Roseville Public Works, Environment and Transportation Commission Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, June 23, 2026, at 6:30 p.m.
City Council Chambers, 2660 Civic Center Drive
Roseville, Minnesota 55113

1. **Introduction / Roll Call**
   Chair Ficek called the meeting to order at approximately 6:30 p.m., and at his request, Public Works Director Jesse Freihammer called the roll.

   Present: Chair Bryant Ficek, Vice Chair Edwin Hodder, and Members Daniel Fergus, Katie Brokaw Palalay, Luke Sandstrom (remote), and Charles Tedder

   Youth Commissioners: Carsten Bauer

   Absent: Member Allison Luongo and Alexis Jendro (Excused)

   Staff Present: Public Works Director Jesse Freihammer and Sustainability Specialist Noelle Bakken

2. **Approve Agenda**

   Motion
   Vice Chair Hodder moved, Member Brokaw Palalay seconded, approval of the June 23, 2026 Agenda as presented.

   Ayes: 7
   Nays: 0
   Motion carried.

3. **Public Comments**
   Member Fergus corrected the availability of cardboard recycling at the Environmental Center. He noted a member of the public clarified that cardboard is accepted for recycling, correcting a prior misunderstanding.

   Additional informal remarks referenced community events, including Rosefest and participation in the parade.

4. Business Items

a. Communication Items

Public Works Director Jesse Freihammer provided a consolidated update on Ccity infrastructure and operational projects. Updates included capital improvement work, roadway projects, utility coordination, environmental programming, and seasonal maintenance activities.

Key highlights included:

- Advancement of the civic campus project following City Council approval
- Completion of the Lexington pathway project
- Construction beginning on Hamline Avenue improvements
- Upcoming sewer cleaning and lining operations
- Ongoing Ramsey County road projects, including County Road C, County Road D, and Rice Street
- Regional utility installations, including fiber and gas infrastructure

Sustainability Specialist Noelle Bakken updated the commission on Environmental items.

Mr. Freihammer updated the commission on maintenance updates, including storm cleanup response, water meter replacement program activity, and an upcoming water main shutdown at Victoria Street and County Road B2.

Commissioner Fergus questioned delays in the Lexington sidewalk project.

Mr. Freihammer confirmed delays were minor and related to field conditions rather than structural issues.

Chair Ficek asked about restroom availability at Rosebrook Park.

Mr. Freihammer confirmed facilities remain open.

Questions were raised regarding the scope of the Larpenteur Avenue corridor study.

Mr. Freihammer confirmed it spans Highway 280 to Highway 35E and includes multiple jurisdictions.

Commissioners did not express concern or opposition to any of the updates.

b. Leaf Site Future

Public Works Director Freihammer introduced the Leaf Site item as a long-standing operational program providing seasonal leaf drop-off and composting services. The facility operates on Dale Street and is funded through the stormwater utility fund.

Mr. Freihammer explained that the updated analysis includes:

- Vehicle counts and usage data
- Contractor activity observations
- Operational cost estimates
- Equipment replacement projections (notably compost turner replacement at $500K–$900K)
- Five operational options ranging from status quo to closure or transition to Ramsey County

Staff recommendation: Option D – Closure of the Leaf Site at the end of 2026

Key rationale included:

- Increasing contractor usage
- Duplication of Ramsey County services
- Rising operational costs
- Capital replacement burden
- Limited staffing efficiency relative to output

Chair Ficek opened the discussion by emphasizing the need to evaluate both fiscal sustainability and the impacts on resident services.

Vice Chair Hodder immediately focused on service duplication, questioning whether the City was maintaining a service already provided regionally. He expressed concern that continued operation may not be necessary given the county's availability.

Commissioner Fergus questioned geographic accessibility, asking how much additional travel would be required if the site closed.

Mr. Freihammer indicated that increases were relatively modest but varied by location.

Commissioner Fergus noted that even small increases could affect residents near Dale Street differently than those in northern or western parts of the city.

Commissioner Sandstrom raised concerns about how vehicle counts were interpreted. He questioned whether repeat visits were included, whether contractor usage inflated the totals, and whether the data accurately reflected resident reliance.

Mr. Freihammer confirmed that the counts did not distinguish between residents and contractors, or between repeat visits.

Commissioner Sandstrom argued the data likely overstated true residential dependence and suggested actual reliance could be well under 10% of residents.

Commissioner Brokaw Palalay cautioned against relying solely on quantitative usage data, emphasizing that smaller user groups can still represent high-need populations. She also highlighted the importance of compost quality and local distribution, noting community value beyond raw usage numbers.

Commissioner Tedder focused heavily on cost structure. He requested clarification on the annual operational cost (~$120K–$150K), Capital replacement exposure ($500K–$900K), and staffing allocation for compost operations.

Commissioner Tedder framed closure as a significant long-term opportunity to avoid fiscal costs and emphasized that continued operation carries compounding capital risks. He also raised the question of whether partial modifications (Options B or C) would materially reduce or defer costs.

Mr. Freihammer confirmed that partial operations still have staffing and equipment needs, limiting the potential for savings.

Discussion reflected two emerging perspectives. Those supporting closure cited cost avoidance, the significant capital investment required, duplication of county services, increasing misuse by contractors, and operational inefficiencies. Those favoring continued or modified operation emphasized the site's convenience for residents, the value of producing and distributing high-quality compost to the community, concerns about equity and accessibility, and the environmental benefits of maintaining a local circular waste system.

Chair Ficek concluded that the discussion extended beyond operational considerations and ultimately centered on the City's service identity and long-term priorities.

Chair Ficek opened public comment on the Leaf Site item.

Cynthia Warzeck, Roseville Resident
Ms. Warzeck spoke in support of maintaining the Leaf Site. She described herself as a long-term user and emphasized the convenience of the local drop-off location, particularly for residents in multi-family housing.

Ms. Warzeck questioned whether Ramsey County facilities had sufficient capacity to absorb displaced users. She suggested that contractor misuse might be better addressed through enforcement or fee structures rather than closure. She also expressed skepticism about the odor concerns cited in prior discussions, stating that her personal experience had not revealed significant issues.

Donna Peterson, Roseville Resident
Ms. Peterson also opposed closure. She emphasized the importance of high-quality leaf-only compost and raised concerns that mixing grass clippings could reduce compost quality and introduce pesticide-related contaminants.

Ms. Peterson also expressed concern about increased travel distance for residents if the site were closed. She suggested that contractors could be charged for usage rather than having service eliminated.

Bridget (last name not provided), Roseville Resident
Ms. Bridget raised concerns about potential increases in odor under a Ramsey County operational model, noting that while current operations did not produce significant odor issues, other county facilities had more noticeable impacts. She questioned whether expanded material types could worsen local conditions.

Alex (last name not provided), Shoreview Resident
Mr. Alex spoke in support of maintaining compost distribution services. He described the use of City-delivered compost for a community pollinator garden project and emphasized the value of municipal compost availability for educational and environmental projects. He expressed concern that closure could eliminate this beneficial service.

Chair Ficek closed the public comment.

Mr. Freihammer clarified that compost delivery is currently used primarily for community gardens and small civic projects, and is not widely utilized but is valued where it occurs. They confirmed that Ramsey County does not provide equivalent delivery services.

Mr. Freihammer also reiterated that contractor usage has increased significantly and is a key driver of operational strain. While enforcement or fee-based systems were discussed, staff noted these approaches would require additional administrative structure and may not resolve capacity constraints.

Chair Ficek acknowledged the strong public testimony in favor of maintaining the site, noting that most comments emphasized convenience and compost value. However, he reiterated that the Commission must evaluate system-wide sustainability rather than individual usage experiences alone.

Vice Chair Hodder emphasized that public comment reflected the views of active users of the system and may not represent broader citywide sentiment. He cautioned against allowing concentrated feedback to outweigh fiscal and operational considerations.

Commissioner Tedder raised concerns about equity impacts, particularly for residents in the western and northern portions of the city, who would face longer travel distances. He also noted that accessibility concerns extend beyond mileage and include residents without reliable transportation.

Commissioner Tedder emphasized that compost distribution also supports community garden programs and smaller-scale environmental initiatives, suggesting that these benefits should be weighed alongside operational costs.

Commissioner Brokaw Palalay supported Commissioner Tedder's framing, noting that while usage numbers may be relatively small, the service may be disproportionately important to certain user groups.

Commissioner Sandstrom returned to a systems-level sustainability argument, emphasizing that regional consolidation of services may reduce redundancy and improve efficiency. He acknowledged the environmental appeal of localized composting but questioned whether the City should maintain a standalone system when county infrastructure already exists. He also reiterated concerns about increasing contractor use and operational drift beyond the original program's intent.

Commissioner Fergus focused on long-term capital risk, emphasizing the compost turner replacement cost and ongoing operational strain. He noted that even with modifications, the City would still face significant capital decisions in the near future. He framed closure as a way to avoid repeated reinvestment in a duplicative system.

The Commission's discussion had coalesced around two stable positions. Commissioners supporting closure under Option D emphasized fiscal responsibility, avoidance of significant capital expenditures, the duplication of services already provided by the county, increasing contractor misuse, capacity concerns, and the long-term operational efficiencies that closure could provide.

Commissioners favoring continued or modified operations under Options B or C highlighted the importance of maintaining convenient local access for residents, the value of the site's high-quality compost and community distribution program, equity considerations for residents with limited mobility or transportation options, and the environmental and community engagement benefits of continuing the program in some form.

Chair Ficek summarized the decision as a tradeoff between system efficiency and local service identity.

Motion

Member Sandstrom moved, Member Brokaw-Palalay seconded, to recommend Option D: Closure of the Leaf Site at the end of 2026.

Member Tedder noted that he remained undecided between Options C and D, viewing Option C as a reasonable compromise if it generated meaningful savings. After hearing staff explain that Option C would reduce staffing requirements, eliminate equipment purchases, and provide some operational savings, he reflected on the previous year's public input, recalling that most residents had been more concerned with maintaining the leaf drop-off service than the compost operation. Based on those comments, he indicated he could be persuaded to support Option C as a balanced approach.

Member Fergus agreed that Option C appeared to offer an appropriate compromise between maintaining service and reducing costs. He explained that after considering the public testimony and resident comments, he was reluctant to recommend complete closure and preferred to explore a middle ground that preserved leaf collection while addressing financial concerns.

Vice Chair Hodder cautioned the Commission that the public comments primarily reflected the views of those who actively used the facility, rather than the community as a whole. He emphasized that public engagement naturally attracts those opposed to change and encouraged the Commission to keep the issue's overall scale in perspective.

Member Tedder thanked staff for providing context showing that fewer than eight percent of Roseville residents used the site. He also found it helpful to learn that leaf disposal, rather than compost distribution, was the primary concern expressed by residents. In his view, if compost production were removed from the equation, the remaining service would largely duplicate Ramsey County's existing yard waste facilities. Based on that reasoning, he concluded that Option D represented the strongest recommendation.

Member Palalay explained that she seconded the motion because she continued to believe the City was providing a duplicative service. While acknowledging the value of public feedback, she emphasized that the Commission also needed to evaluate the broader needs of the entire community. She expressed concern that Option C would delay an inevitable decision by continuing leaf collection while leaving unanswered whether the City intended to remain in the composting business. She repeatedly returned to the financial analysis, noting that closure would require fewer than 8% of residents to drive approximately 1.5 miles farther for leaf disposal and only about 0.5 miles farther for compost. She also observed that fewer than 50 residents had purchased compost delivery, making the overall community benefit relatively small compared with the city's population. Given the staff recommendation and more than a year of discussion, she supported Option D.

Chair Ficek shared comments submitted in advance by Member Luongo, who was unable to attend the meeting. Member Luongo expressed support for Option E, stating that continuing the current operation was not sustainable. Still, she also recognized that closing the site would require many residents, particularly those on the west side of Roseville, to travel significantly farther to dispose of yard waste. She recommended submitting a formal request to Ramsey County to explore establishing a replacement yard-waste collection site in western Roseville.

Chair Ficek concluded by acknowledging that he had struggled with the decision because both sides presented compelling arguments. While recognizing the financial savings, operational efficiencies, and limited number of users, he also valued maintaining services that distinguished Roseville from neighboring communities. He described the leaf site and compost program as uniquely local amenities that reinforced the City's sustainability goals and community identity. Although he understood the concerns about service duplication, he ultimately leaned toward Option B because he believed preserving a Roseville-operated compost and leaf facility offered benefits that extended beyond simple cost comparisons.

Ayes: 4
Nays: 3 (Hodder, Fergus, and Ficek)
Motion carried.

Chair Ficek indicated that this item will go to the City Council on July 6, 2026, with the opportunity for public comment.

c. Climate Equity Action Plan

Sustainability Specialist Noelle Bakken introduced the Climate Equity Action Plan alongside consultant Ted Redman. Staff emphasized that the plan aligns with the City's strategic goals and represents approximately 10 months of development, including baseline analysis, public engagement, and interdepartmental coordination.

The plan establishes greenhouse gas reduction targets of:

- 54% reduction by 2036
- Net zero by 2050

Six sectors structure the plan: transportation, buildings, resilient communities, waste, natural systems, and clean economy.

Commissioners broadly expressed appreciation for the plan's depth and structure. Several noted the framework's clarity and the usability of the action-oriented structure.

Commissioners emphasized concerns about transit accessibility, noting that the lack of confidence in transit reliability limits usage. It was suggested that there be a stronger emphasis on education and accessibility, including potential youth transit pass programs.

Commissioner Tedder supported this framing and highlighted the importance of integrating transportation behavior change with education and outreach.

The commission raised questions about heat pump adoption and hybrid heating systems.

Consultant Redman explained that electrification strategies increasingly involve cold-climate heat pumps paired with backup systems, and that technology is improving rapidly.

Commissioners discussed financial barriers to adoption, with emphasis on upfront cost challenges.

Commissioner Sandstrom questioned the waste diversion rate, which was confirmed at approximately 49.7% countywide. Staff indicated a long-term target of 75%.

Commissioners expressed interest in how food waste programs could improve diversion rates.

Commissioner Brokaw Palalay emphasized financial barriers to participation in sustainability initiatives, particularly for renters and lower-income households. She highlighted the importance of financing tools, rebates, and shared solar programs.

Consultant Redman noted that implementation strategies include exploring solar gardens and financing mechanisms to broaden access.

Several commissioners expressed strong interest in the plan's implementation tools, including dashboards, metrics tracking, and progress reporting.

Commissioner Tedder specifically requested a public-facing dashboard, which staff indicated is being explored based on models from other cities.

Motion
Member Hodder moved, Member Sandstrom seconded, to recommend adoption of the Climate Equity Action Plan to the City Council.

Ayes: 7
Nays: 0
Motion carried.

d. Prep for Joint Council Meeting
Public Works Director Freihammer introduced preparation for the upcoming joint Council meeting scheduled for July 20.

Commissioners discussed potential topics, including:

- Highlighting personal reflections from service on the Commission.
- Pathway Master Plan priorities and coordination with parks planning
- Citywide policy topics such as hauling and speed limits
- Interest in council feedback on ongoing work items

Staff encouraged commissioners to reflect on key highlights from their service and identify priority topics for discussion.

5. Commission Direction on Member-Initiated Agenda Items

Public Works Director Freihammer noted upcoming agenda items, including:

- Metro Transit presentation
- Streetlight policy update

6. Approval of May 19, 2026 Meeting Minutes

Comments and corrections to draft minutes had been submitted by PWETC commissioners prior to tonight's meeting, and those revisions were incorporated into the draft presented in meeting materials.

Commissioner Tedder asked if staff could provide more information on the Waste Management presentation in the minutes and whether it met the commissioner's needs. He felt that should be reflected more in the minutes.

Mr. Freihammer indicated that staff could make changes and return the minutes to the commission at the next meeting for approval.

The commission concurred that staff make appropriate changes and bring back the minutes to the July 2026 meeting for approval.

7. Adjourn

Chair Ficek thanked Youth Commissioner Bauer for participating in the meetings, and he wished him luck.

Motion
Member Brokaw Palalay moved, Member Hodder seconded, adjournment of the meeting at approximately 9:04 p.m.

Ayes: 7
Nays: 0
Motion carried.