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DRAFT February Meeting Minutes

**SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION
THURSDAY
FEBRUARY 26, 2026**

**HYBRID MEETING
STAFF CONFERENCE ROOM
AND MICROSOFT TEAMS
211 WEST ASPEN AVENUE
4:30 P.M.**

Vision: The City of Flagstaff is a culture and community that thrives in response to the Climate Crisis.

Mission: To advise Sustainability Division Staff on matters related to climate and sustainability, support community projects through Flagstaff Sustainability Grants, and provide feedback to the City Council on sustainability issues.

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Wolkowinsky called the meeting to order at 4:30 P.M.

2. **ROLL CALL**

NOTE: One or more Commissioner may be in attendance through other technological means.

AMY WOLKOWINSKY - CHAIR (Present)

COMMISSIONER KRISTEN KONKEL (Present, entered 4:36 P.M.)

MARY METZGER - VICE CHAIR (Present)

COMMISSIONER TOM LAMMIE (Present)

COMMISSIONER CAMERON CARLSON (Present)

COMMISSIONER RODGER SCURLOCK (Present)

Also Present:

Blake Seals, Minute Taker

Jenna Ortega, Climate Program Manager

Diane Bridger, Sustainability Specialist

Erik Neilson, Chief Sustainability Officer of Northern Arizona University

Jordan Hess, CEO Mountain Line of Missoula, Montana

Tyler Means, Chief Mobility & Strategy Officer of The Kansas City Area Transportation Authority (KCATA)

Austin Aslan, Councilmember

Jacki Lenners, Marketing & Communications, Planning, and Customer Service Department of Mountain Line in Flagstaff

Heather Dalmolin, CEO & General Manager of Mountain Line in Flagstaff

Greg Ryan, Community Member

Samuel Noble, Community Member

3. **LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

The Sustainability Commission humbly acknowledges the ancestral homelands of this area's Indigenous nations and original stewards. These lands, still inhabited by Native descendants, border mountains sacred to Indigenous peoples. We honor them, their legacies, their traditions, and their continued contributions. We celebrate their past, present, and future generations who will forever know this place as home.

Vice Chair Metzger read the Land Acknowledgement.

4. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

At this time, any member of the public may address the Commission on any subject within their jurisdiction that is not scheduled before the Commission on that day. Due to Open Meeting Laws, the Commission cannot discuss or act on items presented during this portion of the agenda. To address the Commission on an item that is on the agenda, please use the Teams Chat function: simply type in "public comment" to indicate to the Chair that you would like to comment. The Chair will then recognize you when it is time for public comment, and staff will unmute your microphone if needed.

Erik Neilson introduced himself. He then described upcoming propositions for biomass power generation or ground source heat pumps at Northern Arizona University. He stated the timeline for a decision is approximately 18 months in the future, but he wanted to bring this to the attention of the Commission as there is potential for divided opinions in the greater Flagstaff area regarding public perception of logging trucks traveling through town. He stated if both methods are deemed equal, he would support biomass power generation as this route would allow NAU to meet their carbon neutrality goal, get forced resilience, and support the local logging and restoration economy.

5. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

[View the draft January 2025 minutes here](#)

Commissioner Lammie motioned to approve the minutes. Chair Wolkowinsky seconded. All approved and the January minutes were approved.

6. **BUSINESS**

A. **[Commission Appointments Overview & Schedule](#)**

[Diane Bridger, Sustainability Specialist Information only.](#)

Commissioner Born accepted a position with the City of Flagstaff Water Services and thus he is no longer eligible to serve as a Commissioner.

Commissioner Konkell announced that this is her last meeting as she is retiring from the Commission.

Mrs. Bridger announced there are two open positions; Chair Wolkowinsky's and Commissioner Scurlock's positions are up for renewal. These positions will be filled at the following Tuesday's City Council meeting.

City Management and Council will be reviewing all town ordinances, so the Council has been asked to refrain from putting forward new ordinances until further guidance is provided.

B. **[Mountain Line Flagstaff Overview](#)**

[Heather Dalmolin, CEO and General Manager Information Only.](#)

Heather Dalmolin introduced herself, and Jacki Lenner then described the importance of public transit. Her presentation focused on the conversation surrounding reducing or eliminating fares. She stated that fare reduction improves driver safety and increases equitable access for customers, amongst other benefits. She then presented concerns of fare reduction. These concerns included the perception of the public, the increase in riders using transit as shelter, bus capacity limits, staffing, etc. Mrs. Dalmolin shared staff recommendations which emphasized securing external funding sources to expand transit programs to make services more frequent and convenient, as well as expand the reduced fare program.

Mrs. Dalmolin described the current state of Mountain Line which is to remain focused on implementing improvements and expand the reduced fare program. Mountain Line also aims to study if "fare-free" is financially sustainable with current commitments in [Proposition 488](#). Commissioner Carlson stated that there is a fare-free line on Northern Arizona University campus stops. Mrs. Dalmolin confirmed that is true as there is a funding agreement where NAU pays 50% of the operating costs for that route. She then stated going fare-free could jeopardize that source of funding against the 1.4 million dollar yearly operating costs. Mrs. Dalmolin elaborated on the costs of operation.

C. **[Mountain Line Missoula Overview](#)**

[Jordan Hess, CEO and General Manager Information Only.](#)

Jordan Hess introduced himself and gave a brief background on the City of Missoula Mountain Line, including their fare-free pilot program. He stated the services they offer include twelve fixed routes, ADA Paratransit Service, Shuttle Van for riders over age 60, Zero fare access, and more.

He drew commonalities between Missoula Mountain Line and Flagstaff Mountain Line, including budget and size of service area. Vice Chair Metzger asked what is the population of Missoula to which Mr. Hess replied the City has a population of 80,000.

He then went on to describe the Zero Fare program, which began as a pilot program in 2015 with investing partners to secure funding to support it. This program prompted a 40% increase in riders; as a result, voters made the Zero Fare Program permanent. He stated benefits such as safety improvement for operators, reduced dwell time (the time a bus is stopped at a bus stop), and improved air quality to meet sustainability goals. He stated cons such as an increase in destination-less riders and exposing other societal issues. Logistical and social challenges prevent the possibility of once again charging fares, and so he encouraged other transportation organizations to fully understand the outcomes of removing fares from transportation when making the decision. He also described a consequence of increased rider demand leading to issues in meeting the demand of Paratransit riders.

Vice Chair Metzger inquired if there were more maintenance needs to the bus fleet which Mr. Hess responded that there are negligible maintenance needs as some aspects of the buses are no longer needed to be maintained such as the fare equipment.

Mr. Aslan asked how difficult would it be to introduce fares again, to which Mr. Hess responded he did not have an ideal answer, but he elaborated that the most difficult aspect would be the small portion of riders that would create

challenges by increasing conflict with staff.

Commissioner Lammie asked about the ratio of non-destination riders. Mr. Hess explained that they have changed policies in response to non-destination riders to discourage that behavior, but there is a greater positive impact of occasional riders becoming more frequent riders.

Commissioner Konkel inquired how social problems that were exposed through the Zero Fare program were addressed in local government. Mr. Hess responded that there was increased awareness, but those issues have not been substantially addressed yet.

D. [The Kansas City Area Transportation Authority \(KCATA\) Overview](#)

[Tyler Means, Chief Mobility & Strategy Officer](#)
[Information only.](#)

Chair Wolkowinsky introduced Tyler Means. Mr. Means described the Kansas City area, a brief history of the KCATA, and the Fare-Free program KCATA provides starting in March of 2020. A consequence of removing fares was for KCATA to lose various funding sources, resulting in reliance on COVID funds. Mr. Means stated their COVID funds have been exhausted leading the KCATA to look for funding elsewhere, including the possibility of returning to charging fares. Mr. Means encouraged Flagstaff Mountain Line to be intentional with securing funding for future sustainability of the program. He described new challenges, such as social issues coming onto the bus (for example, illicit drug usage and an increase in bed bug infestation incidents). He stated there was a loss of funding from Medicare as riders were no longer providing their Medicare status due to fare being free. He stated a benefit was an increase in ridership.

E. [Fare Free Program Panel Discussion](#)

[Amy Wolkowinsky, Commission Chair](#)

[Information and Discussion.](#)

Chair Wolkowinsky inquired how the Kansas City bus system has been funded since the loss of funding partnerships. Mr. Means responded that COVID funds supported the increase in costs.

Vice Chair Metzger asked if some routes could remain free while others have fares. Mr. Means responded that has not been analyzed, however the organization had partnerships that did cover fares for certain locations.

Commissioner Lammie asked if there was a long history with public transportation. Mr. Means responded the city originally had streetcars which were then removed by General Motors in the 1960s and replaced with buses.

Commissioner Carlson asked if there was any data on climate impacts during the fare-free time period. Mr. Means replied that the small percentage of public transportation users did not impact climate offsets significantly. Mr. Hess also answered that he did not have great data on climate impacts from increase in ridership.

Commissioner Konkel inquired if there are public transport organizations that offer "pay-what-you-can". Mrs. Dalmolin replied it is common to pay by distance traveled rather than flat fees for certain public transport applications, but she is not aware of any sliding-scale or pay-what-you-can options in public transportation. She then went on to elaborate that most public transit authorities focus on increasing equitable access for their programs. Mrs. Lenner stated choosing a route to be fare-free would raise equity issues. This question prompted a further conversation on fare evasion and its impact on public transportation.

Chair Wolkowinsky shared her appreciation to all of the panelists.

Commissioner Carlson asked about the cost to install a credit card payment machine if it is decided to continue charging fares in Flagstaff. Mrs. Dalmolin responded Mountain Line is procuring new fare collection systems and a large consideration is additional fees from utilizing credit cards. She did not have a direct answer to the question.

Vice Chair Metzger asked if Flagstaff Mountain Line has considered offering fares for \$1 instead of \$1.25. Mrs. Dalmolin responded that yes, they have looked into it.

Councilmember Aslan asked what the public perception of voters would be if Flagstaff Mountain Line offered farefree service. Mrs. Dalmolin replied there would need to be a new source of funding as the Transit Tax has been voted on to be allocated in specific ways such as improving services, and thus it could not cover the operational cost to go fare-free. She then went on to describe how policy is implemented within the Mountain Line organization. She emphasized Mountain Line is not a Taxing Authority and instead it is a Co-op. She stated that ultimately City Council would determine how funds are used. She stated she does not anticipate that going fare-free is currently the right solution for the Flagstaff community, as other work to make public transit competitive with cars needs to be done before the implementation of a fare-free program.

Commissioner Lammie inquired about the possibility of having a park and ride program targeting tourists to remove cars from the downtown areas, and mentioned the impacts of going fare-free on a perceived reduction in safety. Mrs. Dalmolin replied Mountain Line is now transporting the Flagstaff Unified School District (FUSD) High School Students within city limits and stated that for this program to be effective, the perception of safety is

important to convince the community to utilize that service.

Commissioner Carlson asked if there are incentives to increase riders on public transportation. Mrs. Dalmolin encouraged the Commissioners to research [Proposition 488 on the Mountain Line Website](#). She continued to say the role of Mountain Line is to educate on their priorities.

F. [Upcoming Volunteer Opportunities Overview](#)
[Diane Bridger, Sustainability Specialist](#)
[Information and Discussion.](#)

Mrs. Bridger encouraged the Commission to access [Volunteer Flagstaff](#) for volunteer opportunities with the City of Flagstaff and to sign up for the Sustainability Office newsletter as monthly volunteer opportunities are advertised therein. She presented on several cleanup events and stated the Sustainability Office is in the planning phase for the 2026 Earth Day event; she asked if the Commission would be interested in tabling at the event as they have done in the past. Vice Chair Metzger and Commissioner Lammie volunteered to table at the Earth Day Event.

G. [Monthly Division Report Review](#)
[Diane Bridger, Sustainability Specialist](#)
[Information only.](#)

Mrs. Bridger presented on the Sustainability Office Monthly Report. She highlighted the launch of the [ADU Model Plan Library](#), that the NEVS team engaged with 655 volunteers in January, and that social media engagement is at roughly 10,000 people per post.

H. [Sustainability Showcase Planning](#)
[Diane Bridger, Sustainability Specialist](#)
[Discussion.](#)

Mrs. Bridger said the Sustainability Showcase will be on March 26th from 4:30 to 6:30 P.M. She said nine of the eleven awardees have confirmed their attendance at the event and then went through the event schedule. Vice Chair Metzger shared the challenges of crowd table rotation flow, to which Mrs. Bridger responded she will provide participants with their starting table number and direction of flow. Chair Wolkowinsky expressed concern about posting the showcase on social media as the event space is small.

Mrs. Bridger then asked for help with showcase needs. Commissioner Carlson volunteered to do the Sam's Club food pickup. She requested 5-6 volunteers to help the set-up process. Chair Wolkowinsky and Commissioner Scurlock volunteered to staff the check-in table. Vice Chair Metzger volunteered to staff the food tables along with a Sustainability Office staff member.

Mrs. Bridger asked if there was additional information she should be aware of for this event. Councilmember Alsan encouraged the procurement of a larger space for next year's Showcase. Mr. Neilsen stated there is potential to partner with Northern Arizona University to host the event on campus. Councilmember Alsan suggested other City of Flagstaff sites. Commissioner Konkel expressed concern on event parking if the event is hosted at NAU to which Mr. Neilsen responded event parking is now encompassed in the event planning process to make it more accessible. Mrs. Bridger said she will research a venue change.

Commissioner Carlson encouraged Mrs. Bridger to advertise public transportation options for participants to take to the Showcase.

8. **TO AND FROM - ALL**

Mr. Neilsen encouraged the Sustainability Office to post events on the AXE of Service program, where every Northern Arizona University employee can do 16 hours of paid community volunteering per calendar year. As an add on statement to the earlier discussion about fare-free programs in Flagstaff, Mr. Neilsen shared his desire for fare-free options for students to incentivize first-year students to not bring their cars.

Commissioner Carlson reiterated takeaways to advocate to City Council from the earlier discussion panel held during the meeting regarding transit. Chair Wolkowinsky suggested creating a small working group to provide updates on public transportation, and the Commission indicated the desire to continue the conversation with Mountain Line. This prompted further discussion on possible partnerships to fund Mountain Line to support Fare-Free programs and the reduction of cars downtown.

Commissioner Scurlock suggested a program to salvage bikes from the landfill to repair and distribute. He said he will comment to City Council as a community member to address this.

9. **FUTURE AGENDA ITEM REQUESTS**

1. Discuss a plan of action regarding public transportation.

Commissioner Konkel requested that Commissioners share with her any volunteer or other opportunities for her students to participate with the work of the Commission or sustainability (this was an ongoing invitation to the Commission, rather than a future agenda item request).

10. **ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Wolkowinsky motioned to adjourn the meeting. All agreed and the meeting was adjourned at 6:34 P.M.

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