

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

**MEETING DATE:** Thursday, November 13, 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 6:03 PM, Chair Futterman called the Sustainability Advisory Group (“SAG”) meeting to order and Sustainability Manager Knight called the roll.

Advisors Present: Chair Futterman, Foerster, Klee

Advisors Absent: Advisors Geelhoed, Fine, Hopkins

Staff Present: Assistant to the City Manager Erin Jason, Sustainability Manager Austin Knight

Also Present: Student Advisor Lucas Hoobler

**MINUTES**

**(a) Approval of the October 20, 2025 Sustainability Advisory Group Special Meeting Minutes**

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

**BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC**

Hannah Donart, Highland Park resident, voiced concerns regarding vehicle idling’s impact on health and the City’s ordinance compared to state law and nearby counties. She then talked about safer play spaces for kids by switching from plastic play spaces due to chemicals and heat islands to more sustainable options that are also more ADA friendly. She finished by mentioning previous work on Indoor air quality monitoring and how it’s something she wants to do in Highland Park.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**a) Discussion: 2026 Work Plan Details**

Chair Futterman asked Sustainability Manager (SM) Austin Knight to go over the documents provided, to which he proceeded to do. Chair Futterman asked each Advisor to share what they are interested in working on over the next year.

Advisor Foerster shared she was interested in Climate Coach and a communications plan, but wants to know the scope of the communications plan is as it relates to SAG and the Climate Action Plan (CAP). Assistant to the City Manager (ACM) Erin Jason explained the City’s pathways and sustainability plan as it relates to the CAP along with its relation to SAG. ACM Jason gave an overview of communications

expectations for City staff and SAG with Sustainability Sunday, tabling, and the Speaker Series being highlighted as examples for SAG. She gave examples of Spring Clean-Up and commercial composting as it relates to what SAG can help influence as priorities in 2026.

The discussion refocused around what SAG's messaging would be and what channels it would go through for the best use of Advisor's time. Advisor Foerster asked about the CAP and sustainability plan, specifically how they are related to each other along with timeframe. ACM Jason explained that the CAP is still in development with an aim to be presented to Council at the end of 2026 and be in line with the infrastructure plan at 5-10 years to meet the 6% per year greenhouse gas reduction (GHG) goal. The CAP provides more actionable items with measurable results that are/can be budgeted for right now compared to the sustainability plan.

Advisor Klee shared his interest in exploring ways residents can make personal contributions to reduce their carbon footprint especially if they have limitations or want to do more. He brought up the former vehicle sticker program or a voluntary charge on a water bill to go direct towards carbon capture, renewable energy credits (RECs), or similar GHG reduction mechanisms. Advisor Klee also discussed additional messaging opportunities within the water bill to promote programs such as Climate Coach or Speaker Series. Discussion ensued on possibility of a competition with neighboring communities to energize community involvement, if a water bill voluntary fee is possible, and other opportunities such as branded gear or vehicle window clings for sale. Advisors asked if offsets/RECs will be shown in the GHG inventory. SM Knight explained after the absolute emissions inventory is calculated, yes the inventory can be adjusted for any RECs purchased while still being compliant with international reporting standards.

Advisor Klee spoke about working more with the high schools and schools overall to promote sustainability culture. He brought up including more sustainability material in the welcome packets as a way to introduce these concepts; ACM Jason said they do have some content in current welcome packets staff will review in future with SAG to update.

Chair Futterman shared their interest in having a unified brand for all sustainability efforts in the City amongst government entities. A discussion between Advisors and staff ensued as to who would be involved in the creation of the logo and what it would mean. Chair Futterman stated an opt-out REC program would be more effective than current electric aggregation program. He stated a different provider other than MC2 would be preferable as their price isn't attracting many subscribers. He also mentioned that MC2's community solar was lagging with a long wait list and that the City should look into additional options.

Chair Futterman sited another priority for him is compost options for multi-family including looking at a community drop-off. In addition, he cited closing the loop by using the compost created from Highland Park organics wherever possible within City limits was of interest to him.

Advisors asked what SAG's role is and where are they useful, such as with community solar, where they do not have the authority to act on the City's behalf. ACM Jason then provided the example of composting in the next hauling contract where staff does research, provides it to SAG, and Advisors can then make their recommendation of what to include or not to Council. She then spotlighted how SAG discussed IL Energy Stretch Code and their recommendation had City Council pause on adoption wanting more information leading to staff pursuit of a grant for prep work to then bring back to SAG and Council to address these concerns.

Advisor Klee asked about the 2027 leaf blower gas ban for data and enforcement. ACM Jason reviewed the current progress of where the North Shore Consortium is and the City's level of enforcement along with what other neighboring cities are doing.

Student Advisor Lucas Hoobler talked about how the high school currently does a charity drive and how that could be done as a competition between the two high schools for an offset program/environmental charity. Advisors discussed ideas for possible actions to raise money. ACM Jason mentioned student groups have the opportunity to run a sustainability related service project for MLK Day of Service.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

### **a) City Staff Update**

SM Knight stated the Environmental Award is available for nominations now through December 31<sup>st</sup> and to contact previous winners to help nominate if possible.

He then talked about the RFP for the IL Energy Stretch Code grant and the main aims to accomplish with it. He discussed how solar panel applications were down, but solar paired with storage were applications were up. SM Knight reported the City has made progress towards the Metropolitan Mayor's Caucus EV Ready program's Silver recognition being only 3-4 actions away from achieving it.

In response to a request from Advisors, ACM Jason explained how budgets are set in general for advisory group functions and how that number listed is reflected in SAG events.

### **b) Chair Update**

Chair Futterman reported Go Green Deerfield is having their kickoff for Green Drinks 7pm on Wednesday, November 19<sup>th</sup> at the Italian Kitchen where speakers will be talking about the Berkeley Prairie. He noted he will be the presenter at a future meeting of this group and will keep SAG informed.

### **c) Advisor Comments**

Advisor Klee commented on the northern lights

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Advisor Klee moved to adjourn Chairman Futterman seconded the motion. Voice vote, unanimous. Chair Futterman declared the meeting adjourned at 7:10 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Austin Knight, SM