

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

MEETING DATE: Thursday, March 12, 2026

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

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

At 6:00 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, Wesslund, and Rosenblatt

Advisors Absent: Goldstone

Staff Present: Assistant City Manager Jason, Sustainability Manager Knight, Management Analyst Megan Cherry

Also Present: Student Advisors Hoobler and Goldberg

MINUTES

(a) Approval of the January 8, 2026 Sustainability Advisory Group Special Meeting Minutes

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

BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC

None

NEW BUSINESS

a) Staff Report: Leaf Blower Feasibility Study

Chair Futterman asked Management Analyst Cherry to present on the leaf blower feasibility study. Discussion ensued between Advisors and MA Cherry regarding data collection during ban times, the potential benefits of having a study done during high volume leaf seasons and what times during those seasons (Spring in April/Fall tbd), whether or not the leaf blowers are commercial grade only, clarification that the study was specifically focused on commercial landscape companies not individual home owners. MA Cherry will follow-up with her counterpart in Winnetka for further clarification as to timing of the study and whether or not the blowers in the study were commercial grade only. MA Cherry further stated that the ban itself applied to everyone but she is not aware of any citations given to residents during the banned months.

b) Introduction of New Member

Chair Futterman welcomed Advisor Wesslund and asked them to share the reason they were interested in joining the Sustainability Advisory Group (SAG). Advisor Wesslund introduced himself and discussed their sustainability interests and what they hope to contribute to SAG.

Student Representative Nate Goldberg was then introduced to SAG and explained why they wanted to be on this Advisory Group.

c) **Discussion: Sustainability Plan**

Chair Futterman gave an overview of the City's Sustainability Plan and the goals laid out in it. He asked if Advisors had any part of the plan they had an interest in.

Advisor Donart said she was interested in the Green Alliance and the intersectional nature of it.

Advisor Wesslund said their biggest interest is in green business and the messaging around that.

Student Advisor Goldberg said they were interested in the Bike Path. Student Advisor Hoobler asked about the greenhouse gas (GHG) goal and if the City was on track. Sustainability Manager (SM) Knight said he would get back to them with exact numbers on the progress.

Advisor Reinstein discussed their interest in natural areas and expanding tree canopy throughout the City. He was also interested in mobility specifically bike paths as he likes to bike with his family asked if there was any City plan. SM Knight mentioned the MoveHP plan that contained many options and feedback for Highland Park to expand walkability and bikeability

Advisor Klee discussed his interest in energy and individual carbon footprint. He then talked about AI and the environmental costs of using it.

d) **Discussion: Working Groups**

Chair Futterman talked about how SAG meets for only an hour, but that a lot of the work to get things done occurs in-between meetings. He explained the Open Meetings Act limits the number of Advisors per working group and how they are decided upon. He reviewed possible working groups being Communications for Sustainability Sunday, tabling, speaker series, etc., Energy, Natural areas, and a group focused on a Green Business program.

Discussion amongst Advisors included consideration of a Policy working Group and the importance of the communications and education components of sustainability. Discussion continued with Chair Futterman forming working groups for Green Business, Communication, Energy, Natural Areas, and Policy. Volunteers were as follows:

Advisor Klee: Energy

Advisor Wesslund: Communication and Green Business

Advisor Reinstein: Green Business and Natural Areas

Advisor Goldstone: Recommended for Communication and Natural Areas

Advisor Donart: Policy

Student Advisor Goldberg: Green Business

e) **Green Business Program**

SM Knight explained what current green business programs are in nearby municipalities and the County.

Advisors asked about program rewards to which SM Knight responded that there were some that gave out goodie bags, recognition at a Council/Board meeting, and listing in a green business brochure. Assistant City Manager (ACM) Jason talked about how this was brought up to SAG a few years ago, and the worry that it might make businesses spend just to be recognized. She also mentioned that this topic was also brought to Business Development Advisory Group in the past with minimal interest in taking that up, but currently with the new group there's interest in having a discussion. She said there would be many businesses in Highland Park that currently work towards a green business threshold.

Discussion ensued on number of businesses with solar, on potential for composting at businesses being part of a base rate similar to the all-in residential program, and the want for composting at Highland Park High School.

f) Introduction to Recycle Coach, Hefty ReNew, Climate Coach, and All-In Composting

Chair Futterman and SM Knight reviewed Recycle Coach, Hefty Renew, and Climate Coach programs. Chair Futterman explained that these are things SAG "tables" and Advisors should be familiar with. For example these will all be topics covered at Arbor Day.

Discussion ensued on how Recycle Coach gets its data, praise for the features it contained, the pros and cons of the Hefty ReNew program, and how to sign-up to be a learner for Climate Coach.

ACM Jason stated in addition to these items at Arbor Day the City will be distributing bird safe window decals along with educational materials.

g) Discussion: Sustainability Sunday Posts

SM Knight explained Sustainability Sunday and how it could be on topics of interest for Advisors submitted via the Air Table platform. He then asked for volunteers for dates in May and June. There was a question on how Advisors should format posts. ACM Jason said the content will be translated into the different formats however it is entered. Advisor Klee mentioned writing a post about AI which led to a discussion on alternatives or environmentally friendly AI options.

Chair Futterman noted posts can also be video and then Advisors signed up for the following dates:

- 5/17: Advisor Klee
- 5/24: Chair Futterman
- 5/31: Advisor Reinstein
- 6/7: Advisor Donart
- 6/14: Advisor Wesslund

ACM Jason then discussed the social media statistics and what each one means. A question was asked on the City posting to Instagram to which ACM Jason explained the City's social media policy and how Instagram is used.

OTHER BUSINESS

a) City Staff Update

SM Knight talked about the following:

- City's Arbor Day event is taking place on April 25th from 9am-11am. SAG Advisors are requested for the event with Advisor Reinstein volunteering. Chair Futterman went over what the Arbor Day event entails and tabling topics.
- A compost giveaway and confidential document shredding event on May 9th from 9am to 1pm at the Hidden Creek Aquapark.
- RFP for IL Energy stretch code was awarded to Thornton Tomassetti with a meeting on March 25th. ACM Jason explained what the grant covers and how they are going to use the grant.
- Speaker series on urban wild life at Heller Nature Center on March 21st from 9am to 11am.
- Community solar with Roofless Solar and Nextamp and where each is as it relates to capacity.
- Discussed the bag tax and research undertaken to identify what is going on in the surrounding Chicago area. ACM Jason noted that they are exploring all options, keeping tabs on state legislation, and that a bag tax has not been brought before council.
- Showed SAG the new Highland Park Green Alliance logo.
- Explained the Resident Academy and ACM Jason then expanded upon what the program entails.
- ACM Jason then asked if any Advisors would be interested in marching at the Independence Day Parade to reach out to her.

b) Advisor Comments

Student Rep Hoobler updated SAG on trying to get recycling at the Highland Park High School. Discussion ensued on recycling at the high school and options they have.

Advisor Klee brought up an article about offshore wind in Lake Michigan and asked who regulates it.

Chair Futterman discussed that META is building a large data facility in Louisiana and how many data centers are appearing in IL. He mentioned the Clean Power Act that would regulate data centers and offer faster connection etc. if they source their energy from renewables. He then discussed the state legislation on a neonicotinoids ban from ornamental plants and the health and environmental impacts of the chemicals.

ADJOURNMENT

Advisor Rienstien moved to adjourn Advisor Donart seconded the motion. Voice vote, unanimous. Chair Futterman declared the meeting adjourned at 7:40 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Austin Knight, SM