

CITY OF PALM BAY, FLORIDA
SUSTAINABILITY ADVISORY BOARD
REGULAR MEETING 2025-12

Held on Tuesday, the 16th day of December 2025, in the City Hall Council Chambers, 120 Malabar Road, SE, Palm Bay, Florida.

This meeting was properly noticed pursuant to law; the minutes are on file in the Public Works Department located at 1050 Malabar Road, SW, Palm Bay, Florida. The minutes are not a verbatim transcript, but a summary of the discussions and actions taken at the meeting.

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Doug Hook at 6:00 PM.

ROLL CALL:

CHAIRPERSON:	Doug Hook	Present
VICE CHAIRPERSON:	Rebecca Ziegler	Present
MEMBER:	Jane Higgins	Present
MEMBER:	Vacant	
MEMBER:	Eileen Sepp	Present
MEMBER:	O'Brian Parcmnt	Absent
MEMBER:	Anthony Abate	Present

CITY STAFF:

Nadeca Gonzalez, Public Works Assistant Director; Derek Bunt, NPDES Stormwater Outreach Coordinator; Jesinie Fieffe, Administrative Assistant, Eric Blount, Operations Superintendent.

ADOPTION OF MINUTES:

1. Meeting 2025-09; September 25, 2025.

Motion by Ms. Sepp, seconded by Ms. Higgins, to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

2. Meeting 2025-10; October 22, 2025.

Motion by Ms. Ziegler, seconded by Ms. Sepp, to approve the minutes as presented.
Motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: (Non-agenda items only)

1. Ms. Lydia Barber, resident, presented her research on biochar, highlighting its negative impact on insects, including potential physical interactions and developmental abnormalities. She recommended not using biochar in Palm Bay due to these potential adverse effects on beneficial insects. In response, Ms. Sepp discussed the various types of biochar and their specific impacts on small insects, such as prions and ants. She also pointed out the advantages of biochar for water treatment and its role in mitigating forest fires. Additionally, Ms. Barber emphasized the importance of addressing glass recycling through the Board, referencing a previous meeting where misinformation was shared.

Mr. Hook proposed adding glass recycling to the agenda for January. Motion by Ms. Higgins, seconded by Ms. Ziegler, to add glass recycling to the agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Barber presented information regarding graphene, including its discovery, relevant patents, and the production processes implemented by General Graphene Corporation. Ms. Sepp elaborated on the federal government's interest in graphene due to its implications for energy efficiency and its potential applications in controlled burns. In support of these initiatives, Ms. Elizabeth Blackford, resident, proposed actively engaging specific neighborhoods and local churches in the associated outreach campaign.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Welcome New Members

Mr. Hook introduced Mr. Abate, who provided a brief introduction to his employment and his involvement with various sustainability organizations.

2. ORCA presentation- Natalie C. Stephens

Ms. Natalie Stephens from the Ocean Research & Conservation Association (ORCA) presented an overview of their land-to-sea monitoring program, emphasizing its commitment to habitat restoration along the Indian River Lagoon. She elaborated on the

program's two tiers: living shorelines and buffered shorelines, each aimed at pollution mitigation and shoreline stabilization.

The living shoreline monitoring initiative, which commenced in 2018, has successfully revitalized eleven (11) sites by incorporating native vegetation and green infrastructure. Ms. Stephens highlighted the numerous benefits associated with living shorelines, which included enhanced biodiversity, increased oyster recruitment, and improved shoreline accretion.

Ms. Stephens also discussed the buffered shoreline monitoring program, which focused on reducing stormwater runoff and addressing nutrient pollution. She provided data demonstrating significant decreases in phosphate concentrations within stormwater runoff as a result of this approach.

Ms. Sepp posed a question regarding the effectiveness of baffle boxes. Ms. Stephens conveyed that ORCA had not formed a definitive opinion on this matter but remained receptive to further examination and discussion regarding the issue.

Ms. Sepp shared her observations concerning oyster recruitment at Castaways Point Park. Ms. Higgins inquired about the identification of future projects. Ms. Stephens responded by outlining ORCA's multifaceted approach to site selection.

Mr. Hook raised concerns regarding the presence of grass clippings from Turkey Creek and their potential impact on water quality. Mr. Blount informed the Board that the Public Works Department was currently addressing this issue and had proactively shared information with homeowners. Furthermore, Mr. Hook proposed the idea of hosting an educational event at Turkey Creek to raise awareness and promote best practices in environmental stewardship. Ms. Blackford supported this initiative and recommended involving specific neighborhoods and local churches in the campaign to enhance community engagement.

3. F.I.T. projects

Mr. Hook led a discussion on potential projects for presentation to the Florida Institute of Technology (FIT). The focus was on comparing low-impact development plans across municipalities and identifying sustainability practices from neighboring areas. Ms. Higgins proposed revisiting the previous month's topic – a comparison of low-impact development plans along with best practices – as strong candidates for presentation. Mr. Hook

emphasized the need to contact the City Manager for more information regarding FIT and suggested revisiting these topics in future meetings. No actionable items were finalized, and no public comments were made.

4. Turkey Creek/grass cutting

Mr. Hook raised the issue of grass clippings from Turkey Creek and their impact on water quality. He shared concerns from Diane Burrell, one of the individuals who helped establish Turkey Creek Sanctuary, about the effects of increased foot traffic in the sanctuary. The sanctuary was designed as a pineland preservation area, not a public park, and was being disrupted by activities off the designated trails.

Mr. Blount mentioned that Public Works was already addressing this issue and had been sharing information with homeowners. The disturbances led to the introduction of non-native species and creating a need for mowing, which further impacted the native plants. Mr. Hook suggested organizing an educational event at Turkey Creek to raise awareness and promote best practices. Ms. Blackford supported this idea and recommended involving specific neighborhoods and churches in the campaign.

OTHER BUSINESS:

1. Board Reports

Ms. Sepp discussed the issues of no-see-ums and midget visions, as well as potential solutions such as gambusia fish and chia seeds. Mr. Hook mentioned the availability of mosquito fish through Brevard Mosquito Control and emphasized the need to increase awareness among developers. Mr. Abate shared his interest in energy management in commercial buildings, highlighting the potential for innovative strategies to reduce energy usage.

Ms. Higgins provided updates on follow-up items from the previous meeting, including the native plant update and the Building E (located at City Hall campus) sustainability initiatives. Mr. Hook updated the Board on the native garden project, noting challenges with the Building E site and the potential to use the space next to the Police Department. He suggested that the discussion continue at the next meeting and proposed collaborating with the City Manager to finalize project details.

Mr. Hook highlighted the shift in focus to the design space near the Police Department, mentioning interest from partners like Brevard Custom Aquatics and Florida Native Plants.

This space was viewed as better suited for community resources, including a remembrance garden, compared to the current building. Ms. Higgins agreed with the proposed shift and asked about the next steps for funding discussions with the City Manager.

Mr. Hook outlined a plan to create a presentation for the City Council and indicated a standing meeting with the City Manager was scheduled for early January. He stressed the importance of not burdening city staff with the creation of the presentation, suggesting that Board members take the lead. Ms. Higgins offered to draft the presentation, and Mr. Hook agreed, noting the significance of the City Manager's input. The discussion also included the need to gather resources, locate the space, and prepare the presentation for the City Council.

Motion by Ms. Higgins, seconded by Ms. Ziegler, to add Glass recycling to the next meeting agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Upcoming Meetings/Events of Interest (INFORMATIONAL).

Mr. Hook introduced the topic of National Invasive Species Awareness Week, which was scheduled for February 23-27 and coincide with the Board meeting on February 25th. He contacted Keep Brevard Beautiful to request a presentation on managing invasive species during this awareness week. Mr. Bunt suggested that Keep Brevard Beautiful contact city staff directly to get added to the meeting agenda.

Ms. Barber mentioned a useful website run by the Florida Invasive Species Council that listed invasive species by their scientific names. She had created an Excel spreadsheet sorted by common names, which could be beneficial for the awareness week. Mr. Hook suggested sending this resource to Mr. Bunt for inclusion in the preparations made by city staff. Ms. Barber noted that the website was outdated, but she was currently working to update it.

Mr. Hook continued discussing the Board's plans for National Invasive Species Awareness Week, mentioning that the North American Invasive Species Awareness Council's website offered resources and information that could be helpful for the event. He emphasized the importance of gathering and organizing these resources to ensure a successful awareness week.

Additionally, Mr. Hook proposed creating a sustainability calendar on the city's website to list events and raise awareness. He shared a handout detailing various sustainability events happening throughout the year that could inspire local activities.

Motioned by Mr. Hook, seconded by Ms. Sepp, to add discussion on the National Invasive Species Awareness Week to the next meeting agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Barber noted that January 16th was Florida's Arbor Day, a nationally recognized observance that promoted the benefits of trees in urban environments and encouraged tree planting and care. Mr. Hook suggested featuring regionally appropriate events on the city's website every other month. Ms. Higgins mentioned the upcoming Conradina meeting in January, which would feature a presentation on native bees by Laura Zorro. Mr. Hook also highlighted the Conservation Wild 4 to 5K event in Orlando on January 31st, which supported conservation efforts for the Florida wildlife corridor.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:54 P.M.

Doug Hook, Chairperson

ATTEST:

Jesinie Fieffe, Recorder