

City of Ashland – Sustainability Committee Meeting

Thursday, December 11th, 2025

6:00 pm – 7:00 pm HYBRID MEETING:

**Meeting Link: <https://meet.goto.com/740241965> | Access Code:
740-241-965 – 2nd Floor Conference Room (601 Main Street W)**

Energy Action Plan, 25x25 Plan, Sourcewater Protection Plan linked here:
<https://sites.google.com/view/ashland-sustainability/themes>

Agenda

- 1) Approval of Agenda
- 2) Introduction of new Committee Member Rachel Myslivy
- 3) Approval of minutes from the November 6th, 2025 meeting
- 4) Citizen Participation
- 5) Projects/Discussions
 - a) Municipal Code Section/Eco-Municipality Resolution – Discussion and Action
 - b) Communications - Discussion
 - c) Ashland County Comprehensive Plan Sustainability Chapter Discussion/Action if necessary
 - d) Potential Grant/Funding Opportunities – Beth Gehred
 - e) Downtown EV Chargers - Discussion
- 6) Staff Updates
- 7) Future agenda items
- 8) Adjournment

The City of Ashland does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age or disability in employment or provision of services, programs or activities.

It is possible that members of and a possible quorum of members of other governmental bodies of the municipality may be in attendance at the above stated meeting to gather information or speak about a subject, over which they have decision-making responsibility. Any governmental body at the above stated meeting will take no action other than the governmental body specifically referred to above in this notice.

NOTE: Upon reasonable notice, the City of Ashland will accommodate the needs of disabled individuals through auxiliary aids or services. For additional information or to request this service, contact the Planning & Zoning Department at (715) 682-7041.

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Present: Charlie Ortman, Meghan Salmon-Tumas, Beth Gehred, Amy Amman

Peter Levi (District 3 Councilor and the Nature Conservancy), Derek Hall (Airport Manager), Peggy Bergman (Chequamegon Carbon Collective), Steven Wiley (Planning and Development Director),

Agenda

- 1) Approval of Agenda
Ortman called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm and a quorum was declared present.
Ortman asked for approval of the agenda.
Amman moved to approve the agenda. Gehred seconded. Motion carried 4-0.
- 2) Introduction of new Committee Member Rachel Myslivy
Wiley stated that Ms. Myslivy was unable to attend tonight. Ortman asked if anyone knows Ms. Myslivy. Tumas stated that she has worked with Ms. Myslivy.
- 3) Approval of minutes from the August 28th, 2025 meeting
Ortman asked for approval of the minutes from the previous meeting. Gehred to approve and Tumas seconded. Motion carried 4-0.
- 4) Citizen Participation
None.
- 5) Projects/Discussions
 - a) Presentation: Renewable Energy Siting Tool – Peter Levi
Ortman introduced Peter Levi who was here to present a tool that the Nature Conservancy created. Levi thanked Ortman, Wiley and the committee. He works as the Director of Science for the WI Chapter of the Nature Conservancy (TNC). He has talked to Wiley and had discussions with Derek Hall, Peggy Bergman, and others leading up to the meeting. This is the first time he is presenting to a community. He knows everyone here so this is a good opportunity. TNC is looking to accelerate the transition to clean energy and help mitigate the climate crisis. They are using policy and looking to lower emissions, increase the amount of energy in US by 400%. The three C's (Climate, Conservation, and Communities.) We want to look at where we site solar. We do not want to use prime farmland but rather marginal farmland. We want this to be climate positive. The Renewable Opportunity Explorer looks at environmental suitability, social suitability (Power of Place). Developers look at proximity to transmission lines and suitability for power generation. National and State Parks, Conservancy areas, etc. are excluded. Looking for opportunity zones (example Mining the Sun project). This is rooted deeply in science. Lower scores indicate higher suitability. (-10 versus a 5). Partner organizations, decision makers,

landowners, and developers are all potential users. The tool aggregates a lot of different data layers. For example, it will aggregate layers together and give you one score for social suitability. This is not intended to be prescriptive. The Renewable Opportunity Explorer has two aspects. They are the Basic Planning Map and top-down/bottom up suitability filtering. We can avoid intact wildlife habitat. We can filter by 400-acre parcels for example. We can start big and zoom in or bottom-up and pick a specific site. An example is a one-acre parcel. Levi showed the airport. Environmental suitability scoring for the airport is high. Opportunities include community solar, the Bayfield Electric Co-op, and the Xcel Energy Project. (Get a developer here and have a utility scale project). Such a project would be 5+ Megawatts and 25-25 acres in area. We could receive utility aid payments and lease payments (\$2,000/Megawatt per year and \$500 per Megawatt per year respectively).

Levi offered to take questions. Gehred asked if it is in contracts that a developer has to remove the solar at the end of its useful life and what are we finding at the end with the land having been shaded for so long? Levi stated that many projects are done with Joint Development Agreements (JDAs) that look at front and back end of the project. They may require soil amendments for example. Ortman asked if the point would be to leave the solar infrastructure there and replace bad panels. Levi stated that if we want to mitigate climate change we need rapid scale advancement of renewable energy. There are ways we can have solar and be working the land.

Ortman mentioned the Ashland County Farmland Preservation Plan which addresses threats to farmland. Agrivoltaics were mentioned in the appendix. Ortman stated that 10% of the state's farmland is affected by PFAS sludge. This land is not eligible for federal easements. His mother's former land is ineligible. If TNC wanted to evaluate this Ortman suggests it. Amman asked about the top-down example and mentioned that public lands appear to show up. She was curious about this and asked if County lands are blocked out. Levi stated that they might be included. Levi stated that this isn't a tool for TNC to say we want solar in a specific location but rather for local officials and developers to use as part of the conversation. Ortman asked if the recommended type of panel was a straight up one. Levi stated that he does not get into that. That is for the developers. Levi, Hall, and Bergman left at 6:38 pm.

Gehred mentioned 2 updates on climate change. One was with Bill Bussey on Nov 6, one with Bill Bailey on Nov 18, and one with Matt Danielson on Dec 4 at CORE in Bayfield.

b) Eco-Municipality Resolution – Discussion

Ortman asked if Wiley had the job descriptions on the eco-municipality resolution and our ordinance and if he could merge them. He did not finalize them but could work on merging them.

c) Communications – Discussion

Ortman stated that Kucera and Wiley can move this forward as an analysis. He suggested reaching out to Jolma and muGrid. He asked if they could get us an analysis. Wiley stated that he would follow up with Kucera tomorrow. Amman read the previous meeting minutes from the communications discussion which focused on

the 25x25 plan. We can get that out. We have a strategy to determine where we are at. Tumas stated that we mentioned communications in the newspaper for example. There have been many communications in the paper lately.

- d) Ashland County Comprehensive Plan Sustainability Chapter Discussion/Action if necessary

Ortman asked if Amman and Tumas were still up for this. Tumas said she was and asked what the timeline was. Ortman stated June or July next year maybe.

- e) Potential Grant/Funding Opportunities – Beth Gehred

Gehred usually forwards opportunities to Wiley and asks Wiley to forward to Ortman if they have merit. She has not seen anything recently.

- f) Downtown EV Chargers – Discussion

Gehred mentioned that Bill Bailey said the easiest way to get chargers back into commission is to do a workaround on the statute prohibition that the City cannot make money on them. We can lease the land under our chargers themselves to someone eligible under a lease agreement. The Co-op would be a candidate since they are close. Gehred reached out and said there was some interest. She could not remember what was the next move. It was not rejected out of hand by the Co-op. Gehred or Kristen can write something up to the Co-op board. The next step could be to talk to the City Attorney. Wiley mentioned that he spoke with Kucera and Kucera is also looking into this. Kucera wants to make sure that we are legally on solid footing. We can get clarification on the legal side and take it back to the Co-op. Gehred asked if we can have an estimated date by which we can get this done so that it does not just get bounced. Wiley stated that he is hoping within the next month to have more information. Sometimes things take longer than we would like but they ultimately get done. Wiley will bring it up again tomorrow. Tumas stated that the Co-op is a local partnership which is a benefit here to strengthen ties. The legislative approach could help other communities though. Gehred has been in touch with Mr. Bailey and Representative Angela Stroud's office. We will keep this on the agenda.

- 6) Staff Updates

Wiley mentioned that we are still working on the City solar assessment funded through the PSC RESP grant. We have data loggers at all sites and had kick off meetings for all sites. Tumas and Wiley are still working on the Energy Star Portfolio Manager project. We can touch base with John Butler and Dan Homola. The Committee discussed drones and that we have access to drones if needed.

- 7) Future agenda items

Tumas would like to keep the Comprehensive Plan chapter on the agenda. We will also keep the EV charging stations discussion on the agenda.

- 8) Adjournment

Ortman asked for a motion to adjourn. Tumas moved to adjourn and Amman seconded. The motion carried 4-0 and the meeting adjourned at 7:08 pm.

The Committee set a tentative next meeting date of December 11th.

49 (1906) Sustainability Committee

49.01 Purpose

49.02 Membership And Organization

49.03 Duties

49.04 Meetings And Public Notice

49.05 Quorum

49.06 Reports And Record Keeping

49.07 Referrals To The Committee

49.08 Miscellaneous Provisions

HISTORY

Adopted by Ord. [2018-1906](#) Adopts Chapter 49. Sustainability Committee. on 6/26/2018

Amended by Ord. [2022-1955](#) Amends Chapter 49 (2018-1906). Sustainability Committee Ordinance. Section 49.02(a). Membership and Organization. on 1/11/2022

49.01 Purpose

The Sustainability Committee was created to advise the City of Ashland's Planning and Development Department, Ashland Common Council and other City of Ashland Departments to provide and improve the sustainability resources (including environmental, economic, and social) of the City for the enhancement of the quality of life for residents, the larger regional community, and visitors. The goals of this ordinance will be accomplished through prioritizing Ashland's sustainability goals, completing annual reviews, organizing sustainability improvement projects pertaining to natural resources, economic efficiency, and social interaction, and enhancing communication within and between the City of Ashland and residents. The Sustainability Committee will study and make recommendations regarding sustainability issues affecting Ashland community members and undertake such projects and requested by the City's governing body. The Sustainability Committee shall consider the following four guidelines when considering matters:

1. Reduce dependence upon fossil fuels, and extracted underground metals and minerals.
2. Reduce dependence on chemicals and other manufactured substances that can accumulate in Nature.
3. Reduce dependence on activities that harm life-sustaining ecosystems.
4. Meet the hierarchy of present and future human needs fairly

The Committee shall, from time to time as it deems desirable:

1. Present or discuss policies and programs affecting all aspects of City sustainability.
2. Recommend cooperation with all agencies, groups, clubs, and individuals concerned with environmental conservation, economic efficiency, and social organization in the City.
3. Make recommendations to both the Planning and Development Department and Common Council for maintaining and improving overall quality program/service deliveries.

HISTORY

Adopted by Ord. [2018-1906](#) on 6/26/2018

49.02 Membership And Organization

1. The Sustainability Committee shall be composed of 5-9 members appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the Common Council to serve staggered two year terms commencing July 1st.

Where possible, one member should be a member of City Council, and at least one member should be a high school, college, or technical college~~Northland College~~ student.

2. At the first meeting of the committee and the first meeting after July 1 of any given year, the committee shall elect a chairperson and vice-chairperson.
3. If any committee member has three unexcused absences or resigns, the Committee may declare the position vacant and request the Mayor to fill the vacancy (for the remainder of the term) pursuant to the provisions of this section.

HISTORY

Adopted by Ord. [2018-1906](#) on 6/26/2018

Amended by Ord. [2022-1959](#) Amends Section 49.02(a). Membership and Organization. on 3/29/2022
[49.03 Duties](#)

Unless otherwise expressly provided, the Committee may perform its duties without first obtaining the consent of the Common Council but in no event is the committee empowered to financially obligate the City of Ashland in any manner without the consent of the Common Council.

1. Prioritize City sustainability initiatives
2. Promote/disperse sustainability information to local area of influence
3. Serve as contact for sustainability issues and questions
4. Organize/Plan sustainability events and programs
5. Conduct annual evaluations and monitoring of city sustainability goals and projects
6. Encourage citizen participation.

HISTORY

Adopted by Ord. [2018-1906](#) on 6/26/2018

49.04 Meetings And Public Notice

1. The Committee shall meet as determined by the Committee.
2. All agenda items will be reviewed by the Committee Chair for validity and urgency of the request and determine when and if that item should be placed on a Committee agenda.
3. The Committee shall operate under Robert's Rules of Order.
4. All regular and special meetings of the Committee shall comply with the public meeting requirements of Wisconsin Statutes.
5. All meeting notices shall comply with the public meeting notice requirements of Wisconsin Statutes.
6. All meeting notices and agendas shall be issued by the Planning and Development Department.

HISTORY

Adopted by Ord. [2018-1906](#) on 6/26/2018

49.05 Quorum

A quorum shall be a majority of the full Committee.

HISTORY

Adopted by Ord. [2018-1906](#) on 6/26/2018

49.06 Reports And Record Keeping

1. Committee members shall select one among themselves, or the Planning and Development Department will designate a staff member, to record the minutes of each meeting of the Committee. A written record of all meetings shall be kept and approved at the next subsequent meeting of the Committee.
2. Committee reports and recommendations shall be reduced to writing and shall not be included on a Council agenda until reduced to writing and submitted by the Committee to the City Clerk.
3. The City Clerk is the record custodian for the City. All committee minutes and records shall be filed with the City Clerk.

HISTORY

Adopted by Ord. [2018-1906](#) on 6/26/2018

49.07 Referrals To The Committee

The Common Council of the City of Ashland may refer any matter pertaining to City sustainability programs and projects to the Sustainability Committee for review, study, and reports.

HISTORY

Adopted by Ord. [2018-1906](#) on 6/26/2018

49.08 Miscellaneous Provisions

If any section, subsection, sentence, clause or phrase of this ordinance is for any reason held to be invalid, unconstitutional by reason of any decision of any court of competent jurisdiction, such decision shall not affect the validity of any other section, subsection, sentence, or clause or phrase or portion thereof.

HISTORY

Adopted by Ord. [2018-1906](#) on 6/26/2018

RESOLUTION TO ADOPT ECO-MUNICIPALITY DESIGNATION FOR THE CITY OF ASHLAND, WISCONSIN

Adoption of Sustainable Community Development Policy

WHEREAS, the City of Ashland has adopted a Comprehensive Plan (2004 – 2024) that calls for “The Making of an Exceptional City”, and includes dozens of references to sustainable practices; and

WHEREAS, the adoption of the four systems conditions of the Natural Step can provide a framework that will assist city employees and elected officials in moving in a more sustainable direction; and

WHEREAS, the willingness of the city to move in the direction of becoming an eco-municipality can serve as a model for others and encourage economic development along similar lines in our city and region; and,

WHEREAS, the City of Ashland has a pledge of support through mentorship and consulting from The National Association of Swedish Eco-Municipalities; and

WHEREAS, the following four guidelines were developed by the American Planning Association to help communities implement sustainable practices:

1. Reduce dependence upon fossil fuels, and extracted underground metals and minerals.
2. Reduce dependence on chemicals and other manufactured substances that can accumulate in Nature.
3. Reduce dependence on activities that harm life-sustaining ecosystems.
4. Meet the hierarchy of present and future human needs fairly and efficiently.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Ashland hereby endorses the principles of sustainable community development described herein, and agrees to apply these principles whenever possible in its planning, policy making, and municipal practices.

Councilperson

PASSED:

ATTEST: _____
Rae M. Buckwheat, City Clerk

Fred P. Schnook, Mayor

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Scott W. Clark, City Attorney

reso542

Background on Comprehensive Planning:

[from Extension website](#): “A comprehensive plan is a document that describes a long-term vision that a community wants to achieve. It is a broad brush look at the entire community in terms of where it is now, and where it would like to be in the coming years. It looks at the many parts of the community, how the community functions, and its role in the region. A comprehensive plan is intended to provide a rational basis for making local land use decisions and to serve as a blueprint for community-wide efforts to achieve its vision.

“Ashland County and all the municipalities within the county developed and approved comprehensive plans in 2005-2006. State law (Wisconsin Statutes 66.1001) dictated the process and components of a comprehensive plan and that once adopted, plans should be reviewed at least every 10 years. That most recently revised Comprehensive Plan and Farmland Preservation Plan was reviewed and approved at the December 15, 2016 Ashland County Board of Supervisors meeting.”

[State law](#) requires comprehensive plans to include the following chapters, though additional chapters may also be included: Issues and Opportunities; Housing; Transportation; Utilities and Community Facilities; Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources; Economic Development; Intergovernmental Cooperation; Land-use; and Implementation. These plans guide county projects and activities. Additionally, municipalities within the county try to align their comprehensive plans with those of the county, such that municipalities’ projects and activities are also somewhat guided by this plan. For reference, the City of Ashland’s most recent Comprehensive Plan is available [here](#).

[Ashland County 2006 Comprehensive Plan Vision and Goals:](#)

Vision: We envision a County that recognizes the diversity of rural, forested, community and village life. By joining together, we become stronger and more efficient in meeting our citizen’s needs. We are challenged to maintain and improve land, air and water quality in an increasingly complex world.

Goals: To meet these challenges, the County will...

- Have robust economic development throughout the county to remain competitive in attracting new businesses and supporting existing businesses
- Have a thriving local economy that attracts and retains young people, state-of-the-art infrastructure, the most up-to-date telecommunications, well-qualified workforce with a high-quality of life, and ample job opportunities providing a living wage
- Maintain a high-quality natural resource base and preserve our air, land and water at the highest level for future generations
- Continue its position as a steward to county, state, and federal forest lands, fish, and wildlife through collaboration with different agencies and organizations
- Have quality and affordable housing opportunities for all residents

- Continue to provide both natural resource opportunities and cultural resource opportunities that attracts people to the county, and continues to recognize the importance of tourism in the County
- Continue to support the main economic drivers of the county including manufacturing, forestry, tourism, agriculture, education and health services
- Support childhood and life-long learning through strong k-12, two-year and four-year higher educational institutions

City of Ashland's Sustainability Committee's Role:

We have a potential role in providing input to the current update of the County's Comprehensive Plan. Already, Ashland County Extension (Lissa Radke) has convened experts in five working groups to provide input on sustainability themes for the updated comprehensive plan: Transportation; Utilities and Community Facilities; Agricultural Resource; Natural Resources; and Land-use. I was involved in one of these groups and based on my experiences I feel confident that robust input was gathered around these topics. Community input is now being gathered through community surveys and planned town halls. We can provide input as community members at these town halls and by providing specific recommendations from this committee to the Ashland County Planning Committee.

Questions to Consider:

- What might be missing from the 2006 Vision and Goals?
- What is no longer relevant or needed from the 2006 Vision and Goals?
- How can the 2006 Vision and Goals be edited to better represent the ethos of sustainability?

Some Ideas to Consider:

- Add a sustainability goal, such as "Ensure the County's economies, communities, and environments thrive for current and future generations of people and nature."
- Recommend sustainability-oriented objectives for appropriate chapters:
 - Energy in the county is produced through renewable resources, sourced locally, and utilizing local contractors and service providers.
 - Novel synthetic chemicals (i.e. PFAS, microplastics) are monitored in the environment. Their release into the environment is controlled and high concentrations in the environment are remediated.
 - Biodiversity is maintained through conservation lands, ecosystem restoration, and control of non-native species
 - Future climatic conditions and associated weather risks are considered in all planning, investments, and projects.
 - Biogeochemical flows in the environment (i.e. phosphorous and nitrogen) are monitored and controlled to maintain ecosystem health and safe water for drinking and recreating

- Freshwater changes (soil moisture, river and lake levels, water temperature) are limited by maintaining and restoring healthy ecosystems and planning for future hydroclimatic conditions
- Indoor and outdoor air quality is monitored and communicated to the public. Residents are educated on the impacts and dangers of poor air quality. Programs help individuals limit their exposure to poor air quality and its effects.
- Economic development incorporates maintenance of healthy ecosystems and other natural resources for future generations and balances the needs of residents and tourists.
- Cultural resources are preserved through vibrant programs (i.e. language, arts, and crafts) that adapt to residents' needs
- High-quality services (i.e. medical care, education, emergency services) are available to all
- Interconnected communities, transportation access, and other services ensure that all residents have access to social relationships and social isolation is reduced
- County population remains stable or changes slowly. County services are flexible to scale with changes in population.

Further Inspiration:

The 2023 update to the Bayfield County Comprehensive Plan includes numerous goals and objectives related to sustainability. Here are some that I selected out to highlight:

- Transportation:
 - Goal 3: The future transportation system should be flexible, multi-modal, incorporate technologies to support the transition to electric vehicles, and provide for the needs of citizens and businesses in Bayfield County.
 - encourage bike trails
 - develop a county-wide trail plan
 - additional right-of-ways
 - alternative fuel filling station
 - encourage ride sharing programs
 - Goal 4: Pursue alternative fuel sources for fleet vehicles as technology becomes available.
- Utilities and Community Facilities
 - Goal 1: A clean, resilient energy supply that makes use of cost-effective renewable resources while protecting Bayfield County's natural resources, which are consistent with and contribute to the County's goal of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.
 - county-wide EV infrastructure plan
 - track energy use by county-owned facilities
 - county-wide energy resilience plan
 - smart grid

- solar-friendly zoning codes
 - focus on energy
 - consider large-scale solar locations and plan and zone accordingly
 - encourage RE with local utilities, promote siting RE projects now
 - educate residents on energy savings
 - ID and map potential resilience centers
 - develop RE at essential service locations
- Goal 3: Support and strengthen essential services to protect the public health, safety, and welfare of the community.
 - Develop a countywide plan that provides guidance to municipalities re: climate-change induced impacts to waste treatment and water treatment plants.
- Goal 4: Recognize the value and everyday importance of Bayfield County's parks and community centers, libraries, civic buildings, and cultural assets by investing in their maintenance and improvement.
 - ID, fund, and update all County-owned buildings with HVAC systems (and hot water heaters, windows, and building insulation) older than 20 years. Replace with high efficiency HVAC systems.
- Ag, natural, and cultural resources
 - Goal 1: Protect, maintain, and enhance lakes and streams, wetlands, forestlands, aquatic and terrestrial habitats, and groundwater to maintain water quality, ecologic function, and recreational and aesthetic values.
 - tech assistance for landowners
 - slow the flow
 - zoning and tech assistance to slow erosion and slumping
 - habitat
 - invasive species
 - protect lakes and streams
 - Goal 2: Reduce and mitigate surface and groundwater impacts from agricultural land use activities...
 - nutrient management planning
 - farmland preservation plan
 - increase minimum parcel size?
 - fish creek and marengo watershed plans
 - Goal 3: Enhance or improve climate resiliency across all natural landscapes, with an emphasis on forests, and increase natural carbon sequestration to the extent needed to achieve the County's goal of net-zero carbon emissions from County operations by 2040 and from all County sources by 2050.
 - establish forest ecosystem trends
 - larger minimum parcels to reduce habitat fragmentation
 - sustainable forestry practices
 - carbon-balanced county forests
 - reduce carbon loss from disturbances
 - promote perennial crops and rotational grazing

- Goal 4: Increase the climate resilience for planning, design, engineering, and construction of future projects due to more intense weather events.
 - plan for 100-yr storms
 - stay up-to-date on trainings
- Goal 5: Protect, restore, and enhance sustainable fish and wildlife populations and habitat through an integrated ecosystem approach.
- Economic Development
 - Goal 4: Bayfield County will invest in infrastructure improvements needed to support modern economic development and community needs.
 - ID potential grant-funded RE projects
- Hazard Mitigation
- Land Use
 - Goal 1: Ensure that land use and development is compatible and harmonious with the natural environment.
 - minimum lot sizes to decrease fragmentation
 - promote high-density development at appropriate sites
 - minimize # driveways
 - more through-streets, less dead ends
 - parking standards
 - develop BMP for light pollution
 - encourage dark skies
 - Goal 3: Protect water resources in volume and quality.
 - study artesian water system
 - Goal 4: Protect and preserve agricultural and forestland uses and the overall economic viability of working lands within Bayfield County.