

CITY OF HIGHLAND PARK CULTURAL ARTS ADVISORY GROUP
REGULAR MEETING

Tuesday, January 13, 2026 - 6:00 PM

Highland Park City Hall, Pre-Session Conference Room
1707 St. Johns Avenue, Highland Park, Illinois

PUBLIC NOTICE

In accordance with the Statutes of the State of Illinois and the Ordinances of the City of Highland Park, a regular meeting of the City of Highland Park Cultural Arts Advisory Group is scheduled to be held at the hour of 6:00 P.M. on Tuesday, January 13, 2026, at City Hall in the second floor Pre-Session Conference Room, 1707 St Johns Avenue, Highland Park, Illinois.

Individuals with questions or feedback about an agenda item may address the Advisory Group in the following ways:

1. **EMAILS FOR THE RECORD.** Email the Cultural Arts Advisory Group staff liaison, Communications Manager Amanda Bennett, at abennett@cityhpil.com. If you wish to have your comments read into the record, limit your communication to 200 words or less. Public comments received by 3:00 PM the day of the meeting will be read under Business from the Public. Any comments received during the meeting will be held until the end of the meeting.
Public comments should contain the following information:
 - In the subject line, identify, “CAAG Meeting – Read into the Record”
 - Name • City • Address (optional) • Phone (optional) • Organization, agency representing, if applicable. • Topic or agenda item number of interest
2. **EMAILS WITH UNLIMITED INFORMATION.** Individuals who do not wish to have their comments read into the record can email staff liaison Amanda Bennett an unlimited number of words. Emails will be forwarded to the Cultural Arts Advisory Group if requested.
3. **TELEPHONE.** Individuals with no access to email may leave a message with staff liaison Amanda Bennett by 3:00PM day of meeting.
4. **LIVE COMMENTS.** Individuals are able to address the Advisory Group during the meeting. Questions/comments are limited to written testimony into the record or spoken comments, not both.

MEETING AGENDA

- I. Call to Order
- II. Roll Call
- III. Approval of Minutes
 - a. October 21, 2025
- IV. Business from the Public
- V. New Business
 - a. Member Introductions
 - b. Arts Award Nomination Discussion
 - c. Poet Laureate Program Update
- VI. Chair Report
- VII. Staff Report
- VIII. Adjournment

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

MEETING DATE: October 21, 2025

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

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

At 6:33 PM, Vice Chair Rota called the Cultural Arts Advisory Group (“CAAG”) regular meeting to order and Staff Liaison Bennett called the roll.

Advisors Present: Advisors Archambeau, Bruno, Gran, Rota (VC), Steiger, Student Representative Peterson

Advisors Absent: Eisenberg (C), Matiosian; Student Representative Edelstein

Staff Present: Amanda Bennett, Communications Manager/Staff Liaison

Also Present: Councilmember Yumi Ross (Council Liaison)

MINUTES

a) Approval of the July 15, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Advisor Archambeau moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Advisor Steiger. Voice vote, unanimous. Vice Chair Rota declared the motion passed.

BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC

No business from the public.

NEW BUSINESS

Before continuing with business of the evening, Staff Liaison Bennett shared the regrets of Chair Eisenberg, who was unable to attend the meeting due to a personal emergency. Staff Liaison Bennett conveyed Chair Eisenberg’s sincere appreciation for the group during his tenure as a group member and especially as Chair, and his best wishes for continued success to all.

a) 2026 Meeting Resolution

Vice Chair Rota introduced the 2026 meeting resolution, noting for the record two proposed changes: a switch to second Tuesdays and to meetings beginning at 6:00 PM. Advisors were supportive of the changes. Advisor Bruno moved to approve the 2026 meeting resolution, seconded by Advisor Archambeau. Voice vote, unanimous. Vice Chair Rota declared the motion passed and the meeting resolution approved.

b) Photography Contest Discussion

Advisor Gran presented an overview of her recommended changes for the Capture the Heart of Highland Park

photography contest, with which advisors concurred, including:

- Retain existing categories (Arts/Architecture, Daily Life, Environmental, Community Favorite)
- Addition of two youth categories:
 - High school students
 - Middle school/elementary school students
- Improved category descriptions & guidelines for photographers
- Parameters prohibiting the use of generative AI in photo editing
- New, standardized evaluation rubric to increase transparency and consistency
- Contest administration software to streamline the submittal, evaluation, and public display of entries
- Continue recognition of winners at the Highland Park Awards Ceremony
- Continue recognition of winners, honorable mentions with a community display

Advisor Gran explained that these changes will further professionalize the photography contest and ensure that it continues to attract high-quality submissions.

Advisor Archambeau strongly supported allowing youth participation, noting that feedback from poet laureate programs and other initiatives indicates community interest in multigenerational programming.

Student Representative Peterson asked whether there was any interest in having youth categories for the contest, or if youth entries celebrating Highland Park would be in a single category. Advisors supported having two categories for youth, all with the general topic of “celebrating Highland Park” – high school students and elementary/middle school students.

Student Representative Peterson shared that the Highland Park High School newspaper would be able to share a call for submissions should there be a category for high school students. Councilmember Ross recommended reaching out to the District 112 Foundation to engage middle school students. Advisor Bruno concurred, citing the example of HPHS partnerships relative to poet laureate events.

Advisor Steiger noted that judging creative work is inherently subjective, and asked if members of the public would be able to request records such as the evaluation rubric for their work. Advisor Archambeau stated that this has occurred in other contests and journal submissions in his experience as well. Staff Liaison Bennett explained that the rubric, scales, and other guidelines would be public and that there may be value to sharing that information in advance. Requests for judging documents would be processed like any other request for public records, and City staff could confirm with corporation counsel what materials generally could be made public for requesters.

Advisor Gran shared that as a photographer, she has personally found value in knowing score totals and other information from contests as the constructive criticism can be beneficial.

Separate from recommendations regarding contest administration, Advisor Gran also invited the group to brainstorm ways to display photographs in a new setting, including:

- Outdoor displays, such as a photography walk in the parks, such as the Preserve of Highland Park
- Promotion of an online gallery with QR codes

Advisor Steiger agreed that this would be a positive step, and reminded the group that the traveling exhibit has historically been popular albeit not necessarily in the most highly-trafficked places apart from The Art Center and the Senior Center. She recommended seeking out opportunities to display the work where there would be significant crowds already, such as at Port Clinton.

Advisor Archambeau seconded this idea, particularly as outdoor spaces could support larger displays incorporating more photographs than just the winners/runners up. Advisor Archambeau suggested considering additional recognition for more photographs as space allows, noting that recognition on that scale could incentivize increased participation.

Advisor Steiger shared that printing on metal or aluminum could be really impactful but also expensive. She also explained that there might be site-specific concerns or limitations; alternative materials could include vinyl or glass, though there would be concerns with seasonality/weather impacts such as mold for options where printed materials are set between glass or acrylic panels.

Vice Chair Rota thanked Advisor Gran for her extensive research and preparation on this topic, and noted that Chair Eisenberg had previously shared his appreciation.

Councilmember Ross thanked Advisor Gran and shared that the Council has been impressed by the way the photography contest has grown, in addition to other CAAG initiatives over the past few years. Councilmember Ross also thanked Advisor Steiger for her work to coordinate the public art walking tours with artist Mary Seyfarth; Councilmember Ross attended one of the tours and found it to be a very enjoyable, informative, and collegial experience. Staff Liaison Bennett shared that she would pass along the kind words to Mary Seyfarth.

Advisor Steiger moved to accept the changes to the photography contest guidelines, seconded by Advisor Gran. Voice vote, unanimous. Vice Chair Rota declared the motion passed.

c) 2026 Work Plan Discussion

Vice Chair Rota asked Staff Liaison Bennett to introduce the proposed 2026 work plan, which was included in the meeting packet. Staff Liaison Bennett reviewed the draft workplan and associated budgetary requests.

Advisors were supportive of Poet Laureate Laura Joyce-Hubbard's recommendation that the timeline for selection of a new poet laureate overlap with her tenure. Advisors also supported hosting a reception honoring Poet Laureate Joyce-Hubbard and the incoming poet laureate, ideally in fall.

Staff Liaison Bennett noted that the poet laureate search project would likely need a working group that would meet in addition to existing CAAG meetings. Vice Chair Rota suggested Advisor Archambeau lead this effort if amenable; Advisor Archambeau accepted.

With respect to Poet Laureate programming, Staff Liaison Bennett invited advisors to share any other feedback for Poet Laureate Joyce-Hubbard via email.

Vice Chair Rota reviewed Poet Laureate Joyce-Hubbard's event in October with Dr. Taylor Byas, and recommended that future events incorporate writing time/audience participation. Advisor Archambeau suggested incorporating this question of how they would invite and encourage participation into the application process. Advisor Bruno concurred, citing the large turnout at the Rosewood Beach event and the audience's strong engagement.

Advisor Gran recommended engaging Highland Park poetry organizations to co-present programs and reiterated previous feedback to be collaborative and explore a multigenerational approach for maximum impact.

Advisors supported items pertaining to "Miss Nitro," the photography contest, and the Arts Award as presented. Advisors Archambeau and Steiger expressed strong support for the group's original recommendation of Brown Park as the future home for the sculpture.

Staff Liaison Bennett provided an update on the planning process for a permanent place of remembrance and shared additional details on the group's future participation in the design and community engagement process. Advisors were appreciative of the opportunity to participate in the planning.

Staff Liaison Bennett summarized feedback regarding mural arts promotion and programming from CAAG and others. Advisor Steiger provided an update on projector murals; given initial feedback from CAAG and the City regarding the cost, she will reach out to the Highland Park Chamber of Commerce to see if there is

interest in advancing such a program. Advisor Gran agreed that if there was interest in pursuing a projector mural, it would benefit by accompanying an existing event.

Vice Chair Rota described attending an event in Parma, Italy, that included a projector mural installation, and said that the crowd was delighted by the artwork and engaged by interactive components.

Advisors Archambeau and Steiger agreed that amplifying the arts during the course of existing events would be a positive approach that would engage visitors and enhance the event. Advisors did not support a standalone mural festival, but recommended pursuing ways to include the visual arts in existing events. Advisor Archambeau suggested that this would be a fiscally responsible way to gauge interest in a pilot.

Advisor Steiger reiterated that the City does not play a role in creation of permanent murals in Downtown Highland Park as the program is intended to facilitate partnerships between private property owners and artists, with the City providing administrative oversight. This further informs the recommendation to find ways to incorporate the visual arts alongside performing arts at events.

Advisors discussed ideas for incorporating the visual arts in existing events, and determined that in 2026 advisors would be encouraged to attend events and make recommendations at the July meeting for potential implementation in this regard, including consideration of:

- Photography display at Port Clinton Square
- Art installation along Central Ave. (such as painted butterflies, cows, etc.)
- Encouraging businesses to incorporate the arts
- Promoting the existence of the mural arts program to new businesses & property owners
- Plein air painting invitational at a City event

Advisor Gran noted that the Downtown Highland Park Alliance's Spotlight Grant Program might be a good program to promote to business owners, in addition to Advisor Steiger's recommendation of the Chamber.

Advisor Bruno highlighted ArtsLink North as a resource to promote the mural arts program, calls for artists, and events.

Advisor Steiger moved to approve the 2026 workplan, seconded by Advisor Archambeau. Voice vote, unanimous. Vice Chair Rota declared the motion passed.

OTHER BUSINESS

a) Staff Report

Staff Liaison Bennett shared a request from Highland Park Poetry to co-present an event in March featuring the State of Illinois Poet Laureate Mark Turcotte. Highland Park Poetry requested that the City provide an in-kind donation of space for the event. With CAAG support, Staff Liaison Bennett will work with City staff to co-present this exciting event.

b) Chair Report

Vice Chair Rota thanked Advisor Bruno for her work on the Poet Laureate events throughout the year.

Vice Chair Rota recognized Chair Eisenberg and Advisor Steiger for their service, honoring Advisor Steiger for her incredible contributions and volunteerism during her tenure on the board, especially the most recent coordination of the docent-led walking arts tours. Vice Chair Rota also recognized Chair Eisenberg for his generous and supportive leadership over the past two years.

ADJOURNMENT

Advisor Steiger moved to adjourn. Advisor Bruno seconded the motion. Voice vote, unanimous. Vice Chair Rota declared the meeting adjourned at 8:20 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Amanda Bennett, Communications Manager/Staff Liaison

MINUTES APPROVED BY THE CULTURAL ARTS ADVISORY GROUP ON:

DRAFT