

**MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
OF THE CITY OF HIGHLAND PARK, ILLINOIS**

MEETING DATE: Wednesday, June 24, 2026

MEETING LOCATION: Council Chambers, City Hall, 1707 St. Johns Avenue, Highland Park, IL

CALL TO ORDER

At 6:30 p.m., Chairperson Weeder called the meeting to order. This Commission meeting takes place on-site. Staff was asked to call the roll.

ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Chairperson Weeder; Commissioners Ehrlich, Greenbaum, Pines, & Portman

Commissioner Absent: Commissioner Gonka

Councilmember Present: Blumberg

Student Council Absent: Cooper Baum & Gabi Goldstein

Staff declared that a quorum was present.

Staff Present: Taub, Fontane, Coleman, & Markle

Guests Present: Ben Waldo, Associate Principal/Landscape Architect with SWA

Others Present: Gale Cerabona, Recorder

Commissioner Greenbaum arrived at 6: 32 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

There was no Approval of Minutes.

SCHEDULED BUSINESS

There was no Scheduled Business.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. Place of Remembrance Design Concept

Assistant City Manager Emily Taub highlighted the Place of Remembrance that has been discussed since 2022. She shared the history, etc. The Rose Garden was selected as the site. Firms were considered, and City Council hired SWA as the design partner. Three design concepts were narrowed as compiled from community feedback.

Ben Waldo, Associate Principal/Landscape Architect with SWA, offered a presentation which discussed the concept, schematic design, design development, construction, documentation, bidding, and construction. He expounded:

- Phase One Engagement Process, Design Ideation
- Phase Two Engagement Timeline, Design Concept Review

Engagement takeaways were shared. Analysis of Laurel Park Gardener's Memorial and historic site elements were discussed. Marshall Johnson (Jen Jensen's son-in-law) is the designer of the original site. Historic elements are the Stupey Cabin (which will remain), the Rose Garden (in honor of William C. Egan, the first rosarian in the area), and two limestone wall features. Roses, species were highlighted. Trees, native plantings, etc. complement the garden.

Mr. Waldo walked the HPC through the Concept Design. He described a loop design with a water feature, 48 trees, those who are remembered, and a flower/plant palette. There will no longer be north and south access. Circulation and commemoration areas were illustrated. Historic preference points were shared. Stories will be depicted. The legacy of Jens Jensen, William Egan and Jesse Lowe Smith will be depicted on plaque off to the side. There will be a meadow beyond containing an immersive space with paths. Aerials/renderings were shown. Historic interpretive signage will be evident. Wood-clad benches would be present. How the community responded will be incorporated. There will be 7 niches (with a limestone table, wood bench, brick paving, and landscaping). Seasonally-changing perennial plants will be evident. Materials were identified. A calm, rich (sensory experience) is intended. Lighting was shown. An extensive plant list (highlighting 4 seasons) is available.

Some HPC comments are.....

- Commissioner Ehrlich said the photos indicate tall trees. He wonders how the existing trees will be preserved (in addition to the Oak trees), asked if native grasses would be used, and if Chicago Botanic Garden would partner. Mr. Waldo identified the area where trees will be removed, per the City's arborist report. He noted many are young and not in good condition or are in poor condition, etc. Many cannot grow into healthy trees. Trees in the ravine and Oak trees will not be touched. Vertical 4'-caliper tall trees will be planted.
- Commissioner Pines asked if the maple trees would be the exact same and if they would be varied. Mr. Waldo concurred and noted, they are hybrids.

Audience comments:

- Mary Seyfarth stated her family was friends with the Egan family for 3 generations. She asked what the cost is to destroy the landmark Rose Garden, and noted this is a deep wetland, prairie; hard maple woodland. Meadows are miles away. Ms. Seyfarth discussed Millennium Park, and stated this design is vague, common-looking; a meandering path. She wonders how the 2 will be combined. The niches are okay but not good enough.

More HPC comments are.....

- Commissioner Portman stated/asked:
 - the color palette for different seasons looks nice, but he is curious if plantings will sprout, and how much maintenance there'll be. Mr. Waldo replied perennial plantings have slow-growers in a larger size and filler plantings in a smaller size. Aside from the Rose Garden, maintenance will be in the spring and during other key times. Rich soil promotes weeds, but they will be over-competed.
 - the Rose Garden went into disrepair, as no one took responsibility to care for it. Mr. Waldo said City Staff is aware of the maintenance schedule (via Public Works perhaps weekly).

- what the Winter Concept (snow removal) is. Ms. Taub stated this will include maintenance for all seasons.
- he would like to see a description of the original garden, etc. regarding plaque history location.
- what the plan is for exact wording. Mr. Waldo said there's a lot of text to be developed together with SWA and HPC/Staff.
- Commissioner Greenbaum said:
 - she doesn't see any part of historic elements of the Rose Garden in this plan. Mr. Waldo said the central circle will have the water feature. Rose beds will not be present (as they do not live up to deer pressure, etc.).
 - she is disappointed that the Rose Garden is basically going away. This is a wooded area. With trees, there will be shade, and flowers won't prosper.
 - she would like to know where the Sundial Bench would be. Mr. Waldo said, based on community feedback, this design elevates the historic preservation elements. Plants will flower, the space will succeed. Ms. Taub said the City will work with an art conservator to see if the bench can be preserved off-site. Depends on integrity of material.
 - this is a landmarked property.
 - the victims and associates of the victims deserve something more spectacular; this was a stain on the Highland Park community.
- Commissioner Pines:
 - respects the above comments. He wonders if symbols of this historic property could be resurrected with the old and the new.
 - said this is a perfect spot for this Place of Remembrance. An update of significance is appropriate; collect symbols of the path and have an ambitious plan.
- Chair Weeder:
 - thanked Mr. Waldo for presenting to the HPC in person. She noted the historical piece is addressed. She would like to understand scale. Mr. Waldo said this is 35-40' across. The niches are 14'.
 - would like to see more intimate niches. The Bench could stay at the end, and a limestone bench could be obtained. She is pleased, and would like to see wider and narrower paths.
 - said, regarding Port Clinton, she would like to see a brass plate embedded in the concrete or in the streets with 48 small marks. This would offer a grand impact. Trees can get problematic when they fail. Mr. Waldo will review same and explore the suggestions.
 - Asked that materials and design of bench at north end evoke Jens Jensen.
 - Suggested restoring rose garden pool in lieu of seating area.
 - Perhaps sundial could be incorporated as a design element.
 - thanked Mr. Waldo for all of the hard work.
- Commissioner Portman:
 - asked what will be at the entry on St. Johns. Mr. Waldo stated there may be a sign or a wayfinding element. He believes people will enter from Hazel. Signage will take place in the Design Development stage.
 - said it could be modest.

Councilmember Blumberg thanked and appreciates the HPC for its input. There is a concern the physical historic elements aren't being preserved; though feedback indicates the design direction is accurate. He noted some stakeholders don't want anything to be walked on, as it may be disrespectful. Councilmember Blumberg thanked SWA for the efforts.

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2 Final HPC comments:

- 3 • Commissioner Portman asked what is happening with the direction of Port Clinton. Ms. Taub said
4 there will be a pause on that subject for now.
5 • Chair Weeder said the presentation and work being done is very thoughtful.
6

7 Planner Markle advised that Chair Weeder and Commissioner Gonka provided written feedback. Copies are
8 available. They reminded this is a Pre-Application review.
9

10 **BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC**

11 There was no Business from the Public.
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13 **OTHER BUSINESS**

14 1. Next Regular Meeting is Scheduled for July 9, 2026

15 The next regular HPC Meeting is scheduled for July 9, 2026.
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17 **STAFF REPORT**

18 Planner Markle advised Commissioner Hartinger has resigned from the HPC and won't be returning.
19

20 **ADJOURNMENT**

21 Commissioner Portman moved to adjourn at 7:52 p.m. Commissioner Ehrlich seconded the motion.
22

23 On a voice vote

24 Voting Yea Chairperson Weeder; Commissioners Ehrlich, Greenbaum, Pines, & Portman
25 Voting Nay: None
26

27 Staff declared that the motion passed unanimously.
28

29 Respectfully Submitted,
30

31
32 Gale Cerabona

33 Recorder
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