percentile would come closer to meeting the City's stormwater retention and flooding reduction goals.
- There should be further consideration of whether stormwater management should become required when any change to a residential property is made, whether it should become required when any change over a certain threshold is made, or whether it should only apply to new builds.

- If the acreage of impervious surfaces created by new builds in the last few years could be compared to the acreage of impervious surfaces in the City created by other changes to a property in the last few years, it could help inform whether the policy should pertain to new builds only, changes over a threshold, or all changes.
- It might be appropriate to require stormwater retention once the impervious surface of a lot exceeds a certain percentage of the total lot.
- Reducing the amount of impervious surface allowed on lots would also be an efficient way of improving stormwater management in the City.
- Since it might not be efficient to require stormwater management after smaller changes to residential lots, those lots could be encouraged to participate in other stormwater management/sustainability efforts.
- All of the City of Ann Arbor is on a separated system. Grand Rapids offers a credit system. These could help inform how Birmingham writes its policy.

5) Miscellaneous Communications

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

7) Adjournment

No further business being evident, the meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.



Summer Aldred-Arens, City Planner



Laura Eichenhorn, City Transcriptionist