

**SUSTAINABILITY & ENERGY COMMISSION (SEC)**

**GRAND HAVEN, MICHIGAN 49417**

**NOTICE AND AGENDA FOR COMMISSION MEETING**

LOCATION: GRAND HAVEN CITY HALL

519 WASHINGTON STREET

A regular meeting of the Sustainability & Energy Commission (SEC) was called to order by Jean Madden, Vice Chair, at 6:01 p.m. on Thursday, March 12, 2026, in the Council Chambers of Grand Haven City Hall.

**Present:** Ryan Cotton, James Hagen, Jean Madden, Pam Blough, Patti Nelsen, Nancy O'Neill, Dan Small, and Andrei Skelly

**Absent:** Andrei Skelly (Dan Small was on his way).

**Also present:** Eric Law (Administrative Liaison), Larry Burns, DPW Assistant Director for Urban Forestry.

**Call to Audience:** No members of the public

**Approval of Minutes:** Moved by Ryan Cotton, supported by Patti Nelsen, approved by voice vote.

**AGENDA**

**1. Tree Canopy Update** – Ryan Cotton provided a quick review of prior discussions and deliberations of a Subcommittee consisting of Larry Burns, Nancy O'Neil, and Ryan Cotton. Increasing the tree canopy percentage from 28% to 40% is the tentative goal. To do so, Ryan Cotton passed out hard copies of two potential resolutions for consideration.

The highest priority recommendation for the City Manager is to update the street tree inventory and determine the current tree canopy percentage is before the Commission in the form of two resolutions. These recommendations were prompted by former discussions and research of tree plans and ordinances elsewhere, including Grand Rapids.

The Commission discussed the importance of getting accurate tree metrics, the background of the City's International Tree City, and made specific resolution edits. The City's public budget discussion is set for April 15<sup>th</sup>. Jean Madden moved and Dan Small seconded to approve the first resolution regarding the tree canopy. The vote was unanimous as amended. See attached approved resolution.

The second highest priority is to accurately determine the City's current tree canopy with the goal of establishing a higher goal like 40% in place in other communities. Pam Blough said this is often referred to as "tree canopy equity" and mentioned a variety of aerial methodologies to determine, including the Ottawa County GIS service. Ryan Cotton also explained the subsequent steps for further review once the street tree inventory and tree canopy equity data is secured, and as previously discussed, by the SEC:

- Street tree maintenance/trimming
- Nuisance tree solutions/abatement
- Utility line protections, as well as utility tree trimming/removal
- Legacy tree protection
- Private property education and incentives regarding disease control, invasive species, and private tree planting

After the Commission made edits to the second resolution regarding tree canopy equity, Dan Small moved and Jean Madden supported. The vote was unanimous as amended. See attached approved resolution.

**2. Power Diversity** - Jim Hagen showed slides from the BLP show grid showing supply stress (low to no availability of solar or wind accessible to the BLP) during a recent storm event (winter storm Fern). A review of the BLP presentation – Showed two times when solar and wind was not accessible to the BLP. Conclusions are to look at help from "peaker plants," especially because of more variable weather patterns. Nancy O'Neill asked if BLP discussed ways to reduce demand? Jim Hagen said they believe we need a more diverse power supply.

**3. Deer Enclosure Study and Site Plan** – Jean Madden reported that revisions were made after the last meeting which were subsequently reviewed/approved by Larry and DPW. She requested a vote on an endorsement of the Mulligan's Hollow deer enclosure site plan, as well as reimbursement for the costs from the Grand Haven Area Community Fund accrued forestry funds (roughly \$2,400). Jean Madden will address getting it constructed, planted, and in place. Moved by Nancy O'Neill, supported by Pam Blough. Approved unanimously.

**4. Community Service Events Ideas Continued Discussion** – Jean Madden reported that Brittany Goode reached out about beach clean-up on April 18<sup>th</sup> as being an SEC sponsored event? All the SEC members agreed.

Meanwhile, the Downtown Business District got a grant for planting of native perennials, rather than annuals, in the downtown planters. Pam Blough said other communities tried the same yet were criticized because they are not viewed as aesthetic. Jean Madden, Eric Law, and Pam Blough made suggestions for how to ensure it is a success.

Third, both Jean Madden and Dan Small suggested a trash clean up this summer -- down by the River near Harbor Island and the East End Park boat launch area, respectively. Dan said a dumpster might be necessary due to the presence of tires and other bulky items, in coordination with the DPW. Eric will check with DPW for good days and times.

**5. Newsletter Ideas Discussion** - Jean Madden requested and received suggestions.

**6. Other Business –**

- Patti Nelsen met twice on the Michigan Green Communities Challenge and with Brian Urquhart and Brittany Goode. No additional points were earned this year and cannot progress to platinum, yet Grand Haven is still eligible for gold. Patti Nelsen posed the question of whether the SEC should go before the City Council regularly to report on what we have done? The SEC members were supportive of this idea. Eric Law will carry forward to the City Manager.

- Nancy O'Neill reported on Jim Mathew's funeral. It was well attended and absolutely beautiful. Two of the officiants were Jim's grandsons. Ryan Cotton suggested that a tree get planted in Jim's honor and passed a hat. \$120 was donated by the SEC members. Ryan Cotton said he will coordinate time, place, and planting with the DPW. Nancy O'Neill volunteered to coordinate with Mathew's family.
- Ryan Cotton reported that Jim Hagen and he were working on the Residential Energy Advisor recommendations of the Community Energy Plan. He said they hope to coordinate with the BLP before the next SEC meeting.

**7. Final Call to Audience:** No one was in attendance.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Moved by Dan Small to adjourn and Jean Madden supported. The meeting was unanimously adjourned at 7:58 PM.