

City of Ashland – Sustainability Committee Meeting

Thursday, May 28th, 2026

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) Approval of minutes from the April 30th, 2026 meeting
- 3) Citizen Participation
- 4) Projects/Discussions
 - a) Communications - Discussion
 - b) Ashland County Comprehensive Plan Sustainability Chapter Discussion/Action if necessary
 - c) Potential Grant/Funding Opportunities – Beth Gehred
 - d) Sustainable Purchasing Policy – Discussion
 - e) City Solar Opportunities – Discussion
 - f) Committee Opinion on Data Centers – Discussion
 - g) City-owned EV Charging Stations
- 5) Staff Updates
- 6) Future agenda items
- 7) 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

Absent: Rachel Myslivy (Excused)

Agenda – * Revised 04/27/2026

- 1) Approval of Agenda
Ortman called the meeting to order at 6:06 pm and a quorum was declared present. Ortman asked for approval of the agenda. Tumas moved approval and Gehred seconded. Motion carried 3-0.
- 2) Approval of minutes from the March 26th, 2026 meeting
Ortman asked for approval of the minutes from the March 26th meeting. Gehred moved approval and Tumas seconded. Motion carried 3-0.
- 3) Citizen Participation
Gehred mentioned a petition called Free the EV that has been signed so on behalf of the committee she was presenting it. There are about 30 signatures. The petition asks the City to work with partners or push back against Act 121 to get the chargers back up and running. Ortman asked for us to make copies and Wiley can present it to the Mayor.
- 4) Projects/Discussions
 - a) Communications – Discussion
Tumas mentioned an ordinance by the City of Washburn (Ordinance 21-001). It has a lot of recycling information in there and Tumas is wondering if we have something similar we can put in the paper. We have talked about various ways to use the paper for communication. Wiley can look at what ordinance the City has on the books. Tumas said that the idea is to always look for opportunities to put things out. The Focus on Energy presentation provides a great opportunity for a letter to the editor of the paper also. Gehred could write a letter to the editor. Tumas has met people at the state level that have done the energy assessments Matt Danielson has done. If there are a few homes to make it worth it they would come up. Gehred asked if she can write the letter and send it. Ortman and Wiley stated that Gehred or someone else can write the letter and bring it to the Committee to review prior to having Mr. Kucera and the Mayor review it. Gehred and Tumas discussed getting a critical mass of interested people together, referring them to a willing person whether it is Wiley or someone else, and making them aware of the Focus on Energy resources. We should keep in touch with Mr. Danielson. We can then determine what to do next perhaps similar to the Solar group buy.

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

Wiley included a draft outline in the packet. Tumas was hoping for feedback on this especially on what the Committee believed she could not write since there was a lot there. Folks involved might be aware of initiatives but not necessarily how to write about sustainability. Goals would likely have objectives under each goal that would relate to several different chapters.

Ortman asked if Tumas had a vision statement in mind. Tumas stated that she wasn't necessarily looking to mess with the vision statement. Ortman likes the existing one a lot.

Tumas stated that the implementation section would be the toughest. Ortman stated that maybe you have a red, yellow, and green for how well we are doing the things. Wiley stated that Tumas could include short, medium, long term, costs, responsible partners, etc. Ortman stated that he wanted to compare how much in renewable energy we have purchased relative to non-renewable. The savings from renewables would help fund improvements to further reduce our dependence on non-renewables. Gehred stated that the up-front cost is the big hurdle. Ortman stated that Xcel is trying to get the solar panels people place in their yards so in essence would lease the space. We need grid managers so even if we go 100% renewable we will need to pay Xcel. Gehred asked if leadership was supportive. Ortman stated that all we need to do is pay the interest on the loan. Ortman stated that if you do not have solar you are losing money. Ortman stated that all we need to do is get some numbers and make the financial case to leadership. Gehred asked if staffing was a challenge. Wiley answered that it was but that also the upfront cost, and if people were not used to having conversations about solar during the capital project/budgeting discussions it would get left by the wayside. Tumas wants suggestions on how to prioritize the sections because she cannot write a 40-page report. If she can only get to 2 or 3 areas in the outline which ones should she prioritize? She wants to create something that we as a committee can hand off to the Comprehensive Planning Committee that they can incorporate into their plan. Gehred stated that George Bussey mentioned there is nothing in there about climate change. She asked how far along the plan is towards getting ratified. Ortman stated that the Comprehensive Planning Committee is a standing committee. Gehred asked where they usually get their verbiage and how much do we need to show that people contributed to this section. Ortman stated that in 2016 the Extension spearheaded it. Tom Wojehowski and Gary Mertig were involved. Tumas sees this as potentially a skeleton that can be provided to the committee who can fill in elements over time. Tumas asked Wiley to keep this on the agenda for next time and she will provide something if she has it. Gehred mentioned Monroe County as an example.

- c) Potential Grant/Funding Opportunities – Beth Gehred

Gehred asked if a grant would be good for helping with up front costs. The waste Management grant is an opportunity. It is a nice project because it is a reduction of carbon producing waste. Gehred stated that the City would have concerns with

- committing to grants in some cases. Wiley explained the example COW agenda bill he had in the meeting packet and the COW/Council approval processes along with the information needed for these. Ortman stated if the committee had grants in mind he could include them in his brief to take forward to the COW. Ortman asked how much was in the Waste Management grant. Gehred stated that they contribute 2% of their profit so she would have to go back and see what we would be eligible for. The Boreal Waters fund can provide \$10,000 for legal work for example and they are much more winnable. Gehred asked Wiley to keep in mind if we need an energy coordinator for 5 hours a week for example. Tumas mentioned that when Bayfield County wrote their grant the project would have to be carbon reducing. Ortman stated to keep in mind all the places we could place energy producing facilities such as the landfill or 40 acres owned by the City.
- d) Sustainable Purchasing Policy – Discussion
The Committee discussed tabling this. Tumas moved to postpone. Gehred seconded. Motion carried 3-0.
 - e) City Solar Opportunities – Discussion
Wiley explained the report from Jolma and muGrid Analytics and provided background. The Committee supported the report and its findings. Ortman asked if the study could be manipulated for current best practices. He stated that the overall cost would be \$5.5 million. He is not sure if interest would cover this. We will need a few more numbers. Tumas stated that this is also about energy security.
 - f) Committee Opinion on Data Centers – Discussion
Ortman is not reading much good on them. They are increasing the use of energy to unsustainable levels, increasing PFAS, and are noisy. He has heard of many complaints and they don't create a ton of jobs. They raise energy costs. They share energy costs across the whole area, not just data centers. Tumas saw a presentation by Peter Annin who has done research on the Great Lakes Compact, etc. If they are following best practices with data center design their usage is a drop in the bucket compared to many industrial users. Ortman stated we should create an ordinance. Do a noise study, recycle their water. He asked if we want to predigest an opinion or be pseudo-event driven. Tumas likes the idea of bringing a suggested ordinance forward ahead of time. She is not panicked and wants to be level headed. Ortman stated there is probably a good ordinance we can look at. Tumas likes the idea of not doing a moratorium. Gehred does not see expressed an idea on AI. It is pushed on us by people who profit the most. She wants to incorporate this. The public should have right to weigh in on AI itself. She brought this up with Angela Stroud but Stroud mentioned it is not a state issue. It is bigger. She asked if one of the choke points is some guardrails around the use of AI. She is not comfortable at all that AI will be a positive for humanity. Tumas stated the City can consider a technology review committee. Ortman asked Wiley to mention to Kucera and the Mayor about the possibility of having a listening session on AI.
 - g) *Update on City-owned EV Charging Stations
Gehred stated that if we hold out for Angela Stroud to get the law changed we can continue to own the EV charging stations and with what money they make ensure that some money goes into a fund to maintain or repair them and it would be our money which would go into funding the Sustainability Committee. Waiting is the slow route,

but BART or the Co-op would be the quicker way. Maybe the City should get a lease in place for a year until the law changes. Ortman stated that we could maybe put two more chargers in. Ortman asked Wiley to inform Kucera and the Mayor of the state efforts and ask them to consider these. Wiley stated he could talk to Kucera. Ortman asked if Wiley could follow up with Haley Makela. Wiley answered that he will.

5) Staff Updates

None

6) Future agenda items

Gehred asked about committee membership/growing the committee. Ortman mentioned the City investing in renewables. He stated that we want some numbers. Wiley will keep the Communications, Ashland County Sustainability Chapter, Grant/Funding Opportunities, and Sustainable Purchasing Policy on the agenda.

7) Adjournment

Ortman asked for a motion to adjourn. Gehred moved approval and Tumas seconded. Motion carried 3-0 and the meeting adjourned at 7:36 pm.

Ashland County Sustainability: Outline of Proposed Chapter for the Ashland County Comprehensive Plan

- What Is Sustainability?
 - (Focus on regionally-accepted frameworks)
- Why Plan for Sustainability in Ashland County?
 - Community Values (from survey and interviews by CRC)
 - Vision (how sustainability supports the County Comp Plan Vision)
 - Current Sustainability Conditions and Trends
 - Assets (tourism, forestry, agriculture, community strengths)
 - Vulnerabilities (climate trends and key events, aging infrastructure, low investment in rural areas)
 - Existing policies and initiatives (City of Ashland Sustainability Committee, state priorities)
- Recommended Sustainability Goals
 - Environmental Systems:
 - Protect residents from exposure to poor air, water, and soil quality to support public health.
 - Protect and restore lands and waters that provide habitat, recreation, cultural value, and essential ecological functions.
 - Enhance carbon sequestration and storage in natural systems and working lands.
 - Energy and Infrastructure:
 - Ensure an affordable, reliable, and resilient energy system that minimizes greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution.
 - Expand infrastructure for low- and zero-emission transportation, including electric vehicles, active transportation, and alternative fuels.
 - Design, maintain, and invest in infrastructure to withstand future environmental, economic, and climate conditions.
 - Economy
 - Support the long-term economic viability and sustainable management of working lands, including forests and farmlands.
 - Promote economic development that balances the needs of residents and visitors, supports long-term resilience, and sustains healthy ecosystems.
 - Community Wellbeing:
 - Ensure all residents have equitable access to high-quality housing, childcare, transportation, education, healthcare, emergency services, digital connectivity, and other essential community services.

- Reduce social isolation by fostering opportunities for meaningful social connection and community engagement.
 - Preserve and celebrate cultural resources through inclusive and adaptive programs that reflect community needs.
- Implementation Strategies
 - Review proposed policies
 - Partnerships
 - Funding opportunities
 - Timeline
- Metrics and Tracking
 - At least one quantitative metric for each proposed goal

NORTHLAND COLLEGE

POLICY: Sustainable Electronics Purchasing Policy	POLICY NUMBER: [POLICY NUMBER]
RESPONSIBLE DEPT: IT Department	APPLICABILITY: STUDENTS <input type="checkbox"/> FACULTY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CONTRACTED SERVICES STAFF <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALL <input type="checkbox"/>
OWNER: Sustainability Workgroup	EFFECTIVE DATE: JUNE 1, 2020
	LAST REVIEW: MM/DD/YYYY
REFERENCES:	NEXT REVIEW: MM/YYYY
APPROVAL:	APPROVAL DATE: MM/DD/YYYY

PURPOSE

Northland College is dedicated to sustainability and ensuring the technology utilized by the College is energy efficient and made through environmentally responsible methods. The policy provides guidelines and information **to guide** sustainable purchasing practices in line with the mission and values on Northland College. This policy applies to electronics procurement conducted by all Northland College departments and offices.

DEFINITIONS

- **EPEAT:** EPEAT is a certification for computers and electronic products that includes standards for energy efficiency, materials selection, longevity, and other criteria related to sustainability. More information at <http://www.epeat.net/>
- **EnergyStar:** EnergyStar is a third party certification for energy efficiency backed by the US Environmental Protection Agency.

POLICY

All units of Northland College will purchase electronics (computers, monitors, laptops, tablets, phones, printers, and scanners) that are EnergyStar certified **and/or** rated at least EPEAT bronze.

This policy excludes specialized equipment for which no EPEAT certified products are available.

PROCEDURES

1. This policy will be reviewed annually by the Sustainability Workgroup.
2. All parties responsible for electronics purchasing will utilize this policy as guidance.
3. The IT department will provide data on annually each fall to the Sustainability Workgroup for purchases during the prior fiscal year. The workgroup will review compliance with this policy and make recommendations.

PUBLISHING

This policy will be published on the Northland College Sustainability Website, in the Sustainability Policy area.

