

CITY OF HIGHLAND PARK CULTURAL ARTS ADVISORY GROUP
REGULAR MEETING

Tuesday, July 14, 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, July 14, 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. April 14, 2026 Meeting
- IV. Business from the Public
- V. New Business
 - a. Relocation of City-owned sculptures “Antelope” and “Forest King”
 - b. Arts Award Process Feedback & Updates
 - c. Poet Laureate Program Update
- VI. Chair Report
- VII. Staff Report
- VIII. Adjournment

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

MEETING DATE: April 14, 2026

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

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

At 6:01 PM, Chair Rota called the Cultural Arts Advisory Group (“CAAG”) regular meeting to order and Staff Liaison Bennett called the roll.

Advisors Present: Amdur, Bruno (departed 7:15 PM), Gran (departed 6:52 PM), Greenberg, Herzog, Hollander, Rota (C); Student Representatives de la Cruz, Peterson

Advisors Absent: Advisor Archambeau (VC); Student Representatives Edelstein, Sullivan

Staff Present: Amanda Bennett, Communications Manager/Staff Liaison

Also Present: Councilmember Yumi Ross (Council Liaison)

MINUTES

a) Approval of the January 13, 2026 Meeting Minutes

Advisor Bruno moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Advisor Herzog. Voice vote, unanimous. Chair Rota declared the motion passed.

BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC

No business from the public.

NEW BUSINESS

a) Photography Contest Debrief

Chair Rota invited Staff Liaison Bennett to introduce the photography contest debrief discussion. Staff Liaison Bennett explained that feedback was needed on the following topics: the new evaluation process, category options, and the proposed 2027 contest timeline.

Consensus on the new evaluation process was positive, with several advisors sharing appreciation for Advisor Gran’s work to provide guidance throughout the process and detailed rubric. Advisors felt that the new process,

while lengthy due to the volume of submissions in certain categories, represented a step forward in professionalizing the contest and delivering value to participants.

Advisor Hollander noted that category fit appeared to be an issue this year, as multiple photographs could have fit in different categories, and may have been scored differently had they been entered in other categories. Several advisors called out photographs in the “Arts & Architecture” category specifically – entries that seemed to be more “art photography” than photographs of arts and architecture. Staff Liaison Bennett noted that photographers choose their categories, so it may be worthwhile to add further guidance to help photographers choose the best fit.

With respect to “food photography,” Advisor Gran thought the category was a positive addition, but was disappointed in overall lack of participation in this category. General consensus was to retain the category for the next year since changes can take time to become established. Staff Liaison Bennett made a note to place this and category descriptions on the agenda for the October meeting.

Chair Rota expressed enthusiasm for the incorporation of the photography contest into the Taste of Highland Park marketing nevertheless, and asked if there were plans to display the works apart from the Taste. Staff Liaison Bennett indicated that photographs would be displayed at City Hall and at the Highland Park Senior Center as in years past.

Advisor Hollander asked if the City had received any feedback about the generative AI guidance. Advisor Gran provided some context on approaches to AI integration among professional photographers and other contests, explaining that photography as a field now includes multiple contexts/applications for AI, including AI-assisted tools that have been in place for a long time (such as auto-correction tools in Photoshop). Advisor Gran explained that generative AI tools, which are very accessible to non-amateurs, often involve modification to the image beyond targeted tools that are designed for use by professionals. Advisor Gran noted additional professional concerns among photographers as it pertains to authenticity in AI-generated photography.

Councilmember Ross shared that she has observed an increase in art exhibits in which digital art that is AI-enhanced, describing examples of works where artists, trained in traditional methods, use generative AI as part of the process.

Advisor Amdur concurred, noting that she has similar seen an increase in artwork that involves AI at some point in the process, beyond the assistive tools described by Advisor Gran.

Advisor Greenberg shared his professional familiarity with the field, noting that it takes knowledge and skill in the effective use of AI, and that the argument could be made that artists could choose to use it as a tool like any other. Advisor Greenberg suggested the group consider ways to include new media art so as to encourage more participation, rather than limiting access, and recommended an approach that would differentiate digital art from photography, to address Advisor Gran’s concerns.

Advisor Herzog suggested that if the group did want to pursue a “new media” approach, that CAAG consider a way to prompt artists to provide insight into the process used, both from a practical, process-oriented perspective as well as their general philosophy of art.

Advisor Greenberg concurred, and noted that there were certainly ways to require that artists share the intentionality behind their works.

Councilmember Ross described several examples of this, including two artists whose work she enjoyed at recent art fairs, who were clear about their use of AI to transform paintings. Councilmember Ross also noted that as students are encouraged to explore new technology, they also are actively innovating ways to create.

Staff Liaison Bennett suggested that, given Advisor Gran's characterization of professional photographers' concerns about AI-generated images, particularly among those working in genres like environmental photography, that Advisor Greenberg's approach to differentiate new media art from photography would balance the desire to encourage continued development of the photography contest with the interest in broadening scope to welcome artists in different areas. Staff Liaison Bennett shared that this could be addressed in October as well.

With respect to the 2027 contest, Advisors expressed support for returning to the traditional calendar. Staff Liaison Bennett shared that while there was extensive promotion, overall submissions were slightly below prior years. This may have been due to separating the photography contest from the broader Highland Park Awards nomination process. Advisors agreed that there were benefits to a unified calendar, but that the contest period should still encompass all of 2026. Staff Liaison Bennett confirmed that photographs taken at any point in 2026 would be eligible for the contest, and that nominations would be open from November 1 through December 31, 2026.

Advisors discussed the low engagement with the student contest. Student Representatives Peterson and De La Cruz provided some recommendations to increase student involvement next year, including student publications, announcements, and teacher outreach. Advisor Gran recommended reaching out at the start of the school year and shared that reverting to the Highland Park Awards timeline would be beneficial since both school districts are actively engaged in the Awards process.

b) Volunteer Opportunities

Chair Rota introduced several opportunities for CAAG members to assist with various programs throughout the year, including the Highland Park Awards ceremony and Poet Laureate Program events. Advisor Bruno explained that Poet Laureate Program Ambassadors would be very helpful. Poet Laureate Ambassadors could help pass out flyers and help out with logistics at programs.

Staff Liaison Bennett requested feedback from the group on the prospect of CAAG advisors contributing social media posts about public art sculptures over the summer and into fall, leading up to the planned public art walking tours in late September. Advisors were supportive of this approach; Staff Liaison Bennett will provide additional information, including an example post, and the group can discuss at the next meeting.

c) Poet Laureate Program Update

Chair Rota thanked Advisor Bruno for her extensive work and dedication to the Poet Laureate Program. Events to date in 2026 included a Community Poetry Reading at Secret World Books, an event with the State of Illinois Poet Laureate, Mark Turcotte, coordinated in partnership with Highland Park Poetry and East on Central, and the kids' poetry writing workshop, Leaf Town Forever.

Chair Rota previewed upcoming events, including participation at Arbor Day, another Community Poetry Reading, and an upcoming workshop with writer and veteran Hugh Martin as part of the City's America250 events slate.

Staff Liaison Bennett provided an update to CAAG discussion at the last meeting regarding the potential extension of Poet Laureate Laura Joyce-Hubbard's tenure. Staff Liaison Bennett met with CM Neukirch and ACM Jason to discuss the proposed extension and CAAG's recommendation that we retain her in the role of poet laureate for an additional year. In terms of next steps, City Manager Neukirch will request feedback from City Council; if supported by Council, Poet Laureate Joyce-Hubbard will begin planning her capstone year projects for 2027.

OTHER BUSINESS

a) Staff Report

- Awards Ceremony/Arts Award
Staff Liaison Bennett encouraged advisors to attend the April 23, 2026 Awards Ceremony, at which the photography contest winners and the Arts Award winners, Secret World Books (Gayle & Michael Brandeis) will be honored. The program begins at 6:30 PM at the HPHS auditorium.
- Place of Remembrance Update & Invitation to Participate
Staff Liaison Bennett provided an update on planning for a permanent Place of Remembrance. The City is currently in the first engagement phase, Ideation. During this phase, community feedback is invited as the design team conceptualizes how the Place of Remembrance should feel for visitors and what it should accomplish as a place of respite, reflection, and remembrance that will last for decades into the future. CAAG Advisors were invited to attend the April 16 Community Ideation Workshop and to complete the community-wide survey. Design concepts will be presented to the community at a public meeting of the working group planning for a Permanent Place of Remembrance on May 7; a community workshop on the concept designs will be held on May 11, 6:30 – 8:30 PM at The Moraine (1201 Park Ave. W.) Community feedback, especially from arts leaders such as CAAG members, is truly valued by the design team and City staff.
- Thank You from Highland Park Poetry
Staff Liaison Bennett shared thanks from Highland Park Poetry and Jennifer Dotson for the group's co-sponsorship of the March event with State of IL Poet Laureate Mark Turcotte. With well over 60 poetry loves in attendance, Highland Park Poetry was very pleased with the turnout, and appreciated Poet Laureate Laura Joyce-Hubbard's role in facilitating questions after the reading.

b) Chair Report

Chair Rota recognized graduating seniors Frances Peterson and Addison Edelstein, thanking them for their ideas and engagement over the past two years.

Chair Rota provided an update regarding the Park District's community engagement process for a new home for "Miss Nitro." The City will continue to work closely with PDHP and other partners to explore a new location for this significant sculpture.

Councilmember Ross kindly provided information about the annual Art in Bloom exhibit, a partnership between North Shore School District 112 and downtown Highland Park businesses.

ADJOURNMENT

Advisor Amdur moved to adjourn. Advisor Hollander seconded the motion. Voice vote, unanimous. Chair Rota declared the meeting adjourned at 7:28 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Amanda Bennett, Communications / Staff Liaison

MINUTES APPROVED BY THE CULTURAL ARTS ADVISORY GROUP ON:

CITY OF HIGHLAND PARK PUBLIC ART INVENTORY

Name: Forest King

Location: Laurel Park, Laurel Ave./St. Johns Ave./ Hazel Ave. between the Highland Park Library and Highland Park City Hall

Artist: Abbott Pattison

Materials: Cast Bronze

Date: Sculpted c. 1970

Installed Spring, 2000

Purchase Price: Donated by Kay & Robert Sanford (appraised at \$4,000 in 2000)

Description: **Forest King** was created by artist Abbott Pattison and is located in the pocket park east of the Rose Garden between City Hall and the Highland Park Public Library.

The 1970 cast bronze sculpture was installed in spring 2000, thanks to a donation by Kay and Robert Sanford. The piece features abstracted forms and some “globular” organic shapes that some viewers may find reminiscent of “Genesis,” Pattison’s work in the collection of Ravinia Festival. Where “Forest King” is quite linear, “Genesis” features more rounded, almost bulbous forms.

Born in Chicago in 1916, Pattison divided his time between homes and studios in the Chicago, coastal Maine, and Italy until his death in 1999. His works, typically bronze, brass, or marble, are in public and private collections around the world.



CITY OF HIGHLAND PARK PUBLIC ART INVENTORY

Name: Antelope

Location: Storage

Artist: John Kearney

Materials: Chrome (car bumpers)

Date: Installed c. 1972; Restored by John Keith and relocated in 2015; placed into storage in 2022

Purchase Price: Donation

Description: **Antelope** was crafted by artist John Kearney and was donated to the City in 1962. Antelope is made from chrome auto bumpers that are welded together, Kearney's signature materials.

Born in 1924, Kearney learned to weld as a U.S. Navy sailor during World War II. He studied at the Cranbrook Academy outside Detroit and the Università per Stranieri in Perugia, Italy before establishing his studio in Chicago, where he spent most of his career until his death in 2014.



Arts Award Criteria

The City of Highland Park Arts Award recognizes outstanding achievements or contributions to the arts in Highland Park. Individuals may nominate a deserving person or organization for the Award. The Arts Award is not limited to any one artistic discipline. Previous winners have included individuals and organizations representing arts education, visual arts, literary arts, performing arts, architecture, and digital media/graphic design.

Individuals may be recognized for artistic excellence, significant contributions to their artistic discipline or to the local arts community, arts leadership, or volunteerism for the arts. Individuals do not need to reside in Highland Park to be eligible for the Award. Regardless of residency, the nominator must demonstrate the individual's impact on the arts as part of the individual's nomination.

Organizations may be recognized for making a substantial impact on the cultural development of the community as demonstrated through exceptional artistic achievement, outstanding programming, or significant commitment to the arts. Arts entities, nonprofit organizations, and businesses supporting the arts are all eligible to be nominated for the Award.

Any person (or person representing an organization) may submit a nomination for the Award. Please note that self-nominations are not accepted.

Nominators are encouraged to review the list of prior winners available at cityhpil.com/awards. A previous winner may be nominated for the Award. However, the nominator must detail new accomplishments or achievements as part of the nomination.

Nominations must be submitted via the form below. All fields marked with a red asterisk are required. Please be as detailed as possible in your responses so that nominations may be carefully reviewed.

Arts Award nominations are reviewed by the Cultural Arts Advisory Group, with winners selected by the City Council. The City reserves the right not to select a winner.



Previous Winners of the Arts Award

Year	Winner
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2026	Secret World Books
2025	Lynne Belsky & Lisa Gold, Time to Dance
2024	Bitter Jester Foundation for the Arts 2023
	Rhoda A. Pierce
2022	The Art Center
2021	Ravinia Festival
2020	<i>no award given due to COVID-19</i>
2019	Chloe Schneider
2018	Highland Park Poetry
2017	Gabrielle Rousso
2016	Susanna Calkins
2015	Jonathan Plotkin
2014	Sandra Lewis
2013	Highland Park Public Library
2012	Irina Makkai Classical Ballet and Dance School
2011	East on Central
2010	Highland Park High School Band under the direction of Dr. James Hile
2009	Carol Honigberg
2008	Amy Amdur
2007	Jack Blane
2006	Sumner Garte
2005	Raymond Geraci
2004	FOCUS ON THE ARTS – 20th anniversary
2003	Joan Kathryn Weaver
2002	Highland Park Strings
2001	Mortimer Scheff
2000	Joan Arenberg
1999	none – not enough nominations submitted
1998	Eileen Boevers
1997	Zarin Mehta
1996	Highland Park Players
1995	Ann Slavick
1994	Ann Rosen
1993	Larry Block
1992	Apple Tree Theatre
1991	Leonard Abrahamson, Sylvia Delman, Ruth Esserman
1990	Cortesi Family and Delores Weinberg