
SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

Minutes of 12 November

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Western Michigan University Faculty Senate Sustainability Committee was called to order at 10 a.m. on 12 November 2025, in the Office of Sustainability, by Steve Bertman, chair.

Members Present: Steve Bertman, Mia Breznau, Lynne Heasley, Valerian Kwigizile, Mitchell Luttermoser, Kate Martini, Timothy Palmer, Jeff Spoelstra, Sara VanderVeen

Advisory Member Present: Steve Root

Ex Officio: LuMarie Guth

Quorum

A quorum was present with 11 members in attendance, of the seven needed to establish a quorum.

Agenda

[MOTION] It was moved by Heasley, seconded by VanderVeen, to accept the agenda as presented. The motion carried.

Minutes

[MOTION] It was moved by Guth, seconded by Spoelstra, to approve the 24 September 2025 minutes as presented. The motion carried.

Reports of Officers

Bertman did not provide a report.

Guth did not provide a report.

Reports of University Representatives

Spoelstra did not provide a report.

VanderVeen provided the Facilitates report with the status of the Oaklands renovation. Communication gaps were identified with the landscape staff regarding preliminary staking of the drive. A goal has been established for an iterative process of input that allows for adjustment or alternatives. Discussion was held regarding whether landscape staff and others with expertise on campus might be involved earlier, during the conceptual design phase, when a site is first evaluated. Overall, the Oaklands project will preserve all but one of the mature trees.

Unfinished Business

Discussion was held regarding issues and challenges faced by Facilities during large campus construction projects, especially accountability with contractors (i.e., if and how they're held accountable for sub-par work, not maintaining specs, and damage). It was noted from recent and past projects that there is concern regarding rogue decision-making, adverse soil quality impacts, lack of consultation with staff on appropriate landscaping (trees and plants), and lack of consulting early to identify post-construction impacts. The committee identified several possibilities to explore going forward:

- Enhanced metrics for accountability
- Cultural shifts from contractors to align with WMU values and expectations during projects
- Sustained boots-on-the-ground interaction with site managers
- Assessment of current post-project follow-up protocols: evaluation, additional costs, etc.

New Business

Discussion was held regarding *charge #1: Identify and map sustainability stakeholders on campus; and establish communication networks for collaboration and information sharing to support campus projects.*

The committee suggested establishing a tree subcommittee as an important but still emerging example of cross-silo communication and positive collaboration and action.

VanderVeen requested feedback on the substance, accessibility, and future dissemination of current guidelines on the Facilities and Landscape Services website, as well as the Five Year Capital Outlay Plan.

Palmer raised the issue that some communication and networking will be beyond the scope of this committee. A subcommittee was appointed to carry out a preliminary inventory of units/organizations on campus already established to carry out sustainability work. The subcommittee will consist of Breznau, Heasley, Luttermoser, Spoelstra, and VanderVeen.

Announcements

None.

Adjournment

Chair Bertman adjourned the meeting at 11 a.m. The Sustainability Committee will meet next on 10 December 2025, at 10 a.m. in room 1241, Campus Services.

Approval

Submitted by Lynne Heasley, Secretary

Minutes were approved on 10 December 2025