

COOL CITIES COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES

January 26th, 2026

Goldstein called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm. The following members were present and answered roll call: Goldstein, Martin, Page and Collins.

Also Present: Senior Planner, Caitlin Rice and Carol Frerker, Superintendent Willoughby Farm

SPEAKERS FROM THE FLOOR

N/A

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Page made a motion to approve December 15, 2025, meeting minutes. Seconded by Collins.

Voice Vote: 3 ayes, 1 Abstain Motion approved, (3-0)

DISCUSSION

2026 Important Dates & Goals:

Rice provides an overview of the updates to the important dates and events for the Committee in 2026 based on the Committee's discussion at the December 15th, 2025, meeting. The tabling events have been paired with a relevant sustainability topic for that month or season and prioritizing single use bag fee engagement. The Committee discusses whether tabling the Horseradish and Italian Festival would be as effective as other events and ensuring any tabling would be during lunch hours. Freker expresses importance of cross pollinating with Parks and Willoughby to support each other in our similar missions and gain a wider audience for the Committee. Goldstein offers exploring partnerships with Parks and Willoughby programming such as Tunes at Blum and Movie Night at the Park during the summer or instead of Horseradish and Italian Fest. Collins mentions sharing the DarkSky.org information and their helpful infographics for engagement. Martin shares that Lou Belle and Bing may be offering sewing classes for reusable bags and could be a resource for a sustainable craft night for 2026.

Rice shares a brief summary of the Committee's goals for 2026 based on the discussion at the December 15, 2025, meeting. Martin requests an update from New Earth Farms on membership and diversion rates for 2025.

Single Use Bag Fee Research

Rice provides a brief overview of preliminary research into Single Use Bag Fees. Currently it appears the only local resource is Edwardsville and Chicago area. Links to different studies on bag fees, bans and their impacts are provided in the agenda. Most cases show the bag fee reduces single use bag use after implementation however Chicago reported in previous years issues with residents adjusting to the fee rather than the habit of bringing bags. Staff and the Committee will continue research on different methods of implementation and the impacts. Rice is looking for easily digestible quick facts to help educate the public on the importance of reducing single use bag waste and the effectiveness of a fee. Martin mentions the Ball of Bags visual art installation from St. Louis County that represented the average number of plastic bags used by a family in a year and offers potentially a smaller scale version could be a helpful visual tool.

Single Use Bag Fee Discussion

Committee discusses setting the stage for engagement and a single use bag fee program into the city. Goldstein recommends a simple survey to help canvass the public not only if they would support the program, but aspects of the program such as fee per page, store size, potential exceptions etc. The Committee emphasizes the iron is hot due to community concerns regarding microplastics and PFAS. Collins asks if there are any grants for reusable bags to offer the public for free upon implementation of the program. Martin asks if the Green School Program has any material regarding plastic bags and emphasizes that getting kids on board can help reach a wider audience. Freker will reach out to her contact with Green Schools. Rice will continue to gather data and information for engagement with the public.

OLD BUSINESS

Election of Vice Chair

The committee has determined to hold nominations for the Vice Chair until the new member is onboard.

COMMENTS FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Frerker shares that the ASP (Aerated Static Pile) composting system is up and running and is now accepting food waste from Gateway Convention Center. 350lbs of food waste has already been collected.

ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

Continue Bag Fee Research and Materials

Schedule Spring Highway Clean Up and Spring Invasive Sweep

New Earth Farms Update

Low Mow Spring Program

Motion to adjourn made by Martin and seconded by Collins.

Voice Vote: All Ayes. Motion Approved (4-0) ADJOURNMENT at 6:40 pm.