

City of Ashland – Sustainability Committee Meeting

Thursday, June 25th, 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 May 28th, 2026 meeting
- 3) Citizen Participation
- 4) Projects/Discussions
 - a) Ashland County Comprehensive Plan Sustainability Chapter Discussion/Action if necessary
 - b) Potential Grant/Funding Opportunities – Beth Gehred
 - c) Sustainable Purchasing Policy – Discussion
 - d) City Solar Opportunities – Discussion
 - e) Committee Opinion on Data Centers – Discussion
 - f) City-owned EV Charging Stations - Update
 - g) Communications - Prepare a Summary of Meeting for Public Release - Action
- 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, Karolyn Dunn (citizen), Otis Walvatne (citizen)

Absent: Rachel Myslivy (Excused)

Agenda

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 to approve the agenda and Gehred seconded. Motion carried.

2) Approval of minutes from the April 30th, 2026 meeting

Ortman asked for approval of the minutes. Gehred moved to approve and Tumas seconded. Motion carried 3-0

3) Citizen Participation

Walvante spoke and said he is not too familiar with the committee. He stated that he would like to see something in the Comp Plan regarding the City of Ashland's standing in solidarity with Bad River to remove the line 5 pipeline. We are upstream from the largest freshwater lake on the planet. He looked through the 25 x 25 plan and would like some status updates on it. For the EV chargers he is not too into them, no one he knows drives EVs and there is not much sustainable about rich people driving Teslas. He sees potential in mass transportation. He gave a shout-out to BART. He is opposed to data centers and sees issues with them. Dunn seconds Walvatne and decided to come to the meeting 30 minutes ago so is along for the ride to see how things go along. Ortman recommended Walvatne visiting the Land Conservationist (Ashland County) on Sanborn Avenue. We can make an ordinance where the fences will be regarding data centers. Walvatne can prepare some of his own recommendations on data centers. These can include limits on water use, noise, etc. Ortman stated that this was discussed at the yearly conference for land and water conservation. Regarding water usage there are some authorities that manage water disposal, sewage, etc. Tumas mentioned that the County is updating their Comprehensive Plan and the City will begin soon. Ortman stated that the County Conservationist resides on Sanborn Ave and is responsible for the protection of County land and water. Gehred mentioned that the Land and Water Conservationist is a County position. The County has a Farmland Preservation Plan also and are open to input. Gehred stated that June 10th is a big meeting of County Conservationists. They learn from one another. We can ask for a moratorium on data centers. Gehred stated that our Committee makes recommendations to the City Council.

4) Projects/Discussions

a) Communications – Discussion

Ortman asked Wiley for an update. Wiley recapped the last meeting. Tumas stated that Washburn included their recycling ordinance in the classifieds of the paper. We have a similar ordinance. Maybe we amend our ordinance and shorten it. This process could start with the Committee. Gehred also drafted a letter to the editor of the paper which she shared with us. She talks about the fact that there are not enough assessors in the area to do the energy assessments Matt Danielson mentioned which creates a bottleneck. We can help create connections for people looking to have energy assessments done. This is for the Focus on Energy program. All utilities help contribute to Focus on Energy. Ortman asked if Wiley can run it by Kucera. Wiley stated that he can. We just cannot act tonight since it is not noted as an action on the agenda. Gehred stated that this is a commercial for the program, not for an entity. It is a little boostery sounding. Ortman stated that it reads like a public service announcement to him. What Gehred needs from this committee is confirmation on whether this is what we are looking for and should we pursue this with the paper? Tumas believes this is better than what she was looking for. Gehred stated that we need facts. She asked if for the last paragraph we were fine with the matchmaker role. Ortman is supportive. Ortman explained how we got here. We decided we would take the highlights of the minutes and create a newsletter. Tumas stated that we reviewed our charge and communications to the public was one of our functions. Ortman asked if we want to set an operating procedure on how we want to do that. At every meeting do we take a highlight and what? Do we keep track of the highlights and issue a quarterly? Tumas asked about distribution. It could be a press release, social media, or on the City website. Tumas stated that maybe a Facebook post would be appropriate for every month. For website material or a letter to the editor we may want to drop the frequency down. Gehred asked about a standing Facebook post in advance of the meeting every month a week before. Ortman asked how Dunn and Walvatne became aware. They stated Gehred informed them. Gehred stated that she wants the committee to get bigger and there has been a lag for months in getting people appointed. Ortman asked where Dunn and Walvatne get their information. Walvatne mentioned Facebook, group chats, etc. Dunn mentioned neighbors' group chats. Ortman mentioned the struggles with communication. There is no one sure place to put a notice where everyone will see it. Once we are in the tools how do we pique the interest by someone who is there? Gehred stated we could set a Facebook post at the very least. Maybe then have a follow-up post. Minutes are hard to read because there is a lot there. Maybe consider an executive summary which could be printed and on the table as people walk in. Make sure the Mayor has one and reads it so as people walk in at least he knows. Maybe we give them to Council members. We could write the paragraph before we leave on the most interesting things we discussed tonight. Ortman asked about giving an instruction on summarizing the highlights on the meeting and posting it. Tumas stated that maybe we move this to the end of the agenda and summarize the meeting. Ortman stated it could be called Communications: Prepare Summary of Meeting for Public Release.

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

Tumas had agreed to help prepare the County Sustainability chapter. She mentioned the Eco-Municipality Natural Step and the Native American draws on Sustainability which is key in our region. She will cogitate on the sustainability mission statement. She needs to have a draft to Wiley a week before the meeting. She saw a flyer on the County's plan at the library and it had a good graphic and was very helpful. Ortman stated that this will be a standing committee so Tumas can finish some elements soon and continue working on others. He and Gehred thanked Tumas. Tumas stated that the WI Climate Action Network would be meeting in Ashland in June or July. It is not a general public event. WI-CAN is run by the Office of Sustainability, Climate, and Energy. Ortman and George Bussey invited Tumas to work on the Chapter as members of the Comprehensive Planning Committee. Gehred asked if there was currently a Sustainability Chapter in the plan. Ortman answered no. Tumas mentioned that Lissa Radke is another member of the Committee. She is working on integrating the ideas into the other chapters so that work is happening. Ortman stated presentation is important. He recommends optimizing understanding and connectivity. We have to prepare this for everyone out there. Tumas is trying to keep it simple. Ortman encouraged Dunn and Walvatne to attend meetings. Tumas stated action is not needed now.

c) Potential Grant/Funding Opportunities – Beth Gehred

Gehred stated she does have some grant opportunities and passed them out. The Associated Bank Corporate Contributions would be in the tens of thousands. #2 is a Little Ashland Monday Club that has met for a long time. We can point to the grassroots nature if we get this one. There is a Kwik Trip Kares Foundation. We have three Kwik Trips. She would rather we come up with a project we want to do. There is also the Energy Innovation Grant program. That one is large and she might ask Erica Hannickel for help on it. We do not have resources or authority to apply on our own. We get done what we can get done. This is meant to show that there might be funding we can recommend to the City we would like to go after. Tumas stated that we just finished the micro grid assessment. We want to ensure our grant writer knows about the Energy Innovation Grant and that study at the same time. Gehred stated there might be funding to hire a person. Ortman asked for clarification on capital campaigns. Wiley explained the process. Ortman stated that any grants that could be supportive of the solar and micro-grid assessment would be valuable. The savings on solar could pay the interest on the loan. Then it is a wash. Pick one of the solar opportunities (maybe the least expensive). We would like to be able to go to Council and say here is X amount in grants. We could have someone do the math and get some dollar values. If we can get that bank statement we can prepare a presentation to the City Council. If any of the Committee members want to do that Ortman would be grateful. Tumas clarified that this would involve presenting to the Council the information Wiley presented and the data on funding and savings. Gehred stated sometimes writing the grant and asking to do something works. Ortman knows Council is supportive of renewables. Gehred stated we would need to be approved to apply for the grant. Then decide who is going to write the grant, then it is go. Ortman stated maybe we present the costs without grants, then present costs with grant funding. The Committee asked Wiley to go back to Jolma and get hard costs. Ortman asked who muGrid was. Wiley answered that muGrid is a subconsultant that has

engineers which helps Jolma on many projects. Gehred stated that Bad River for being small has done a great job on solar. Ashland is behind. Bad River works with Bill Bailey and muGrid. Ortman asked if the tribe has a written plan we can look at and copy. Gehred stated that they do. Ortman asked if there were federal grants to help municipalities switch to renewables. Gehred answered affirmatively. Gehred asked who writes grants for the City. Wiley stated that the Departments do. Ortman stated that the next step is to find the numbers. Wiley will do that. We need to make the financial argument. We will tell them how much it will cost to do it and how much savings. What actually is needed to make it happen and implement? What can we expect for payback without grants. Tumas asked if any space would have enough room to serve as a shelter. Wiley stated that he believed so. Gehred stated this could open projects up for emergency funding.

d) Sustainable Purchasing Policy – Discussion

Ortman stated we can copy Northland's policy. Tumas stated Northland had an electronics policy and paper purchasing policy. They came out of the Northland Sustainability workgroup. The paper policy was to push for more recycled paper. There was a timeline. Starting out 30% was to be recycled paper. In 5 years 85% would be recycled paper. The policy would be reviewed by a workgroup on a yearly basis. There would be a report on the paper that we purchased and the committee could review it. Northland purchased paper by ordering it through Staples. Ortman asked if Wiley could run these by the City Clerk and see what she thinks. Gehred asked about reducing paper use at all. Tumas stated that they did not go down that avenue because professors had strong opinions on their teaching styles and did not want to be told how much paper to use. Tumas suggested putting into the policy some annual event that talks to City staff about reducing waste. Ortman mentioned the annual retreat. Tumas stated that having bins with scrap paper could be helpful. Gehred asked if this was something we were interested in looking into more. Wiley will talk to the City Clerk. Julie Vaillancourt would know if there is a place we can pull data on paper purchasing from the budget. Ortman was at a conference when a purchasing policy came up. Gehred asked for electronics if we have a policy. Wiley is not aware of one. Tumas stated the policy examples do not mention recycling at all. Gehred asked if there was a central purchaser for electronics. Wiley answered IT was. Gehred asked Wiley to put the draft policy in front of IT.

e) City Solar Opportunities – Discussion

The Committee discussed this earlier and did not have additional discussion.

f) Committee Opinion on Data Centers – Discussion

Ortman mentioned coming up with an ordinance proactively. We want to ensure data centers would not wreck stuff. Gehred asked if we can invite our citizens to the table. Walvatne mentioned the Hermantown situation and under the table things happening. NDAs were signed. He is not sure what rules are in place to not let this happen. He thinks there has been a conflict of interest between people making decisions. Ortman stated that they had a conflict of interest as soon as they signed the NDAs. They should not vote and they should resign. Gehred stated a lot of activity happens behind closed doors. This is really common. We protect the developers' interests at the expense of open government. Ortman stated that closed session meetings have to follow a strict set of rules and you can challenge them anytime. Ortman stated many

- people on the County Board and Council do not educate themselves on restrictions. Gehred stated that the real problem is the AI. AI is being driven totally by the capitalists who will benefit at the expense of the rest of us. It was pushed without being approved or voted on. Ortman asked if we want to do something about AI or data centers. Gehred stated she would like to keep discussing it. Tumas stated the Ashland School District just kicked off their tech committee. Gehred stated that the AI is being called generative but has not broken that barrier. It is a really good search engine. Ortman stated it was more like regurgative in nature. Tumas asked what the next action steps would be after we develop a more fleshed out opinion. Ortman thinks an ordinance might be better coming from the County. Walvatne mentioned a moratorium is one of the biggest things he has seen. Ortman stated that the Legislature has pre-empted cities on many things. If we have a sample ordinance it would not take long to create a draft. Wiley explained the process for a moratorium. Ortman suggested we have a sample ordinance and sample moratorium prepared. Dunn asked if we were the only Sustainability Committee in the County because of our population or because of political leanings. Ortman believed because of our population we are the largest and have the most room to improve. Tumas asked if we should bring this back as a discussion/action item. Ortman asked if Wiley wants to bring a sample moratorium. Wiley stated he knows of Madison's and could bring it.
- g) City-owned EV Charging Stations
Ortman mentioned the City would be turning them over to BART. Tumas asked if BART would take and move them or keep them as is. Wiley is not sure. Gehred asked for this to go into the summary. Gehred asked where we were at. Wiley has to follow up. Gehred asked on the timeline for this and whether the grantor would be fine with it.
- 5) Staff Updates
Wiley updated the Committee on the Vision apartments, deep water boat launch, beautification efforts/America in Bloom, code enforcement, permitting, and ongoing Sustainability/data collection efforts.
- 6) Future agenda items
Place Communication at the end. It can be called "Prepare a Summary of Meeting for Public Release."
- 7) Adjournment
Ortman asked for a motion to adjourn. Tumas moved and Gehred seconded. The meeting adjourned at 7:55 pm.

Recorded by:

Steven Wiley
Planning and Development Director

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

Vision

A sustainable Ashland County is carbon-negative, contains clean air, water, and soil, boasts plentiful protected biodiverse terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, and maintains thriving economies, supportive services, and flourishing cultural opportunities for all.

What Is Sustainability?

Sustainability is a form of community development that balances the wellbeing of current generations with those in the future, though it can be defined differently in other contexts. Though the term ‘sustainability’ was first used in the environmental movement in 1972, the concept had been widely discussed and utilized for hundreds of years. Importantly, the concepts underlying sustainability are derived from the Seven Generations Principle that has long been practiced by many Native American tribes.

In 2005, the city of Ashland, WI officially became an Eco-Municipality and adopted the Natural Step Principles of sustainable development. These principles are intended to provide more concrete guidance on implementing sustainable development in communities. They can be summarized¹ by four goals:

1. Reduce dependence upon fossil fuels
2. Reduce dependence upon synthetic chemicals and other unnatural substances
3. Reduce encroachment upon nature (land, water, wildlife, forests, soils, etc.)
4. Better meet human needs fairly and efficiently

Importantly, an eco-municipality sees the above sustainability principles as integral to the work of government and applies participatory approaches to implementing them.

Why Plan for Sustainability in Ashland County?

[this section not yet drafted; these are just ideas for an outline]

¹ Karon, Jan. Ashland, WI and Duluth, MN become Sustainable Cities. November 2005, Newsletter of the Duluth Public Policy Alliance.
https://web.archive.org/web/20110903103742/http://www.afs.nonprofitoffice.com/index.asp?Type=B_BASIC&SEC=%7B2E02B44E-ED9D-4C45-B7C7-A670267AE29A%7D&DE=%7B037A8207-109E-46C0-B083-E96FD3882316%7D

- 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 Objectives

- Support clean air quality through reducing vehicle emissions, preserving greenspaces, and setting strict industrial siting guidelines.
- Encourage restorative agricultural practices through technical assistance and financial incentives:
- Support clean water by reducing stormwater runoff and managing invasive species.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

Recommended Sustainability Action Steps

- Support expanded public transit. [BART]

- Plan for bike lanes and pedestrian paths. [Tourism, Highway]
- Cluster development near utility services and community hubs to reduce vehicle miles travelled.
- Promote mixed-use zoning to support residents living, working, and shopping in the same area.
- Develop a comprehensive trail plan and identify funding sources. [Tourism, Highway, and Forestry]
- Develop and implement a countywide plan for supporting zero-emissions and alternative fuel vehicles, including siting of charging and filling stations. [Highway, Tourism, BART]
- Identify critical ecosystem corridors that provide air cleansing and protect their ecosystems. [LWCD]
- Promote no-idling policies near buildings, especially those occupied by children.
- Prioritize attracting low-emissions industries and businesses; use zoning to direct heavily polluting industries away from residential areas.
- Collaborate with counties, communities, and tribes in the region on emissions-reduction strategies.
- Direct local UW-Extension offices to focus resources on soil health monitoring, cover crop field trials, and rotational grazing workshops. [UW-Ext]
- Partner with local agricultural organizations to establish county-sponsored demonstration farms where producers can see restorative techniques working under local climate conditions. [UW-Ext, LWCD]
- Encourage county facilities (jails, schools, hospitals) to source a portion of their food from local farms utilizing restorative practices.
- Lease county-owned, non-forested lands to beginning farmers who commit to regenerative or organic production methods.
- Create streamlined permitting processes for on-farm activities like farm stands, educational workshops, and value-added processing, which help regenerative farmers diversify income.
- Update local ordinances to explicitly protect restorative practices (e.g., on-farm composting, silvopasture, and multi-paddock grazing) from nuisance complaints.
- Adopt localized conservation payment programs that reward farmers for measurable environmental outcomes, such as reduced nitrogen runoff or carbon sequestration. [LWCD]
- Supplement federal and state grants (like the USDA's Regenerative Pilot Program) by providing matching funds for local farmers transitioning to no-till, cover cropping, or rotational grazing. [LWCD]
- Implement preferential property tax assessments for working lands managed under conservation practices, such as managed grazing or agroforestry.

- Preserve undeveloped buffer zones by assigning scientifically-formulated setbacks based upon past recession rates, soil types, bluff slopes and heights, vegetation management, and surface water flows.
- Plan for potential extreme weather and natural hazard impacts to waste and water treatment plants in the county.
- Implement and fund “Slow the Flow” sediment reduction projects in collaboration with neighboring counties. [LWCD]
- Develop/implement a county aquatic invasive species (AIS) plan.
- Maintain and restore ecologically functioning forests and wetlands in headwaters areas.
- Establish baseline estimates of forested land areas in the county and their associated benefits (carbon storage, ecological functions, etc.)
- Encourage the development and adoption of sustainable management strategies that improve forest productivity, diversity, health, and vigor.
- Reduce the potential for carbon loss from human-caused and natural disturbances, including land conversion, wildfire, insects, and disease.
- Promote practices and projects that increase carbon sequestration on working lands, such as perennial crops, rotational grazing, and agroforestry.
- Provide assistance, guidance, and incentives to landowners for habitat improvements on private lands.
- Ensure adequate and mapped public access to County-owned lands to accommodate demands for hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing.
- Identify remaining broadband and cellular “deserts” and work with providers to bring service to those areas.
- Collaborate with renewable energy providers and consultants to identify projects suitable for funding through grants or creative solutions to overcome upfront costs and realize long-term savings.
- Develop a baseline estimate of renewable energy generation and energy-associated carbon emissions from County operations.
- Promote energy-saving practices in all County operations.
- Create solar-friendly zoning codes.
- Encourage future land use planning exercises considering large-scale solar application locations.
- Develop a map of County-owned potential community resilience centers.
- In County-owned buildings, convert all HVAC, hot water heaters, windows, and building insulation to highly efficient models.
- Identify grant programs or other funding mechanisms to replace all HVAC systems older than 20 years in County-owned buildings.

- Plan, design, and construct transportation improvements that respect the natural environment and reflect the aesthetic character and values of the citizens of Ashland County. [Highway Dept.]
- Develop a County-wide plan to address senior isolation.
- Develop a best practices guidance document detailing opportunities for county support of schools, libraries, and municipal and tribal human services programs.
- Coordinate with Bad River Tribe to support cultural programs that preserve heritage, language, artifacts, archaeology, and other cultural resources.
- Support and promote museums and cultural and interpretive centers.
- Develop a list of eligible or registered historical places in Ashland County.
- Incorporate cultural and historical values into land use and development decisions.
- Protect tribal treaty rights on ceded territory areas of Ashland County.

Implementation Strategies

[this section not yet drafted; these are just ideas for an outline]

- Costs
- Partners
- Funding opportunities
- Timeline

Metrics and Tracking

[this section not yet drafted; these are just ideas for an outline]

- Ideally, there would be at least one quantitative metric for each proposed goal; this section may be better developed through regular review by the Comprehensive Planning Committee

NORTHLAND COLLEGE

POLICY: Sustainable Electronics Purchasing Policy	POLICY NUMBER: [POLICY NUMBER]
RESPONSIBLE DEPT: IT Department	APPLICABILITY: STUDENTS ☐ FACULTY ☒ CONTRACTED SERVICES STAFF ☒ ALL ☐
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.

NORTHLAND COLLEGE

POLICY: Paper Purchasing Policy	POLICY NUMBER: [POLICY NUMBER]
RESPONSIBLE DEPTS: BUSINESS OFFICE, ACADEMIC AFFAIRS OFFICE, MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS	APPLICABILITY: STUDENTS ☐ FACULTY ☐ CONTRACTED SERVICES ☐ STAFF ☐ ALL ☐
OWNER: SUSTAINABILITY WORKGROUP	EFFECTIVE DATE: 6/1/2020
	LAST REVIEW: MM/DD/YYYY
REFERENCES:	NEXT REVIEW: MM/YYYY
APPROVAL:	APPROVAL DATE: MM/DD/YYYY

PURPOSE

Purchasing office paper products that are made of post-consumer recycled content or agricultural residue, and are certified sustainable by third parties, is in line with the mission and values of Northland College. Using products made of recycled content promotes a market for recycled materials, and reduces environmental and land use impacts. Purchasing paper without recycled content contributes to greenhouse gas emissions in the SIMAP greenhouse gas emissions inventory, so purchasing recycled paper is one of many efforts towards carbon neutrality.

DEFINITIONS

- Post-consumer recycled content- content recycled by the end user and used as an input in making new paper
- Agricultural residue – residues left over from food production or other processes including straw, stalks, or other fibers.
- Forest Stewardship Council- an independent non-profit organization which certifies paper products
- Multi-use office paper – standard copier paper
- Other office paper products- specialty papers, non-standard sized paper, post it notes, stationary, glossy paper for publications

POLICY STATEMENT

Northland College will purchase paper with post-consumer recycled content or with a third party sustainability certification.

POLICY

1. All multi-use office paper purchased by the College shall contain **at least 30% post-consumer recycled, or agricultural residue** content. By 2025 the post-consumer recycled or agricultural residue content of office paper will reach 85%, as measured by cost.
2. Paper must also be certified to meet sustainability standards of one or more of the following: Forest Stewardship Council, Chlorine Free Products Association, or Sustainable Forestry Initiative.
3. All other office paper products purchase by the college will contain post-consumer recycled or agricultural residue content if the option is available.

PROCEDURES

1. This policy will be reviewed annually by the Sustainability Workgroup.
2. All parties responsible for paper purchasing will utilize this policy as a guideline for selecting multi-use paper products and other office paper products.
3. The Business Office will supply paper purchasing data annually each fall to the Sustainability Workgroup for 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.

DRAFTER'S ANALYSIS: This proposed ordinance creates a temporary moratorium on issuance of zoning certificates for data centers and telecommunications centers of more than 10,000 square feet of floor area. Data centers are facilities, contained within a single building or in a collection of buildings, used primarily for the storage, management, processing, and transmission of digital data, which primarily houses computer or network equipment, systems, servers, appliances and other associated components related to digital data operations. The facility may also include utility infrastructure to support sustained operations at the data center. Currently, Madison's zoning code (MGO Chapter 28) does not include a definition or specific standards for 'data centers' as a use category. In MGO Chapter 28, 'telecommunications centers' is a category that has historically encompassed this type of business but is outdated.

A moratorium is a planning tool that will give the City time to set responsible rules for a new use category. While our community and economy benefit from data storage, research studies and observations in other communities show that certain large-scale data centers may pose a significant strain on energy, water use, emergency services, traffic, noise, air quality and urban development challenges that require planning and consideration. Without a zoning regulation that reflects current best practices to responsibly manage this use, the construction of new data centers may affect property values, the implementation of the City's long-range land use plans, and be detrimental to the public health, safety and general welfare. Therefore, a twelve (12) month moratorium is necessary to research and establish well-informed, consistent zoning and/or regulatory standards applied to data centers and telecommunications centers.

The moratorium will allow the City of Madison agencies, including the Office of the City Attorney ("OCA") and the Department of Planning and Economic Development ("DPCED"), to research best practices and safeguards, including creating a definition of data centers, and other use types if needed; identify the specific planning and development considerations relevant to our community for the responsible operation of data centers in the future; and propose potential standards. Agencies may assess fiscal impacts, including long-term City of Madison service and infrastructure costs for policymakers' considerations. Additionally, a twelve (12) month moratorium will allow the City of Madison to gain insights from the newly created Dane County Advisory Committee on Data Centers for the purposes of regional coordination.

The Common Council of the City of Madison do hereby ordain as follows:

1. Section 28.140 entitled "Temporary Moratorium on Data Centers and Telecommunications Centers" of the Madison General Ordinances is created as follows:

"28.140 TEMPORARY MORATORIUM ON DATA CENTERS AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS CENTERS.

- (1) Declaration of Moratorium. A temporary moratorium is hereby declared with respect to the issuance of zoning certificates for data centers and telecommunications centers, as a principal and primary use, when they have a floor area greater than 10,000 square feet contained within a single building or collection of buildings.
- (2) Statement of Purpose. The purpose of the moratorium is to provide the City of Madison with adequate time to assess the impacts and secondary effects of data centers and telecommunications centers and promote meaningful development and implementation of Madison General Ordinances with regard to both. The moratorium is necessary to protect the health, safety and general welfare of the City of Madison residents, businesses and visitors.

- (3) Authority. The City of Madison relies on the authority granted pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 62.23(7)(am) and all other sources of authority that authorize the adoption of this ordinance.
- (4) Duration of Moratorium. This moratorium shall be in effect for twelve (12) months following the effective date of this ordinance or until an amendment to this chapter related to data centers and/or telecommunications centers is adopted and takes effect, whichever is earlier.
- (5) Direction to Develop Data Centers Ordinance. During the period of this moratorium, the Office of the City Attorney (“OCA”) and the Department of Planning, Community and Economic Development (“DPCED”), in consultation with relevant City agencies, are directed to draft an ordinance providing comprehensive and appropriate regulations of data centers and telecommunications centers to protect the public health, safety and general welfare of City of Madison residents, businesses, visitors and the public. It is the intention of the City of Madison Common Council to amend Chapter 28 of the Madison General Ordinances to adopt an ordinance pertaining to data centers and telecommunications centers before the expiration of this moratorium.
- (6) Subjects of Consideration. In preparing an amendment to this chapter or a separate ordinance related to data centers and/or telecommunications centers, the OCA and DPCED shall review the possible impacts that these uses may have on the health, safety and general welfare of the residents, businesses, visitors and general public in the City of Madison. The OCA, DPCED and relevant agencies shall also consult with other municipalities, experts, stakeholders, and relevant available studies and research pertaining to effective municipal regulation of data centers.
- (7) Definitions. For the purposes of this moratorium only, the following definition shall be established for data centers. Additionally, for the purposes of this moratorium, the previously adopted telecommunications center definition (below) in Sec. 28.211 shall be utilized.
 - (a) Data Center. A facility whose primary and principal use is for the storage, management, processing, and transmission of digital data, which houses computer or network equipment, systems, servers, appliances and other associated components related to digital data operations. The facility may also include air handlers, power generators, water cooling and storage facilities, utility substations, and other associated utility infrastructure to support sustained operations at the data center. Data centers may also contain accessory office uses necessary to monitor and manage sustained operations at the data center.
 - (b) Telecommunications Center. An office facility that is responsible for transmission, receipt, acceptance, processing, and distribution of incoming and outgoing communications.
- (8) Nonconformities. During the duration of the temporary moratorium, existing telecommunications centers greater than 10,000 square feet in floor area shall be nonconforming uses in accordance with Sec. 28.191 and therefore may undergo structural repairs or structural alterations to the building or structure provided they do not exceed fifty percent (50%) of the total assessed value of the building or structure.
- (9) Exceptions. The Temporary Moratorium established in this ordinance shall not apply in the following circumstances and the City may accept, process and, if appropriate, approve zoning certificates for the following type of work:
 - (a) Data centers or telecommunications centers that serve another principal use allowed on the zoning lot.

2. Table 28D-2 entitled “Mixed-Use and Commercial Districts” of Section 28.061 entitled “Mixed-Use and Commercial Districts Uses” of the Madison General Ordinances is amended by amending therein the following:

“Table 28D-2.

Mixed-Use and Commercial Districts									
	LMX	NMX	TSS	MXC	CC-T	CC	RMX	THV	Supplemental Regulations Sec 28.151
Retail Sales and Services									
Sporting goods store, bait shop	P	P	P	P	P	P	P		
Telecommunications center					P	P			Y
Tobacco retailer		P	P	P	P	P	P		Y”

3. Table 28F-1 entitled “Employment Districts” of Section 28.082 entitled “Employment District Uses” of the Madison General Ordinances is amended by amending therein the following:

“Table 28F-1.

Employment Districts							
	TE	SE	SEC	EC	IL	IG	Supplemental Regulations Sec 28.151
Limited Production, Processing and Storage							
Storage facility, personal indoor storage					C	C	Y
Telecommunications center	C	C	P	P	P	P	Y
Warehousing and storage	C	C			P	P	

4. Section 28.151 entitled “Applicability” of the Madison General Ordinances is amended by creating therein the following:

“Telecommunications Center. Shall comply with Sec. 28.140, MGO.”

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Title:

Creating Section 28.140 to establish a temporary Temporary moratorium on the consideration and/or issuance of zoning certificates for data centers and telecommunications centers pending enactment of a zoning ordinance to address these uses and protect the public health, safety and welfare of City of Madison residents and amending 28.061, 28.082, and 28.151 to accommodate the temporary moratorium.



PREPARED FOR THE PLAN COMMISSION

Proposal: Zoning Text Amendment

Legistar File ID #: [91135](#) (Moratorium on Zoning Certificates for Data Centers & Telecommunications Centers)

Prepared By: Zoning and Planning Staff

Background and Purpose

This proposed ordinance creates a temporary moratorium, for up to 12 months, on the issuance of zoning certificates for data centers and telecommunications centers with a floor area greater than 10,000 sq.ft. as a principal and primary use. This is achieved both by issuing a moratorium on the issuance of zoning certificates (zoning approvals) for these uses, as well as by adding a supplemental regulation to the zoning code where telecommunications centers are currently an allowed use to reference the moratorium language.

A moratorium is a planning tool that will give the City time to set responsible rules for a new land use category. While our community and economy can benefit from data storage, research studies and experience from other communities show that certain large-scale data centers may pose a significant strain on energy and water use, emergency services, traffic, noise, air quality and urban development challenges that require planning and consideration. Without a zoning regulation that reflects current best practices to responsibly manage this use, the construction of new data centers may impact the implementation of the City's long-range land use plans, affect property values, or be detrimental to the public health, safety and general welfare. A moratorium is necessary to research and establish well-informed, consistent zoning and/or other local regulatory standards to be applied to data centers and telecommunications centers.

The moratorium will allow the City of Madison agencies, including the Office of the City Attorney ("OCA") and the Department of Planning and Economic Development ("DPCED"), to research best practices and safeguards, including creating a permanent definition of data centers and/or creating or updating other use types if needed; identifying the specific planning and development considerations relevant to our community for the responsible operation of data centers in the future; and proposing potential zoning or other local ordinance standards for the operation of these uses within the city. It is anticipated that this will involve consultation with other municipalities, experts and stakeholders; include a review of relevant available studies and research pertaining to effective municipal regulation of data centers; and provide opportunities for public participation. Additionally, a 12-month moratorium will allow the City of Madison to gain insights from the newly created Dane County Advisory Committee on Data Centers for regional coordination.

Scope of Moratorium

Moratorium on New Data Centers or Telecommunications Centers

This ordinance pertains to zoning certificates for new data centers or telecommunications centers of greater than 10,000 sq.ft. in floor area within the City of Madison. Currently, Madison's zoning code (Madison General Ordinance, Chapter 28) does not include a definition or specific standards for 'data centers' as a use category. In MGO 28.211, the 'telecommunications centers' use has historically encompassed this type of business but is outdated given the evolving nature and range of data centers across the US and in Wisconsin.

For the purposes of this temporary moratorium, data centers are defined as “a facility whose primary and principal use is for the storage, management, processing, and transmission of digital data, which houses computer or network equipment, systems, servers, appliances and other associated components related to digital data operations. The facility may also include air handlers, power generators, water cooling and storage facilities, utility substations, and other associated utility infrastructure to support sustained operations at the data center. Data centers may also contain accessory office uses necessary to monitor and manage sustained operations at the data center.” (MGO 28.140) For the purposes of this moratorium, telecommunications centers are defined as they currently are in the zoning code, as “an office facility that is responsible for transmission, receipt, acceptance, processing, and distribution of incoming and outgoing communications.” (28.140 and 28.211)

This moratorium does not apply to data centers or telecommunications centers that serve another principal or primary use allowed on the zoning lot.

How the Moratorium will be Administered

All new uses are required to receive a zoning certificate (zoning approval) before they can occupy land, a tenant space, or an entire building. The effect of this moratorium is that no zoning certificates can be granted for new principal use data centers or telecommunications centers over 10,000 sq.ft. in floor area. Because zoning approval is required before a building permit may be issued for any new use of a building or tenant space, the moratorium will also mean that no building permits or certificates of occupancy will be issued for new principal use data centers or telecommunications centers if they are over 10,000 sq.ft. in floor area. The floor area measurement includes only the space occupied by the data center or telecommunications center principal use. It does not include other tenant spaces in a building that are separate principal uses.

The zoning code establishes a series of zoning districts and identifies allowable land uses and development standards for development within each district. Each district includes a list of permitted uses and conditional uses allowed within the zoning district. Permitted uses are reviewed by City staff and zoning certificates are issued for applications meeting the ordinance requirements. Conditional uses additionally require review and approval by the Plan Commission before a zoning certificate can be issued.

In the zoning districts where telecommunications centers are currently allowable, the use is often a permitted use and any such application for the use would be reviewed and approved at a staff level. These districts include the Commercial Corridor-Transitional (CC-T), Commercial Center (CC), Suburban Employment Center (SEC), Employment Campus (EC), Industrial-Limited (IL), and Industrial-General (IG) districts. The use is also allowed as a conditional use, requiring Plan Commission approval, in the Traditional Employment (TE) and Suburban Employment (SE) districts.

In some instances, development proposals, including some permitted uses that will ultimately be reviewed at a staff level, include requests to rezone property from one zoning district to another. The moratorium will not prohibit the rezoning of property, including to a zoning district that may currently allow a telecommunications center. However, following any potential approved rezoning, as long as the moratorium is in effect, zoning certificates will not be issued for new data centers or telecommunications centers over 10,000 sq.ft. in floor area in these zoning districts.

It is possible that zoning certificates were issued for telecommunications centers under prior iterations of the City’s zoning code, which may have handled the use differently than the current ordinance, or properties may

have been located in different zoning districts at the time a use was established, thus creating lawful nonconforming uses that may be operating today.

Maintenance of Existing Facilities

During the duration of the temporary moratorium, legally existing telecommunications centers will be lawful nonconforming uses in accordance with MGO Sec. 28.191. As such, these facilities may continue to operate in accordance with previous approvals as long as they are not discontinued for a period of 12 months or more. Additionally, these facilities may undergo structural repairs or structural alterations to the building or structure provided such repairs/alterations do not exceed 50% of the total assessed value of the building or structure.

This moratorium does not impact data centers or telecommunications centers that serve another principal or primary use on a zoning lot, unless such facilities are expanded or altered in such a way that would cause them to become a separate principal or primary use. Expansions or alterations that would cause these facilities to be considered a principal or primary use in excess of 10,000 sq.ft. shall not be permitted.

Duration

This moratorium shall be in effect for 12 months following the effective date of the temporary moratorium ordinance or until an amendment to Chapter 28 related to data centers and/or telecommunications centers is adopted and takes effect, whichever is earlier. The moratorium will apply to new applications for data center or telecommunications center principal uses received after the effective date of the ordinance amendment.

Violations

As mentioned above, ordinary maintenance and repairs of existing establishments are allowed, as long as the repairs do not increase the assessed value of the building or structure by more than 50%.

Violations of this temporary moratorium are violations of the City's zoning code and will be enforced by the Building Inspection Division and Office of the City Attorney through Municipal Court.

Non-Zoning Approvals, Benefits and Impacts

While zoning approvals are a prerequisite to the establishment of a business and securing other types of permits, licenses, or other approvals by the City, this temporary moratorium only impacts the issuance of zoning certificates.

It is the intention of the City to amend Chapter 28 to create appropriate land use and zoning standards for data center uses. It is anticipated that in its efforts to develop such standards, the City will identify information and receive feedback that relates to the benefits of or impacts resulting from data centers that do not pertain directly to land use or to standards that are permissible to regulate in the zoning code. Where these issues address the City's long-term objectives, are not covered by other applicable City or State laws or policies and relate to other permissible municipal regulatory authorities in Wisconsin, other complementary local ordinances may also be recommended for consideration.

Background on Current Data Centers in the City

The City does not keep a list of land use approvals going back in time, so learning of existing data centers can only be sourced from institutional staff knowledge or other information that can be discovered from public searchable data. In an initial, high-level review of possible data centers that currently exist within the City,

staff found two that would likely meet the new definition of data center under the moratorium and would not be able to be newly established under the temporary moratorium if over 10,000 sq.ft. in floor area.

Address	Name	Zoning District	Approximate Floor Area
4916 E. Broadway	Dane County Data Exchange 1	Industrial Limited (IL)	75,000 sq. ft.
315 W. Mifflin	AT&T Building	Urban Mixed-Use (UMX)	unknown

The City is aware of some additional businesses that may be operating data center functions either below this threshold, in such a way that does not meet the new data center definition, or as part of another principal land use. Additional research into the range of existing data centers will be conducted during the moratorium in support of forthcoming ordinance proposals.

The City of Ashland's Sustainability Committee invites interested homeowners to investigate new programs from a Focus on Energy that offer thousands of dollars in incentives for solar panels, heat pumps, insulation, and HVAC upgrades. Highest payouts are directed to low- and moderate-income households to allow nearly everyone to participate.

Wisconsin offers two major federal Home Energy Rebate programs based on a household's income as defined by the program:

- **Home Efficiency Rebate (HOMES):** Targets whole-home retrofits to reduce energy usage by at least 20% through insulation, air sealing, or high-efficiency HVAC. Rebates range from 50% to 100% of project costs, with maximums between \$1,500 and \$10,000 depending on the household's income.
- **Home Electrification and Appliance Rebates (HEAR):** Designed to offset the purchase of qualifying efficient electric appliances, such as heat pumps, heat pump water heaters, and electrical panel upgrades. Rebates cap at \$14,000 for low-income households and \$7,000 for moderate-income households.

Important Details & Deadlines

- **Deadlines:** Applications for heating and cooling rebates (purchased and installed between Jan 1 and Dec 31, 2026) must be submitted within 60 days of installation, and no later than August 31, 2026.
- **Contractor Requirements:** You must work with registered, participating independent contractors to qualify for many of these rebates.
- **Stacking:** These rebates cannot be stacked with other federal dollars on the same project.

Next Steps

1. **Find a Contractor:** Use the Focus on Energy Trade Ally Locator (found on the Focus on Energy website here <https://focusonenergy.com/trade-allies>) to find a qualified installer near you.
2. **Verify Income:** Check the Focus on Energy webpage (<https://focusonenergy.com/ira-hear>) to check if your household income meets the criteria for HOMES or HEAR programs.
3. **Submit Applications:** Apply for your heating, cooling, and insulation rebates via the portal.

The Sustainability Committee is also playing matchmaker between area people interested in being trained as Assessors or local electrical companies wanting further engagement with this program to build capacity for program impact in the area. If interested in learning more, contact City of Ashland Sustainability Director, Steven Wiley at XXX or Charlie Ortman, Chair, at XXX.