



## **Middletown Sustainability Commission**

Sustainability: “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (United Nations)

**Regular Meeting—January 26, 2026**

**7:00 p.m.**

**Meeting held virtually via Webex**

**Members Present:** Stephan Allison, Nicole Charles, Brian Gomez, Izzy Guy, Rebecca MacLachlan, Jen Smith, Leslie Spatola, Kelly Sweeny, Krishna Winston, John Yarmolovich, Tisha Zawisky

**Staff:** Lisa Liesener

**Also Present:** Jean Chatfield, Eleanor Nettleton, Tom Swarr

**Guests from Secure Energy:** Erin Bissonette, Chad Brodeur, Alfonso Terrentino

### **I. Call to Order**

The Chair, K. Winston, called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

### **II. Acceptance of Minutes**

The Chair inquired if there were any additions or corrections to the minutes of the November 24, 2025 meeting. There being none, the Chair declared the minutes accepted.

### **III. Presentation by Secure Energy consulting firm**

L. Liesener introduced the three-person team. K. Winston reminded the Commissioners and the guests that an invitation to address the Commission did not imply any commitment on the part of the City to employ the firm. A. Terrentino noted that the firm had enjoyed a long relationship with the City, working between 2009 and 2020 on energy procurement. Sharing his screen, C. Brodeur explained the energy-tracking services the company could provide to a client. Using energy bills compiled and “cleaned” by a vendor, and data from meters installed by utilities or the client, the firm could create a wide range of reports on its BUDA (Build Utility Data Analytics) platform, reports determined through consultation with the client to be useful. Spikes in usage or consistent usage that deviated from the norm; changes occasioned by weather or by work or occupancy patterns; individual anomalies; and many other conditions requiring the client’s attention could be identified. Data for individual sectors—such as schools, Public Works, administrative buildings, etc.—could be broken out for analysis. At the client’s request, specific alerts could be built into the reporting. E. Bissonette commented that regular monitoring of the bills could pick up expensive waste, as had happened when Secure Energy noticed that a certain town was still receiving estimated energy bills from the utility for a building that had been demolished a year and a half earlier.

L. Liesener asked how this data-tracking might interact with the City’s use of the Energy Star Portfolio. C. Brodeur replied that the portfolio functioned well and should remain in use, but his firm could

streamline the method for entering data. Further discussion included questions on using the data for forecasting expenses for budgeting purposes and goal-setting, measuring actual performance over time against goals, and opportunities for regularly scheduled check-ins as well as extra check-ins as needed. At the end of the conversation, the consultants indicated that typically the data-tracking would be bundled with other services and in that case would be provided free of charge. The Chair thanked the presenters for a very enlightening session.

#### **IV. Public Comment**

There were no public comments on agenda items.

#### **V. Continuing Business**

##### **A. Update on search for Public Works Director and Deputy Director**

L. Liesener reported that with Robert Russo as acting Director and Brian Gartner recently appointed as acting Deputy Director she had congenial colleagues guiding the affairs of the Department. She had no updates on the reopened Director search, and Commissioners Spatola and Sweeney had no further insights to provide.

##### **B. Sanitation District Waste**

L. Liesener reported that with the end of the Save As You Throw Program, the District's waste no longer needed to be sorted, and was therefore being sent to Berlin's CWPM facility rather than the one in Southington. Once a contract with Murphy Road for MSW-handling was approved by the Common Council, the City would truck its waste to the transfer station on Middletown's Industrial Park Road, saving fuel and wear-and-tear on its vehicles, reducing emissions, and obtaining a favorable rate of \$115/ton.

The question of how to divert food waste from the MSW to avoid having it transported to landfills in Ohio remains to be answered. Various options under consideration included curbside collection, siting of additional drop-offs, and utilizing small-scale composting operations, but it would be important to ascertain residents' views, provide effective education, and take neighborhoods' characteristics into consideration. L. Liesener predicted that mandatory diversion of food waste was likely to be legislated at the State level in the not-too-distant future. The City would do well to get ahead of such a requirement. Commissioners expressed the view that residents should not have to pay for collection of food scraps. A financial incentive for reducing MSW was the new availability of a smaller, 35-gallon, trash cart. J. Chatfield recommended holding workshops on food-scrap diversion and asked how the schools were handling their food waste. L. Liesener explained that the schools had carts for food-preparation scraps but not for scraps and leftovers from the cafeteria. She and the Organics-Diversion Working Group would be seeking to change practices in the schools. Further discussion focused on squirrels and other animals that opened or chewed their way into plastic carts and containers, and ways to prevent this problem.

In response to a question, L. Liesener confirmed that weekly recycling had been in effect in the Sanitation District since November. She had indications that residents welcomed the more frequent collections, but to date not enough data had been collected to confirm a reduction in MSW tonnage. Current tip fees for single-stream recyclables were not much lower than for trash, but any capture of

recyclable materials was positive. J. Smith offered to promote drop-offs and recycling in the condominium and apartment complexes in Westfield.

### **C. Engagement with City Departments**

In consideration of the already full agenda, the Chair proposed leaving the engagement discussion for the next meeting. She urged the Commissioners to review the November minutes and give thought to the departments with which they would engage and the approach they would take. She proposed that although the budget process would soon be consuming much of the department heads' time, the Commission should forge ahead.

## **VI. New Business**

### **A. "Nips" surcharge funding**

L. Liesener reminded the Commission that her previous position, as part-time Waste Reduction and Litter Assistant, had been funded with revenue from the surcharge. Currently a temporary employee occupied that position, but the funds, approximately \$60,000/year, should not be spent solely on salary. Other possible uses included technology for waste reduction, compost bins, and the like. She urged the Commissioners to send her suggestions, which she and the Chair would discuss and put on the agenda for the February meeting.


### **B. Meeting with RiverCOG planners on a regional waste authority**

The Chair urged the Commissioners and members of the public to attend the meeting, scheduled for February 5 at the Library, and to fill out the survey on waste management that would close on January 31. She mentioned possible waste-management projects that regional collaboration might make possible: siting of an anaerobic digester for organic materials; establishment of a static aerated composting facility; and specialization among transfer stations as to the source-separated materials they collected.

## **VII. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Krishna Winston, Chair