

**CITY OF STEVENS POINT
SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION MINUTES
March 5, 2026 - 5:30 PM
Community Room
933 Michigan Avenue, Stevens Point, WI**

Opening Section:

1. Roll Call.

PRESENT Heather Phelps, Doug Stingle, Robert Michitsch, Greg Knight, Ald. Sam Lang - District 9 (by ZOOM), and Ald. Allison Burr - District 5.

OTHERS PRESENT **Speakers:** Susan Schuller, Executive Director and Rylee Mullikin of Recycling Connections.

2. Persons who wish to address the Sustainability Commission on specific agenda items must register their request at this time.

No one wished to address the Commission on specific agenda items.

3. Persons who wish to address the Sustainability Commission on non-agenda items must register their request at this time.

No one wished to address the Commission on specific non-agenda items.

Discussion and Possible Action on:

1. To approve the Minutes of the February 5, 2026, Sustainability Commission Meeting.

Robert Michitsch **moved**, Ald. Burr **seconded**, to approve the Minutes of the February 5, 2026, meeting.

Call for the Vote: Ayes: **All**
 Nays: **None**, Motion **Carried**

2. Presentation and discussion with Susan Schuller, Executive Director and Rylee Mullikin of Recycling Connections on the City's downtown recycling program.

Background on Recycling Connections:

- Founded in 1981 through a grassroots effort in Stevens Point to provide curbside recycling.
- Played a key role in the establishment of local recycling infrastructure prior to the 1990 Wisconsin recycling law.
- Shifted focus over time to include education, statewide leadership, waste reduction initiatives, and zero-waste services.

Downtown, Main Street corridor garbage & recycling study:

- Evaluate the current waste and recycling material found in trash bins and the bin locations in the downtown Main Street corridor.
- Develop recommendations to improve recycling access and diversion rates in the Main Street corridor.
- UWSP students participated in collecting data for this recycling study.

Current Main Street corridor garbage bins:

- 35 City garbage bins; 15 are caged bins, and 20 are concrete, artist-painted bins.
- There are no public recycling bins in the Main Street corridor.
- Garbage collection occurs on Mondays and Thursdays.

UWSP Students waste Characterization study:

- Conducted by UWSP Students with City approval.
- Trash was collected from sampled bins on March 11, March 25, and April 8.
- Trash waste was categorized into 12 material types.
- Key finding: Approximately 25% of downtown waste consisted of recyclable bottles and cans.

Additional study visual assessments:

- Conducted on August 24, September 7, and September 21.
- Focused on identifying high-use and low-use trash bins.
- Highest-use bins are located around the square, bus stops, and near Frame Park.

Study recommendations:

- Focus recycling efforts on bottles and cans only to minimize recycling bin contamination.

- Convert existing trash bins into 20 paired garbage and recycling stations.
- Repaint existing black trash cages to blue for recycling, fabricate 5 additional cages for recycling use.
- Use clear, consistent bin labeling and imagery to identify recycling bins.
- Pair the garbage and recycling bins to improve proper use.
- Maintain existing collection routes and Monday/Thursday schedule.
- Monitor bin overflow and recycling bin contamination during collection.
- Perform bin maintenance, including repainting and label upkeep.
- Recycling Connections can assist the City with monitoring and evaluation during implementation.

Expected outcomes:

- Divert an estimated 25% of downtown waste into recycling.
- Improve the City's sustainable image and visibility.
- Support downtown businesses and community events.
- Align with Stevens Point's sustainability goals and Green Tier Legacy Community designation.

Discussion and questions:

- Past downtown recycling was discontinued due to contamination issues associated with mixed recycling.
- Simplifying recycling of bottles and cans is expected to improve participation and reduce contamination.
- Liquids remaining in bottles may limit recyclability, but do not damage processing equipment.
- Residential recycling participation in Stevens Point was noted as strong.
- Commissioners expressed interest in future expansion to organic and food-waste diversion from garbage. There may be future state rules for cities to reduce organic and food waste going into landfills because of methane emissions.

3. Discussion of the Sustainability Commission 2026 meeting calendar updates and new information for future meeting topics and presentations. Information on the April 2nd Commission facilitated a working meeting to begin developing a sustainability plan road map.

Review of upcoming meeting calendar:

- April 2nd Sustainability Commission Meeting; facilitated the planning process and brainstorming session. The meeting will be facilitated by Katie Livernash, UW Extension Community Development Educator, and Caity Carmody, Department of Administration Office of Sustainability.
- Purpose: Begin outlining a 2026 Sustainability Commission report.

