

**MINUTES OF A OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF THE CITY OF
HIGHLAND PARK**

MEETING DATE: January 12, 2026

MEETING LOCATION: City Hall, 1707 St Johns Avenue, Highland Park, IL 60035

I. Call to Order

At 5:01 PM, Mayor Rotering called the meeting to order and asked for a roll call:

II. Roll Call

Present: Mayor Rotering, Councilmembers Center, Bruckman, Ross, Tapia (arrived at 5:02 PM), Lidawer, Blumberg

Absent: None

Staff Present: City Manager Neukirch, Director of Public Works Bannon, Community Development Director Fontane, Assistant City Manager Jason, Police Chief Jogmen, Finance Director McCaulou, Fire Chief Schrage, Assistant City Manager Taub, Commander Curran, Communications Manager Bennett, Assistant to the City Manager Palbitska, Business Development Manager Elder

Also Present: Corporation Counsel Elrod

III. Approval of Minutes

A. Approval of the Minutes of the Rescheduled Regular Meeting of the Committee of the Whole Held on December 15, 2025

Councilmember Lidawer moved to approve the Minutes of the Rescheduled Regular Meeting of the Committee of the Whole Held on December 15, 2025. Councilmember Blumberg seconded the motion. Upon a voice vote, the Mayor declared the motion Passed (7 - 0).

MOVER:	Councilmember Lidawer
SECONDER:	Councilmember Blumberg
AYES:	Mayor Rotering, Councilmembers Center, Bruckman, Ross, Tapia, Lidawer, Blumberg
NAYS:	None

Councilmember Lidawer provided comments regarding the discussion of the Place of Remembrance from the December 15, 2025 meeting.

Mayor Rotering voiced her appreciation for the comments and noted that the comments would not impact the minutes.

IV. Scheduled Business

A. Discussion Entering into a Sales Tax Rebate Agreement for WKN Automotive Inc. d/b/a McGrath Kia (250 Skokie Valley Road)

City Manager Neukirch introduced the presentation regarding the Sales Tax Rebate Agreement for WKN Automotive Inc. d/b/a McGrath Kia (250 Skokie Valley Road).

Assistant City Manager Jason and Business Development Manager Elder presented information on the Sales Tax Rebate program as well as the requested Agreement for WKN Automotive Inc. d/b/a McGrath Kia (250 Skokie Valley Road). They presented the staff recommendation and requested feedback from the Council regarding the maximum rebate, revenue share and the terms of the agreement.

Corporation Counsel Elrod provided information as to how the sales tax rebate is paid to the applicant and the City's obligations.

The Council and Staff discussed how the market for car dealerships is a highly competitive market. They discussed how the sales tax rebate program is not a grant or a loan but a tool to incentivize businesses to continue operating within Highland Park. They discussed how CPI will affect the baseline requirements annually and that it would need to be met in order for a payment to be issued to the business. They discussed historical information on past sales tax rebate agreements and the overall benefit these agreements have had for the community at large. They discussed the necessary investment that is being required by KIA Corporate, the impacts and benefits this investment will have on the community and how it will apply to the sales tax rebate agreement. It was noted that even if the agreement did not move forward, the investment would still need to be made but the business has been working to move forward with the upgrades in good faith in order to stay in Highland Park. They discussed how this agreement is a traditional way to keep businesses in Highland Park and how it is a reasonable economic incentive program that differs from the incentive programs provided to restaurants. They discussed ownership of the property. It was noted that a business can participate in the sales tax rebate program in the future if they had an agreement in place previously, but the business would need to provide information as to how they are generating more sales tax revenue for the area.

City Manager Neukirch thanked the Council for their feedback and stated the sales tax rebate agreement will be on the next available agenda, likely January 26, 2026 for approval.

At 5:31 PM, the Mayor declared a recess of the Committee of the Whole Meeting.

At 6:49 PM, the Mayor reconvened the Committee of the Whole Meeting and asked for a roll call:

Present: Mayor Rotering, Councilmembers Center, Bruckman, Ross, Tapia, Lidawer, Blumberg

Absent: None

Staff Present: City Manager Neukirch, Director of Public Works Bannon, Community Development Director Fontane, Assistant City Manager Jason, Police Chief Jogmen, Finance Director McCaulou, Fire Chief Schrage, Assistant City Manager Taub, Commander Curran, Communications Manager Bennett, Assistant to the City Manager Palbitska

Also Present: Corporation Counsel Elrod

B. Recognizing Special Sister Cities Guests from Modena, Italy and Don Sante Bartolai Day

Mayor Rotering recognized Highland Park Sister Cities Delegation from Modena and read a proclamation.

Carol Wolfe, President of Sister Cities, provided comments.

Julie Morrison, State Senator, provided comments.

Mayor Rotering thanked everyone for attending the recognition.

V. Closed Session

Councilmember Blumberg moved the Committee to close its meeting to the public, pursuant to the following cited section of the Illinois Open Meetings Act (5 ILCS 120/2(c)), for the purposes of, (i) purchase or lease of property (5 ILCS 120/2(C)(5)). Councilmember Lidawer seconded the motion. On a roll call vote, the Mayor declared the motion passed unanimously.

At 7:13 PM, the Committee recessed the public portion of the meeting to meet in Closed Session.

At 7:34 PM, Mayor Rotering reconvened the open session of the Committee of the Whole meeting.

Present: Mayor Rotering, Councilmembers Center, Bruckman, Ross, Tapia, Lidawer, Blumberg

Absent: None

Staff Present: City Manager Neukirch, Finance Director McCaulou, Assistant to the City Manager Palbitska

Also Present: Corporation Counsel Elrod

VI. Adjournment

Councilmember Blumberg moved to adjourn the Committee of the Whole meeting. Councilmember Tapia seconded the motion. Upon a voice vote, Mayor Rotering declared the motion passed unanimously.

The Committee of the Whole adjourned its meeting at 07:35 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Ashley Palbitska
Assistant to the City Manager/Deputy City Clerk