

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

**MEETING DATE:** Thursday, January 8, 2026

**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 6:02 PM, Chair Futterman called the Sustainability Advisory Group (“SAG”) meeting to order and Sustainability Manager Knight called the roll.

Advisors Present: Chair Futterman, Klee, Donart, Reinstein, Goldstone, and Rosenblatt

Advisors Absent: Wesslund

Staff Present: Assistant City Manager Jason, Sustainability Manager Knight

Also Present: Student Advisor Hoobler

Chair Futterman reminded Advisors of best practices from Robert’s Rules and reviewed decorum standards for meetings.

**MINUTES**

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

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

**BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC**

None

**NEW BUSINESS**

**a) Introduction of New Members and Staff**

Chair Futterman asked Advisors to introduce themselves and share the reason they were interested in joining the Sustainability Advisory Group (SAG). Those present took turns introducing themselves and discussing their sustainability interests and what they hope to contribute to SAG.

**b) Brief Overview of Sustainability Plan and Work Plan**

Chair Futterman gave an overview of the sustainability plan and the goals laid out in it. He talked about how Advisors should find things on the plan that appealed to them and to use it as a guidepost for SAG’s work.

Chair Futterman then discussed the SAG Work Plan and how it laid out the Advisory Group's objectives for 2026 while still giving flexibility.

Advisor Klee asked for the 2026 Work Plan to be updated to reflect the new advisors. ACM Jason explained that the list of Advisors on the Work Plan reflects who was on the SAG when it was approved by Council. The current Advisors will be included on the 2027 Work Plan document.

**c) Discussion: HP Environmental Award**

ACM Jason explained reviewed the Highland Park Awards and SAGs role in contributing feedback for Council in their decision making as it relates to the Environmental Award. She reminded Advisors that discussion this evening was not for SAG to vote or have consensus on a nominee, rather to review the applications received and provide an opportunity for Advisors to contribute their thoughts and experiences with nominees for the good of the group. Each Advisor is tasked with providing individual input for each applicant, submitted in an online form. That input as well as a summary of the SAG group discussion will then be provided to the City Council for their consideration before they ultimately vote on whom to bestow the award. ACM Jason also noted that if anyone wants to volunteer to assist with the HP Awards night to please let her know. All are welcome and encouraged to attend. ACM Jason proceeded to go over highlights for nominees Samir Pelinkovic and Heather and Colin Cosgrove. ACM Jason also noted that LRS was also nominated however due to their services being contracted by the City they are not eligible for the award.

Chair Futterman reminded Advisors they are not voting on a winner, but that if anyone had feedback they can provide it now. Discussion ensued between the Advisors and Student Advisor on the nominations before them. Discussion included the following:

- Cosgrove's achievements felt more realistic to what an average resident can do.
- Consideration of the award is to being for a relatable achievement or one on a larger scale.
- The inspiration provided by Red Oak's Youth Garden.
- Pelinkovic's nomination reflects an impressive scale.
- The Cosgrove's work impacting the next generation.
- Impact of similar green growers program at Ravinia Elementary School and that ingraining these habits early on is easier than trying to do so later in life.
- Cosgrove's work impacting kids and the community and how it encourages sustainable behaviors.

Sustainability Manager Knight will resend the link to the individual nomination reviews for Advisors to complete.

**d) Discussion and Updates: Working Groups**

Chair Futterman brought up that SAG only meets 6 times a year and they wouldn't get much work done if they limit themselves to these meetings. He said working groups are a way for Advisors to address their passions and accomplish more in-between SAG meetings. He discussed the working groups from last year as examples and past accomplishments by SAG such as the Speaker Series, tabling, electric vehicle car show, etc. Chair Futterman then talked about the tools SAG have in Sustainability Sunday, Climate Coach, and others that can be created. Said working groups don't have to be determined now, but that the groups are meant to determine SAG wants to direct their energy.

Advisor Goldstone said much of this is communication and that her past work dealt in writing blogs for Lake County to showcase what the County were doing. That it was important for the City to get their actions and SAG's out into people's eyes, so she is interested in helping with communications.

Chair Futterman remarked that while they can advise on policy to council much of what they do is communications. He said the City and other government entities would keep doing what they can to impact the City, but much of what is going to be done will be by private residents. Chair Futterman then brought up the Green Alliance, the Climate Action Plan, and how the Alliance could create a unified brand that would be easily identifiable to residents.

SM Knight said the CAP is meant to be a more targeted plan with actions that addressed the largest contributors to the carbon footprint in addition adding resiliency to make the City further resilient to the climate change that is already projected to happen.

Advisor Donart discussed being excited about the cross-pollination between the jurisdictions specifically students and wanting to find more ways that SAG can amplify. She went on to talk about plastic reduction such as in play spaces and the plastic bag tax with how cross-pollination could play a role.

Advisor Klee proposed setting up a work group to address and offer a way for residents to offset their greenhouse gas use. Possibly using a donation function so residents that could take some sustainable actions especially if they cannot for reasons such as inability to put solar on their roof.

Chair Futterman agreed and said that if the City wanted to achieve net zero that they would need to offset some of the emissions.

Chair Futterman then reminded SAG he wants them to bring ideas not just second motions.

e) **Discussion: Sustainability Sunday Posts**

SM Knight explained Sustainability Sunday on how it could be on topics of interest for Advisors, about certain events, seasonally relevant tips, etc. via the AirTable platform.

Chair Futterman asked if they have content scheduled out to which ACM Jason confirmed.

Discussion ensued related to analytics of Sustainability posts, resident engagement, City social platforms, potential for creating a quarterly sustainability newsletter, other City communication modalities, and the City's communications plan.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

a) **City Staff Update**

SM Knight stated that the City got 5 bids for the RFP on the IL Energy Stretch Code. He then briefly explained stretch codes and what lead up to the RFP.

He spoke about how a new private electric vehicle charger was installed for the Police fleet with an EV for the Police Administrative Department expected sometime this year.

He then talked about the meeting with architects on the sustainability features for a potential renovation or rebuild of the Public Services building. ACM Jason said the building was in need of rebuild and that she and SM Knight are doing what they can to advocate for sustainability options. The City have asked for alternative green bids in addition to the norm when they can while meeting the needs of the staff working there.

SM Knight talked about the Climate Action Plan that is being developed with the intent to bring it back to SAG at a future meeting. That it would feature more targeted actions compared to the Sustainability Plan.

SM Knight stated that a multi-part speaker series is in the works on urban wildlife that should start in the spring.

He then shared that the MLK Day of Service Reuse-A-Shoe Drive was happening January 19<sup>th</sup> from 9am to 10:30am. ACM Jason expanded on it saying that it's a donation drop-off and how SAG was a partner last year where it went incredibly well. She then requested volunteers if anyone is available on the day to help or if they want to donate shoes as well. ACM Jason also discussed future volunteer opportunities for SAG to table at such as Arbor Day.

**b) Chair Update**

Chair Futterman said go Green Deerfield is having their monthly Green Drinks 6pm on January 21, 2026 with the sustainability manager from Deerfield being there to discuss their sustainability efforts.

He also talked about how a few weeks ago he used his first Hefty ReNew bag and while having mixed feelings it's better than going to the landfill.

**c) Advisor Comments**

Advisor Reinstein asked about solar at the Public Services building. ACM Jason said that was discussed in the meetings with the architect and due to building codes the roof would have to be made solar ready even if solar was not initially installed.

Advisor Reinstein talked about microforestry and is excited to see how he can influence through SAG the City to plant more non-decretive native flowers.

Advisor Donart talked about policy such as anti-idling and possibly having that be a working group.

Advisor Goldstone talked about their Bald Eagle sighting in Highland Park by the preserve near the school and that there was an Owl by the library.

Student Rep Hoobler noted he heard that in 2025 the world used more green energy than carbon energy but doesn't know if it's true.

Chair Futterman said he would like to meet with each advisor to get to know them better and see what motivated them.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Advisor Donart moved to adjourn Advisor Goldstone seconded the motion. Voice vote, unanimous. Chair Futterman declared the meeting adjourned at 7:06 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Austin Knight, SM