

Environment Committee

Purdue Northwest 2200 169th St, Hammond, IN Student Union Library Building
May 7, 2026

Minutes

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

George Toppoll called the meeting to order at 9:05

In attendance: Katie Hobgood, Save the Dunes; Kathy Sipple, Earth Charter Indiana; Cathy Perrin, Highland Neighbors for Sustainability; Connie Wachala, Highland Neighbors for Sustainability; Jenny Dmitroff, Porter Sustainability; Megan Mech, Drive Clean Indiana; Ryan Lisek, Drive Clean Indiana; Chandra Viswanatha, Purdue Northwest; Jenny Beier, NIRPC; Nancy Moldenhauer, Michigan City; George Topoll, Union Township; Eric Bird, Porter County

NIRPC staff present were Kathy Luther, Meredith Stillwell, and Jen Birchfield

Meeting Minutes – February 5, 2025

Katie Hobgood moved to approve the minutes. Ryan Lisek seconded. The minutes were approved.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

NIRPC Environmental Project and Program Updates NWI 2050+ Update, Region Profile – draft Environmental Performance Measures

-Kathy Luther, Director of Environmental Programs

Questions and discussion

- Kathy Sipple asked how many square miles are affected? 4,671 acres.
- George Topoll asked how people can find out about properties. Kathy said we are determining “where are we now”. Next let’s look at the zoning and make sure it matches.
- Add legends to the maps
- Michigan City is pursuing grants to clean up known brownfield sites.
- Suggestions were made to check the protected lands slide table, to move light green over dark green on conservation connections, and to add wetlands and lakes to the protected riparian corridors.

- How does farmland and synthetic turf factor in, is turfgrass distinguished from natural plantings?
- Look up climate mayors for sustainability performance measures.
- How does it compare to Indiana clean communities? That program is more regulatory but may overlap.
- Should we have a sustainability program for school districts?
- Is the area developed over time tied to population? Is it unincorporated or adjacent to cities?
- Schnieder has to report tons of garbage and recycling to IDEM to get recycling credits.

Update on Strategies for Brownfield Redevelopment and Quantum Technology

-Celena Green, Economic Recovery Corps

Questions and discussion

- Technology changes like data centers should be incorporated into planning. Efforts. Could NIRPC make a template of best practices and perhaps hold workshops for planning departments?

Planning Partner Updates

- Drive Clean Indiana
 - Ryan gave an update on Drive Clean Indiana projects.
- Lake Michigan Coastal Program
 - Not present

Announcements

- NWI Green Drinks is tonight. The topic is the Building Bird Habitat at Home landscaping guide
- Kathy Sipple is doing a plant smart, do your part pollinator program May 9 at the Michigan City Senior Center.
- The Next EMPC Meeting is scheduled for August 6th, at 10:00 am at NIRPC.

10.0 Adjournment