



CITY OF NOVI
Environmental Sustainability Committee Meeting
January 7, 2026, 5:30 p.m.
Mayor's Conference Room | Novi Civic Center | 45175 Ten Mile Road
(248) 347-0445

CALL TO ORDER: 5:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Council Members Gurumurthy, Heintz, and Smith

STAFF LIAISON: Katherine Oppermann, Assistant to the City Manager

ALSO PRESENT: Rebecca Runkel, Project Engineer
Robb Harper, My Green Michigan
Zac Spector, My Green Michigan

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion: Heintz; Seconded: Gurumurthy; Approved: 3:0

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – September 23, 2025, Minutes

Motion: Gurumurthy; Seconded: Heintz; Approved: 3:0

REMARKS FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

Chairperson Smith stated that he can't believe that it has been since September that they last convened this Committee. He is looking forward to getting back to work. He then turned the meeting to the first order of business, welcoming the representatives from *My Green Michigan*.

MATTERS FOR COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

1. Food Scrap Collection Discussion with *My Green Michigan*

Mr. Harper introduced himself and spoke on his background and the beginnings of *My Green Michigan*. He worked as an economist and ran the local Edible Wow! Magazine ahead of it being bought out and then was brought on to *My Green Michigan*. He loves working on their variety of programs and has no interest in retiring. He stated that he was raised in the ethos of "leave it better/cleaner than you found it", composting is a messy business but that knowing what they keep out of landfills and the atmosphere makes all the difference. It's an exciting company and he is happy to discuss it further with the Councilmembers, he also encouraged them to talk to their peers in other organizations already utilizing the *My Green Michigan* services.

Councilmember Heintz said that he thinks that composting food is a great, achievable goal to approach that doesn't have too much upfront cost beyond the service fee.

Chair Smith asked what cities *My Green Michigan* was already working with and Mr. Harper responded Ferndale, Royal Oak, Lansing, Portage, Farmington, Canton, Meridian Township, Sterling Heights, St. Clair Shores, etc. He said that funding can sometimes be challenging for small communities but that they encourage a tiered approach. In Farmington they started with just one bin, but the program has been so popular, so they are now up to fourteen bins. He further stated that in his experience the main concern people have are cleanliness (concerns about smells, vermin, etc.) but that they have a variety of means to attend that including compostable bags, sealed trucks, portable bin washing, winter bin swapping if needed (the washing cannot be performed in winter). Mr. Spector said that the operation is highly customizable for the City. They can start with one bin with the option to add more bins and/or more locations as needed or desired. Food Waste in landfills is a huge problem, and this is the easiest approach to combat it.

Councilmember Gurumurthy asked if there was a phased approach, and if there is a study that helps the City determine need and placement. Mr. Harper said yes, they do a situation analysis to help determine where to place bins, the best way to maneuver in and out, and more. They are very hands-on in their approach. He also spoke on an Earth Day assembly they did at an elementary school in Livonia to show the full process from breakfast leftovers to rich compost, including vermiculture worms which the kids really enjoyed. This kind of event creates excitement and provides knowledge so that they can be proactive and involved. Mr. Spector also briefly spoke on commercial uses of the system, such as restaurants having shared bins between them. Mr. Harper also shared their experience in Farmington at the farmers' market where they were present for the entire 1st month to speak with people and educating them on the process and being sure they knew what could and couldn't go in the bins. They want to be involved in education to ensure program success. Councilmember Gurumurthy agreed that she thinks the education process is very important. She wants to be sure residents understand the full process, alleviate any cleanliness concerns, ensure as few contaminants in the bins as possible, etc. She asked if they recommended education or implementation first. Mr. Harper said that they encourage implementation alongside advertising and education. Mr. Spector said that education is often clearer when they have the tangible example. They also said that teaching area students is a great part of the program because they can then bring that information and education home to their families. Typically, families start with a 5-gallon bucket, like the type that can be bought at area hardware stores, as they are fairly smell proof, they also encourage the use of compostable liners since it improves cleanliness and ease.

Ms. Runkel asked if communities typically fence in the bin area, Mr. Spector said it is location dependent. She also asked about how they handle contaminants. Mr. Harper said that, if feasible, they remove it but too much contaminant means a batch cannot be used. He also said that they keep close track of such things and can implement fixes or further education if needed. They have a dash that provides data on a number of factors like any issues, where drivers are, and how much they are keeping out of landfills.

Councilmember Heintz said that he wants an appropriate start for the program that can be sold to the rest of the City Council and residents as a pilot. They will need the

hows and costs of potential expansion but wants to know what they would suggest for the 1st year. Mr. Spector said that there is the old adage of “crawl, walk, run” and would encourage their approach be much the same. He suggests two or three locations be selected with two bins each to start. Councilmember Heintz suggested that they might consider the Civic Center and Lakeshore Park to ensure they are covering both the north and south sides of the city. He then asked about costs. Mr. Harper and Mr. Spector said that the exact figure would be included in a proposal but as a “zone 3” the monthly rate for two bins would be approximately \$190, and 4 bins \$268, there are also option costs of cleaning and changing liners, which they can also include in a quote. This would put the cost of service at less than \$5,000 for a year. Councilmember Heintz requested that recommendations from other cities also be included along with the quote. Mr. Harper and Mr. Spector agreed, noting that they can provide several testimonials and test cases. They also noted that the proposed would be a monthly service agreement, not a hard contract, and that if necessary they could “pull the plug” on the program at any time, that said, they are confident that they can be a lasting presence – they have only ever lost a customer when the customer themselves goes out of business.

Councilmember Gurumurthy asked what the ask of city staff will be in the program, beyond being contact points and passive monitors or the site(s). Mr. Harper said that would be all. Chair Smith confirmed that to start all we really need a concrete pad a collection truck can pull up to. Councilmember Heintz said that he is very excited to get started and is looking forward to receiving their proposal.

The committee then spoke briefly on the potential of such a program in interesting other businesses to take part and that it could be an economic draw, especially if they implement a green business recognition program. The creation of a toolkit was also mentioned as was the opportunity for the Committee members to visit the compost processing facility in Wixom, as well as a the “circular process” that would allow residents to buy back compost.

Chair Smith stated that they want to make sure that if they go forward with the program that it wins. Councilmember Heintz agreed and spoke on his excitement to get started.

REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS

The Committee would like to work on establishing a monthly standing date/time for their meetings.

It was also suggested that they should make a trip to see a *My Green Michigan* setup in one of the surrounding communities and that they would like to connect with MSU Tollgate.

They would like to aim for a Q2 composting pilot program rollout.

PUBLIC COMMENT – none

ADJOURNMENT: 7:02 p.m.

Motion: Heintz; Seconded: Gurumurthy; Approved: 3:0