

DRAFT Minutes

Sustainability & Energy Commission (SEC)

Grand Haven, Michigan 49417

Grand Haven City Hall, Council Chambers

519 Washington Street

October 9, 2025

6:00 P.M.

Note: Action Items are in Bold & Italics

- 1. Meeting called to order by Chair Dan Small**
- 2. Roll call:** Pamela Blough, Ryan Cotton, James Hagen, Jean Madden, Patti Nelsen, Nancy O'Neill, Dan Small, Andrei Skelly. Eric Law attended as the Liaison.
- 3. Call to Audience:** Jan O'Connel, Sierra Club. No comments.
- 4. Approval of previous meeting minutes:** Dan Small moved the August minutes; Jean Madden supported. Approved unanimously.
- 5. Forest Management** – Jean Madden reported that the Deer Management resolution would be on the October 20th City Council meeting for a vote. She was not sure what the final resolution would include. Eric Law said the “decoupling” provision to allow the Administration to do their roles on Deer Management is being supported to stay in so far.

After the vote and after deer management, experts recommend waiting five years to see what undergrowth sprouts and grows naturally.

Ryan Cotton suggested we can still move forward on the 40% street urban canopy during that period.

6. Trail Construction to Reduce Erosion: Jean Madden reported on the trail grant project. She said the remaining funds at the Community Foundation (\$12,000) can help match a MDNR Natural Resources Trust Fund grant application. This application is planned for a January start with a March 31 deadline for up to \$400,000. Conceptual design was done by Ottawa County a few years ago; the cost was estimated at \$340,000.

Jean Madden asked Eric to inform Ashley of this request to seek a grant writer/staff member to prepare and submit an application in March of 2026.

7. Boosting Newsletter Subscriptions: Jean Madden requested the group's ideas for the next newsletter. She is seeking more content on the SEC's priorities that she can add to the existing forestry emphasis. 160 subscribers exist so far.

Dan Small suggested making physical copies to leave at the Library and enabling people to sign-up there also. Other suggestions were to post on the City's home page; ask Brent Clark if he would reference it in his newsletter; and include it at the Earth Day event.

Jean asked for articles.

Ryan Cotton said he would do a Community Energy article by Oct 31st.

8. SEC Priorities and Next Steps: Jean Madden asked for updates:

- Review ordinances and policies & recommend sustainable alternatives for energy efficiency, renewable energy & land use. Jean Madden reviewed.

No action so far. (Editor's Note: I did not get who was to take the next step...?)

- Implement a city-wide tree canopy improvement project.

Ryan Cotton reported that Ashley Latsch was sending the existing Tree Policy to me for the SEC to review and would schedule either the Public Works Director or the Projects person to come and discuss at our next meeting if the SEC wanted to.

Ryan Cotton will follow up.

Ryan Cotton also said he will begin working on a Tree Inventory grant request if the City concurs. Jean Madden suggested he talk with Larry Burns on this before moving forward.

Ryan Cotton said he would.

Dan Small said DPW did one in 2010, and it included species data for urban trees on the GIS. Since then, tree health has changed, the Ash trees were cut down, and others were removed or were storm damaged.

- Assist City staff in implementing the Community Energy Plan.
Ryan Cotton reported that Ashley Latsch was presented a proposal to do a trial Home Energy Retrofit program that was supported by a pledge.

Ashley Latsh is working on a decision whether to proceed or not.

- Improve levels of residential, municipal, and business recycling and composting.
No reports or updates were presented.
- Improve infrastructure to enhance healthy transportation and transit.
No reports or updates were presented.

9. Community Solar and BLP: Jim Hagen reported that the BLP is scheduling a presentation to the City's Airport Board.

More to follow from Jim Hagen as to when and the results.

10. Other Business:

- a. Andrei Skelly reported on his extended trip and internship experience in Montana: Andrei was welcomed back. The Commission enjoyed hearing about his responsibility with trail improvements covering 750 miles.

- b. Ryan Cotton asked if the Commission would be interested in a presentation from the BLP regarding the 2026 rebate changes planned since Franklin Energy will no longer be doing. The Board agreed this item should be on a future agenda.

Ryan Cotton will invite the BLP representative to attend.

11. Final Call to Audience: No comments.

12. Adjournment: Dan Small moved and Pam Blough seconded. Meeting adjourned at 6:50 PM.