

CITY OF NORWALK
AD HOC SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCE COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES – APRIL 8, 2026
VIA ZOOM VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

ATTENDEES: Johan Lopez, Jan Degenshein, Brian Bailey, Richard Dellinger, Josh Goldstein, Anne Wennerstrand, Jesse Buccolo, Broderick Sawyer.

STAFF: Jodi Trendler.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Lopez called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. on April 8, 2026, and welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Sustainability and Resilience Committee.

II. ROLL CALL

Mr. Lopez called roll call and confirmed a quorum.

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr. Lopez opened the public participation portion of the meeting. Ms. Diane Lauricella provided public comment, stating her name and address for the record. Ms. Lauricella addressed several items on the agenda, expressing support for converting the ad hoc Sustainability and Resilience Committee into a permanent committee of the City Council. She referenced past advocacy for an environment-related committee to address issues such as toxic waste and air quality. Ms. Lauricella discussed the importance of environmental management for the health and welfare of the city and noted that the time had come for the committee to become permanent given current climate and policy contexts. She advocated for a charter change to increase the number of council members due to the workload on existing volunteers. Ms. Lauricella shared that she had been a student of environmental management in the city for 35 to 40 years, currently serves as co-chair of the Waste Subcommittee of the Sustainability Task Force, and was one of the original members of the Mayor’s Energy and Environmental Task Force started by Harry Rilling in 2014. She offered to share her resources on the topic and welcomed any council members to contact her for conversations. Mr. Lopez thanked Ms. Lauricella. Mr. Lopez confirmed there were no additional public comments.

IV. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

A. Regular Meeting: March 11, 2026 Mr. Lopez called for acceptance of the minutes from the regular meeting of March 11, 2026.

Mr. Dellinger noted one correction on page 4 regarding the reference to the “5th Annual Norwalk Birthday Festival,” which should instead reference the Earth Day Festival. Mr. Buccolo noted that his name was misspelled on page 4.

****MR. RICHARD DELLINGER MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MARCH 11, 2026, REGULAR MEETING AS CORRECTED.**

****THE MOTION PASSED WITH ONE ABSTENTION FROM MR. BAILEY. THE MINUTES WERE APPROVED AS CORRECTED.**

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Sustainability and Resilience Task Force Update Ms. Trendler reported that progress continues with the task force and provided a major update regarding collaboration. Ms. Trendler was invited by the new manager for the Aspatuck Land Trust in Norwalk, who is organizing regional and community-wide environmental groups for collaboration. This aligns directly with the vision of the natural resources task force. The Aspatuck Land Trust manager has agreed to take on the coordinating role to maximize collaborations across community groups for the natural resources section.

Ms. Trendler noted that city members Alexis Kirgetti, Sarah Cruz, Johan, and Misha Oliver were also present at the meeting, along with representation from five or six different groups, with more to be added. This initiative is forming as an amazing collaborative effort. Ms. Trendler stated that this matches the original vision set for all sectors of the task force to bring community organizations together for collaboration and to maximize efforts. The task force is preparing for Earth Day with a table featuring demonstrations, surveys, and email collections. Teams are currently developing surveys to expand community outreach, as the task force currently has approximately 60 members. Surveys will begin at Earth Day with a distribution plan to reach the community more broadly, possibly through additional events or by attending existing ones. The full task force meeting is scheduled for next week, at which point all teams should have their recommendations completed. Ms. Trendler will compile all recommendations and meet with department heads to align internal city efforts with community efforts and create the full plan map. The teams will look for funding mechanisms for the recommendations by May 1st, with final write-ups targeted for the first week of May. Ms. Trendler will send each sector's write-ups to council members for review. A full discussion is targeted for the June 10th task force meeting, after which revisions will be incorporated and the plan will move to Council. Ms. Trendler noted that formalizing the committee would be helpful once the plan is approved and reviewed. Mr. Lopez thanked Ms. Trendler .

Ms. Wennerstrand commended the impressive achievement of convening and sustaining 60 community members on the task force, noting the passion in the group and the leadership required. Mr. Buccolo asked for clarification on whether the Aspatuck Land Trust would lead one of the working groups under the task force. Ms. Trendler confirmed that they would. Mr. Buccolo stated that this was fantastic news and would help with the longevity of the plan, especially given unknowns about the department and role, by tying organizations to the work.

Lopez asked Ms. Trendler to remind the public of the purpose of the recommendations. Ms. Trendler explained that the update is for the Sustainability and Resilience Plan done in 2024 and that the recommendations identify specific actions to lead to measurable, targeted reductions in emissions, with greenhouse gas emissions as the primary metric. All recommendations will have metrics and KPIs for improving sustainability factors within each sector, covering the three

pillars of sustainability: environmental, human, and economic. Ms. Trendler stated that the report defines what the “greenest city” means with numbers to measure and track progress and will be aligned with and adopted to attach to the POCD for integration across operations.

B. Energy Programs Update Mr. Lopez provided a quick update on the energy programs. The solar program that was launched previously is ongoing, and the Heat Smart program was just launched. Mr. Lopez is working with the vendor on the solar program and has sent a quality control survey to participants to gather feedback on the process. Five responses have been received so far, all positive. The survey aims to ensure the program is viable for consideration next year and to identify any improvements. The Heat Smart program letter from the mayor was mailed to 3rd Taxing District and SNU customers, announcing and explaining the program. Twelve responses were received on the day people would have gotten the letter, and responses have been positive. The targets are 50 solar installs and 100 participants in the Heat Smart program, which includes weatherization and heat pumps. Mr. Lopez encouraged any homeowner council members to sign up for heat pumps before funding is gone and noted that participants will at least receive several hundred dollars worth of weatherization from the assessment. The next phase of the mailing will go to Eversource customers once capacity is confirmed. The mayor will record a promotional video for social media during Earth Day week as another reminder. Mr. Lopez asked for any questions or comments. Mr. Buccolo confirmed he received the mailing. Mr. Dellinger asked if there would be any extension for the solar program, which ends May 31st. Mr. Lopez stated that the decision on continuation or pausing until next year would be made at the beginning of next month and welcomed any feedback.

C. Ad Hoc Sustainability and Resilience Committee Formalization Discussion Mr. Lopez led a discussion on whether to formalize the committee by converting it from an ad hoc advisory committee to a more formal committee with greater legal authority. One option discussed was defining a limited set of thresholds or types of items for the committee to review. Mr. Lopez noted pros and cons would be provided in an ongoing document referencing what other cities have done. The discussion assumed scenarios such as staffing changes and considered who would serve as staff support.

Mr. Buccolo asked for clarification on the differences between what an ad hoc committee can do versus a permanent committee, including pros and cons. Mr. Lopez explained that ad hoc committees are created for a specific intended purpose, such as producing the Sustainability and Resilience Plan draft, and do not have legal authority to vote on contracts. Pros of formalization include more direct influence on environmental sustainability matters by council members, consistency, standardizing sustainability criteria across departments, and providing an institutional signal that sustainability is core to governance. Cons could include legal complexities.

Mr. Bailey stated that he views the committee as very important for opining on critical policy and advising the council but questioned what specific contracts it would oversee and whether that would become messy or overlap with existing committees, given that many things impact the environment and sustainability. He expressed general support for making it a permanent committee in a policy-shaping role, provided voices would be heard and incorporated. Mr. Buccolo agreed with Mr. Bailey and expressed concern that formalizing might be preemptive

given the six-month grant-funded role extension, noting cross-functioning departments and the need for guaranteed staffing and department support to ensure the work continues in perpetuity. He stated that once funding clarity is obtained, it would make more sense to solidify the committee.

Mr. Goldstein supplemented background on the two ad hoc committees formed after the 2021 election, noting the broad mandate in the council handbook for the Ad Hoc Sustainability and Resilience Committee to advise on initiatives including but not limited to clean energy, resilience, and conservation efforts. He explained that standing committees align with city departments, while ad hoc committees like this one and the Housing Committee continue as important policy and advocacy bodies. Mr. Goldstein emphasized the importance of strategic objectives, goals, and scope, noting that plans must be executed upon and not left on the shelf. He suggested focusing on specific accomplishments such as developing a stormwater authority and maximizing the tree canopy per the Tree Master Plan, using the committee as a place to track progress on priorities like monthly tree planting goals.

Ms. Trendler responded to questions about observed benefits of formalizing such committees, noting that they serve as a tracking and accountability mechanism to prioritize actions, ensure follow-through, and prevent plans from sitting on the shelf. Ms. Trendler highlighted that the upcoming sustainability plan will provide an overarching framework aligned with the POCD and deepen integration across departments. Ms. Trendler pointed out critical missing pieces in city operations, particularly the lack of a department handling community-wide energy transition to meet net-zero goals by 2050 under the Global Covenant of Mayors, and noted that city buildings represent only a minuscule portion of emissions.

Ms. Wennerstrand asked if other Connecticut municipalities have dedicated energy departments or sustainability departments separate from Public Works. Ms. Trendler confirmed that in the ones she knows of, energy efforts fall under sustainability departments. Ms. Trendler, Mr. Buccolo, Mr. Bailey, Mr. Goldstein, and Ms. Trendler discussed the need for integration without adding bureaucracy, avoiding duplication of efforts such as monthly tree reports from DPW, and ensuring accountability while not interfering with other committees.

Mr. Lopez stated that she, the Vice Chair, and Ms. Trendler would prepare information, examples, and case studies for review and discussion at a future meeting, including how the committee would function with cross-departmental work. Mr. Dellinger expressed anticipation for the sustainability plan update and suggested having chairs of the different task force groups report out on their subgroups' progress once the plan is received. Mr. Lopez confirmed next steps would include compiling research and adding the topic to a future agenda.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

****MR. SAWYER MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.**

****THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Courtney Baldwin
Recording Secretary