

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE SUSTAINABILITY ADVISORY GROUP OF  
THE CITY OF HIGHLAND PARK, ILLINOIS**

**MEETING DATE:** Wednesday, October 22, 2025

**MEETING LOCATION:** Pre-Session Conference Room – Highland Park City Hall  
1707 St. Johns Avenue, Highland Park, Illinois

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**CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

At 6:31 PM, Chair Futterman called the Sustainability Advisory Group (“SAG”) Special meeting to order and Sustainability Manager Knight called the roll.

Advisors Present: Chair Futterman, Foerster, Klee, Hopkins

Advisors Absent: Advisors Geelhoed, Fine

Staff Present: Assistant to the City Manager Ashley Palbitska, Sustainability Manager Knight

Also Present:

**MINUTES**

**(a) Approval of the September 11, 2025 Sustainability Advisory Group Meeting Minutes**

Advisor Klee moved to approve the minutes as amended. Advisor Foerster seconded the motion. Voice vote, unanimous. Chair Futterman declared the motion passed.

**BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC**

None.

**NEW BUSINESS**

a) **Action Item & Discussion: 2026 Work Plan**

Chair Futterman provided information that was discussed at the last meeting and noted that the consensus from the group was that not enough information was provided as to where the City was and what their role was in the sustainability plan to know what actions SAG could assist with. He pointed out a spread sheet that showed where the City was with each project, who was responsible, etc. and that this was what he requested for this meeting.

SM Knight said he would look for this document and update it to provide to the group.

Advisor Klee asked if the purple highlighted document provided is what SAG is to focus on to which SM Knight confirmed.

Advisor Forester noted that it was her understanding that the creation of the work plan was to create actions for SAG to undertake in 2026 to include the items SAG can undertake with help from staff that would be consequential and have measurable impact.

SM Knight noted that staff provided the highlighted sustainability plan action sheet to show where SAG could best provide input and the updated work plan that featured more actionable items that were of interest to the advisors.

Chair Futterman then discussed the meaning and purpose of the work plan.

Advisor Forester explained that she had put together an exercise sheet that contained objectives broken down with actions as to how the group could accomplish the goals that were to be set by the work plan. She noted that this frame of thinking through the goals would assist with determining what is needed to reach each goal.

SAG Advisors and Assistant to the City Manager (A2CM) Palbitska discussed how the budget has been used and how much is discretionary.

Chair Futterman proceeded to go review the sustainability plan, comparing it to what was highlighted by staff as points of focus.

Advisors and staff discussed a lack of focus on policy and the wish to participate in more discussions related to changing or updating current sustainability related policy; upcoming gas powered leaf blower ban; and the importance of reviewing the current sustainability plan to understand actions that have been completed, are currently being worked on and what items are outstanding that could be worked in to the drafting of the 2026 work plan. They discussed the impact Climate Coach has had and how it can be included as a tool as part of the work plan. They discussed renaming methane reduction to Greenhouse Gas Reduction to allow for flexibility in the work to be done for this action; status of community solar; and the difficulties of pursuing green business programs but interest in shifting to more promotions of businesses that are already incorporating sustainable actions within their processes.

Advisor Klee recommended outlining the goals for the work plan instead of creating particular actions under each goal to allow for flexibility.

Chair Futterman explained that there has to be a balance between specifics and generalities. He recommended having a tracking document that will help with the focus of items/actions they are going to work on. The work plan would be for City Council and the spreadsheet would be for the actions they want to take under those topics.

Advisor Foerster recommended that there should be two tools along with focus areas. She noted that one tool could be a communication plan and the other could be Climate Coach.

The Advisors and staff continued discussions on the topics to be placed on the work plan. They reviewed the purpose of the work plan, Council's involvement and the responsibilities of the SAG. They reviewed the need for actionable, smart objectives in order to hold the group accountable and have the ability to demonstrate work completed by the end of the year. The consensus was to include four focus areas of communication, community education, natural areas, and greenhouse gas reduction.

Chair Futterman noted that meeting bi-monthly may slow the momentum of the group and asked if the schedule can be changed to meet monthly.

A2CM Palbitska explained that the meeting resolution was already approved for 2026 but if special meetings were needed, SAG could schedule a special meeting. She reviewed the requirements for calling a special meeting.

The Advisors discussed the purpose of the meeting on November 13<sup>th</sup> and agreed that the discussion would include the creation of actionable steps for the topics and goals that were generated for the 2026 work plan. They agreed that all members would bring ideas to that meeting, which would assist with the building of meeting agendas for 2026.

SM Knight noted that he will work to update the requested spreadsheet and provide that information to the Advisors ahead of the meeting.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

a) **City Staff Update**

None

b) **Chair Update**

Chair Futterman provided information on the Pumpkin Smash event that is taking place on November 7<sup>th</sup>. SM Knight said he will send out details to all Advisors after the meeting.

c) **Advisor Comments**

None

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Advisor Hopkins moved to adjourn Advisor Klee seconded the motion. Voice vote, unanimous. Chair Futterman declared the meeting adjourned at 8:20 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Austin Knight, SM