

Official minutes
Environment & sustainability commission

Members present: Chair Jessie Hendrix, Vice Chair Bennett Myhran, Ryan Griffin, Tatiana Giraldo, Kati Helseth, Avery Kuehl, Adam Oien, Natalie Wagner

Members absent: Avital Krebs, Sasha Shahidi

Staff present: Emily Ziring, sustainability manager

Guests: JoAnn Schutz, resident

1. Call to order

- A. Roll call
- B. Introduction of guests

JoAnn Schutz, a resident of St. Louis Park, introduced herself as a member of ISAIAH, an organization active in social justice issues. She stated she attended to learn more about the commission's work after learning of the meeting through the city website.

2. Approval of minutes

The May 6, 2026 meeting minutes were presented with corrections previously incorporated by Ms. Ziring. It was moved by Commissioner Wagner, seconded by Commissioner Helseth, to approve the May 2026 meeting minutes. The motion passed with one abstention from Commissioner Griffin.

3. Business

- A. Presentations

None.

- B. New business

i. Discuss canceling July ESC meeting

The commission discussed canceling the July meeting given the upcoming council check-in on June 8 and the anticipated onboarding of new commissioners next month. No member expressed a desire to meet in July. Chair Hendrix indicated approval to cancel the July meeting, consistent with commission procedures allowing the chair to authorize cancellation.

ii. Discuss plans for June 8 check-in meeting with council

Ms. Ziring outlined the format of the June 8 study session with city council. The session would be held in the same room as regular commission meetings, would not be video recorded or broadcast, and was expected to last approximately 30 minutes. Council would receive the approved 2025 work plan along with a standard slide presentation covering status of 2025 items and a preview of proposed 2026 items, including two open-ended work plan items pending council direction.

The commission discussed several points to raise with council, including the overlap between the commission's responsibilities and those of the Parks & Recreation Advisory Commission (PRAC) regarding natural spaces, particularly in light of the city's new strategic priority of climate leadership and natural spaces. Commissioners also discussed framing a timeline expectation for council guidance on the two open-ended work plan items so that the commission could act within 2026. Ms. Ziring confirmed she would share the slide deck with Chair Hendrix in advance. Approximately four commissioners indicated they expected to attend.

iii. Discuss Transportation section of Climate Action Plan

Ms. Ziring led a review of the existing transportation strategies within Goal 6 of the Climate Action Plan, which targets a 25 percent reduction in vehicle emissions by 2030 compared to a business-as-usual forecast. The commission reviewed each strategy and offered recommendations for the upcoming Climate Action Plan amendment.

Strategy 1 – Reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT): The commission agreed to retain this strategy. VMT per person was down 9 percent as of year-end 2023 compared to the 2014 baseline, against a target of 12 percent by 2030. Data is sourced from the Regional Indicators Initiative maintained by LHB. Commissioners noted that post-COVID data trends were reversing gains. Commissioner Griffin suggested exploring supplemental data sources. The commission agreed to keep this strategy with no substantive changes.

Strategy 2 – Vehicle Efficiency (CAFE Standards): Ms. Ziring recommended removing this strategy due to the inability to accurately track fuel economy for vehicles registered in or traveling through St. Louis Park. The commission discussed the possibility of analyzing available vehicle registration data but acknowledged challenges related to data completeness and staff capacity. The commission expressed general agreement with removal, noting that EV adoption tracking already captures relevant trends more accurately, but asked whether staff would share the raw data with some commissioners first to see if there were a simple way to analyze it before removing the strategy.

Strategy 3a – Increase EV Adoption (Residents): The commission agreed to retain this strategy but recommended modifying the language to consolidate car and truck categories into a single passenger vehicle category rather than maintaining separate targets. The current adoption rate stands at approximately 7 percent against a goal of 28 percent of all vehicles by 2030. The commission supported the continued tracking of EV adoption through annual vehicle registration data. A sub-strategy referencing EV charger deployment targets was suggested as a supporting element.

Strategy 3b – Increase EV Adoption (Non-Residents): The commission agreed to remove this strategy, finding that the city has limited ability to track or influence EV adoption among non-residents traveling through St. Louis Park, including those on Highway 100 or Highway 169.

Strategy 4 – Fuel Switching for Heavy-Duty Vehicles: The commission agreed to retain a placeholder for this strategy while acknowledging significant tracking challenges and limited city influence over privately owned heavy-duty and off-road vehicles. The commission supported leaving the strategy open for consultant input on subcategories such as school buses or last-mile delivery vehicles. Commissioners noted that the fleet of delivery vehicles, including electric Rivian trucks operated by Amazon, may represent a measurable subcategory. The

commission agreed to keep the strategy inclusive of alternatives such as biodiesel in addition to full electrification.

New strategies for consideration: Ms. Ziring identified several additional strategies discussed with engineering leadership for inclusion in the amended plan, including e-bike adoption initiatives, a comprehensive snow and ice removal program for sidewalks and trails, incorporation of the recently adopted Safe Streets Action Plan, the impact of the citywide speed limit reduction on emissions, encouragement of reduced vehicle ownership through education and car-sharing programs, micromobility options such as electric scooters, expanded transit use including the forthcoming light rail line, autonomous electric vehicles such as Waymo as a potential last-mile solution, and land use strategies to improve walkability and proximity to daily necessities. The commission expressed support for all proposed additions and endorsed separating bicycle adoption from electric micromobility as distinct strategies.

Commissioner Griffin noted that all emission sources, including heavy-duty vehicles, must be accounted for in the path to the city's net-zero-by-2040 goal regardless of the degree of local influence.

C. Unfinished business

None.

4. Staff updates

Ms. Ziring provided the following updates:

Three commissioner vacancies resulting from the resignation of Commissioner Ashare and the term ends of Commissioners Bayer and Kehrberg, as well as one youth commissioner vacancy resulting from Commissioner Krebs' term end, would be filled by council appointment on June 15, 2026. Regular commissioners would begin July 1, 2026. The incoming youth commissioner would begin September 1, 2026.

Staff have been working with Kala Fisher on a demolition waste reduction work group developing policies and programs related to construction and demolition waste. Strategic planning sessions are underway to align Climate Action Plan goals with the city's adopted strategic priorities.

Ms. Ziring noted that Electrify Everything Minnesota webinars are scheduled for June 9 and June 17, 2026, and are free and open to the public.

Regarding federal Inflation Reduction Act rebate programs, Ms. Ziring reported that recent federal guidance permits Minnesota to spend its allocated funds but restricts use for fuel-switching measures such as heat pump installations. The situation remains under review by the Minnesota Department of Commerce. Insulation and air sealing requirements remain in place as a first step for program eligibility.

The climate resilience survey in the Aquila and Texa-Tonka neighborhoods has received over 100 responses with a goal of 500. Staff will be tabling at Aquila Elementary field day on June 6, the Lenox Senior Resource Fair the following week and the Juneteenth Jam concert.

Staff is coordinating the Walk the Park event on July 11, 2026, beginning at 9:15 a.m. at Louisiana Oaks Park, followed by a food forest planting event at Ainsworth Park.

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Ms. Ziring noted that Annie Pottorff has submitted her resignation to attend law school. Her last day will be June 24, 2026.

Commissioners who receive a monthly stipend will receive payments for December 2025 through May 2026 by the end of June 2026.

5. Work plan update

Chair Hendrix noted that the Walk the Park event on July 11, 2026 would address an existing work plan item. A food forest planting event will follow at Ainsworth Park. Commissioner Kuehl indicated that the youth volunteer engagement effort is ongoing and will continue into the fall term.

6. Sustainability issues

A. Group share-out

Commissioner Giraldo shared that St. Louis Park High School is replacing its boilers with new units operating at 90 to 98 percent efficiency, compared to the current 50 percent efficient boilers. The new boilers will be natural gas-fueled, integrated into the building automation system (BAS) and staged based on heating demand. A geothermal system is being considered as a future option when chiller units, which are 5 to 6 years old, eventually need replacement. The current project will be configured to accept geothermal integration at that time.

B. Kudos

No formal kudos were recorded.

7. Items to Discuss at a Future Meeting

No specific future agenda items were formally identified.

8. Upcoming/Proposed Events

Ms. Ziring noted that the fire department open house has volunteer slots available on Sign Up Genius. The Walk the Park event is scheduled for July 11, 2026 at Louisiana Oaks Park beginning at 9:15 AM. The food forest planting event at Ainsworth Park will follow. Additional details on both events will be forthcoming.

The next ESC meeting is scheduled for August 5, 2026.

Chair Hendrix adjourned the meeting at approximately 7:50 PM.

These minutes were created with the assistance of a generative AI transcript service, then edited and finalized by a staff person.