



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

**MEETING MINUTES
CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
SUSTAINABILITY ADVISORY BOARD
Tower 101, Suite 1100
101 NE 3rd Avenue, Fort Lauderdale, FL
33301 May 19, 2025 – 6:00 PM**

Cumulative Attendance 1/2025 through 12/2025					
	Members	Appt by	Attendance	Present	Absent
1	Robert Daoust, Vice Chair	II	P	2	2
2	Kelly Charles	IV	P	4	0
3	David Blattner, Chair	I	P	4	0
4	Suzee Bailey	C	P	3	1
5	Spencer Lasday	IV	P	2	1
6	Robert Landers	III	A	1	3
7	Nicole Barnett	M	P	4	0
8	Sarah Rahmankhah	IV	P	1	0
9	Vacant	M	-	-	-
10	Vacant	III	-	-	-
11	Vacant	II	-	-	-
12	Parker Jacobson-Bertanzetti, Non-Voting Youth Chair	C	P	3	1

*attending via Zoom

Staff Present

Glen Hadwen, Sustainability Manager

Mark Hagerty, Floodplain Manager

Dr. Nancy Gassman, Deputy Director of Public Works/Chief Resilience Officer – Sustainability (via Zoom)

Luz Ramirez, Sustainability Coordinator

Mallory Jones, Sustainability Administrator (via Zoom)

Nali Liu, Sustainability Analyst

Jamie Opperlee, Recording Clerk, Prototype, Inc.

I. Call to Order/Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. Roll was called and it was noted a quorum was present.

New Board members Sarah Rahmankhah and Spencer Lasday introduced themselves at this time.

II. Approval of Minutes

- April 28, 2025

Motion made by Ms. Charles, seconded by Mr. Lasday, to approve. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

III. Liaison Report

- **Net Zero Plan Presentation to Commission**

Ms. Ramirez recalled that the Net Zero Plan was presented to the City Commission on March 4, 2025. The Commission directed Staff to bring back a presentation on specific items, including funding requests, policy changes, recommendations, and ongoing initiatives. This follow-up presentation is scheduled for the Commission's June 17, 2025, meeting and will include the 55 actions identified in the Net Zero Plan. A copy of the presentation is included in the Board members' information packets.

- **EV Fleet Communication to Commission**

Mr. Hadwen advised that the Board's communication to the City Commission from their April 28, 2025 meeting, which addressed the City's electric vehicle (EV) fleet, will be presented at the same Commission meeting as the upcoming Net Zero Plan presentation. The communication recommends that the City adopt a policy to electrify all its light-duty non-emergency vehicles by the year 2035. He encouraged one of the Board members to attend the June 17 meeting in order to address the Commission if they have questions regarding the communication. Mr. Lasday volunteered to attend the June 17 Commission meeting.

- **Switch Together Solar Group Buying Program**

Mr. Hadwen explained that this program is the successor to the Broward Solar Co-op, which was a group buying program for Broward County. The Board supported the Co-op and may send a communication to the City Commission in the future in support of this new group.

Mr. Hadwen introduced new Sustainability Analyst Nali Liu, at this time.

IV. Presentations

- **Developing Tools for Private Resilience (Matthew Jones, Ph.D., P.E., Hazen and Sawyer)**

Matthew Jones, representing consultant Hazen and Sawyer, explained that this firm is working with the City on the Fortify Lauderdale initiative. He provided an update on how the City may aid residents in private resilience efforts.

The goal of Fortify Lauderdale is to improve resilience to the effects of climate change in Fort Lauderdale's most vulnerable communities. Mr. Jones emphasized that resilience means not only prevention of damage and disruption but recovery from it as well. There are several different pieces of this initiative which are intended to improve the City's resilience, which include:

- A City-wide vulnerability assessment
- Accelerating infrastructure improvements in neighborhoods
- Increased funding for seawalls, roads, and bridges
- Improved resilience standards for existing stormwater infrastructure
- Increased staffing and prioritization of the stormwater program

Mr. Jones noted that the Fortify Lauderdale initiative focuses on City-owned infrastructure, including stormwater drainage infrastructure, within rights-of-way on public facilities. In order to broadly improve resilience, some level of partnership is required between the City and private property owners.

Another key aspect of the private resilience initiative is the time it takes to design and implement infrastructure projects. The City is moving forward with public resilience improvements with the goal of completing these improvements by 2034. The City is developing guidance to encourage private owners to work in concert with improvements to public infrastructure, as well as to not be dependent upon the completion of those public improvements before they are implemented.

There are four main pieces to this effort:

- Review of existing local, regional, and national guidance and programs including credit and incentive mechanisms
- Outreach meetings to different stakeholders with an interest in resilience, including City Staff, home and business owners, and the development community
- Development of two private resilience guidance documents for commercial and for residential properties.
- Development of cost-sharing grant program recommendations to incentivize private resilience

Mr. Jones explained that the cost-sharing recommendations address additional communications, online resources, incentives in the form of potential cost-sharing or grant programs the City may undertake, and potential Ordinance changes. He emphasized that this range of options was informed by literature review as well as outreach meetings, but does not recommend any one specific option.

Ms. Jacobson-Bertanzetti arrived at 6:21 p.m.

Mr. Jones addressed the guidance provided, which presents a variety of perspectives from different stakeholder groups. He noted that there is a need for greater education in relation to private property resiliency, including clarification of the City's and homeowners' roles and responsibilities in flood protection and resilience. Different physical measures can be implemented, and national and regional resources are cited so owners can seek additional information. The guidance also includes notes on contexts specific to Fort Lauderdale which residents may need to consider when reviewing broader resources.

Another key outcome of the outreach meetings was the need for an overview of flood insurance for private property owners. The guidance identifies best practices, links to a variety of existing City resources and actions that can be taken before storms occur, and addresses recovery processes.

Thus far, the review and outreach phases of Fortify Lauderdale have been completed, and Staff and the consultant team are finalizing drafts of both commercial and residential guidance documents, as well as a memorandum recommending cost-sharing grant options. They are expected to be available within the next few weeks.

Ms. Charles asked if there are any actions that can be taken by the City and private owners to change flood zones. Floodplain Manager Mark Hagerty explained that it is possible to change flood zones for individual properties, depending upon the actions taken; however, this is difficult to accomplish without elevating properties, which may have an impact on the entire neighborhood and stormwater system. It is crucial to maintain a balance of these considerations.

Ms. Bailey also asked what recommendations are made for developers and construction companies so they can adapt and implement nature-based solutions and improvements into the areas they develop. Mr. Jones replied that these entities would need to meet existing state and local requirements as well as other options that can be identified. He recalled that during the outreach process, a number of developers indicated interest in taking steps to address stormwater control and flood protection. The City is also encouraged to implement resilience practices that private development may emulate.

Ms. Bailey noted that height restrictions are a consideration if buildings are elevated, and asked if Hazen and Sawyer were recommending that municipalities begin permitting with this in mind. Mr. Jones replied that while this explicit recommendation has not been made, this has been noted as a subject worth further consideration.

Vice Chair Daoust observed that flood insurance rates are less clearly connected to the risk of flooding, as they consider floodplain elevations more closely than structural changes that can be made by property owners. Mr. Jones advised that because flood insurance is a federal program, there are limits on what can be done to affect it. There are options that the City may consider to incentivize property owners to make certain changes.

Mr. Jones recalled that when resilience was discussed with the development community, there was discussion of whether or not a developer might incorporate additional resilience features into a property in order to make it more marketable. It was determined that there are some quantifiable steps that could be taken by developers which might be more palatable to that community.

Vice Chair Daoust also requested more information on potential cost-sharing measures. Mr. Jones replied that the My Safe Florida Home program, which is a state program, focuses on protection from wind damage during storms; there is also the more recent Elevate Florida program, which provides grant funds to assist with flood protection efforts. The latter program requires a 25% match.

Other options allow the City to engage directly in incentivizing resilience improvements through a cost-sharing program. This would allow the City to help fund private resilience improvements in a way that provides a broader public benefit as well. The guidance also includes potential tax incentives and stormwater fee credits among the menu of options.

- **Private Resilience and the Community Rating System (Mark Hagerty, Floodplain Manager, City of Fort Lauderdale)**

Floodplain Manager Mark Hagerty gave a PowerPoint presentation on the City's Design and Construction Manual and the benefits of low impact development. . Floodplain management enforces the Florida Building Code flood regulations and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) floodplain management bulletins as it relates to development in the floodplain for new construction as well as properties that are being substantially rebuilt. These Codes ensure that new and rebuilt structures will be protected from flooding. Stormwater infrastructure includes the systems used to keep roadways drained.

Mr. Hagerty explained that the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) is managed by FEMA and has been in effect since 1967. 23,000 communities across the U.S. participate in this program; without participation, they would not be eligible for flood insurance, grants, or disaster assistance funding. Participating communities must enforce the minimum regulations for new construction or substantial improvements.

Flood insurance is required for buildings in high-risk zones which have a one-in-four chance of flooding over the life of a 30-year mortgage. A special flood hazard area is defined as having a 1% chance of flooding in any given year as determined by FEMA mapping. All properties with mortgages in high-hazard areas must carry flood insurance. Mr. Hagerty emphasized that the recommendation to have flood insurance is not limited to high-hazard areas, but applies to properties outside those areas as well. For most properties outside high-hazard areas, flood insurance is often less than \$1,000/year. The damage caused by most floods averages \$100,000 to \$120,000.

The Community Rating System (CRS) is a voluntary program that is considered one step above the NFIP. While 23,000 communities participate in the NFIP, only 1,500 participate in the CRS, which has higher regulatory standards. Fort Lauderdale is one of these communities.

The CRS has three goals, which are:

- Reduce and avoid flood damage to insurable properties
- Strengthen and support the aspects of the CRS program itself
- Foster comprehensive floodplain management in partnership between public and private infrastructure

At present, Fort Lauderdale is considered a Class 7 community, which provides a 15% discount on all flood insurance policies in high-hazard areas. The City hopes to reach a minimum designation of Class 5, which would increase that discount to a minimum of 25%. Programs that would help reach this goal are currently under development.

The total number of policies in Fort Lauderdale as of January 2023 was 34,764 policies. Premiums total \$16 million each year for the properties covered by those policies. The CRS discount of 15% saves these policy holders \$2.5 million per year. The average policy sees a CRS discount of \$72.06. If the City did not participate in the CRS program, it would have a liability of over \$9 billion per year that would not be covered by insurance.

As of January 2023, 5,002 total claims were paid with a total amount of \$166 million. Mr. Hagerty pointed out that these figures were compiled before the severe flood event of April 2023.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends an approach to land development or redevelopment that works with nature to manage stormwater as closely as possible, treating it as a resource rather than a waste product. There are creditable steps that property owners can take under the CRS program, including the following:

- Bio-retention facilities
- Rain gardens
- Vegetated rooftops
- Rain barrels
- Permeable pavement
- Limited use of fill

Mr. Hagerty reviewed these items, noting that some options, such as rain barrels, can be easily implemented at individual homes at relatively little expense. Other concepts, such as permeable pavement, are less useful due to South Florida's high water table. He addressed limited fill in particular, pointing out that this can decrease the amount of flooding across multiple properties.

All of the options listed above are in the Design and Construction Manual adopted by the City in 2019. Mr. Hagerty continued that Staff hopes to partner with both consultant

Hazen and Sawyer and the Sustainability Advisory Board (SAB) to make recommendations to the City Commission that can incentivize developers to use these techniques.

Ms. Charles asked if cisterns are available that can capture rainwater beneath structures and reuse it for irrigation or other purposes that can use gray water. Mr. Hagerty confirmed that this is an option listed in the design and construction manual.

Ms. Bailey stated that another option she has heard raised at various meetings is temporary water storage beneath facilities such as basketball or tennis courts in parks. She expressed concern that while this option is in use in other Broward communities, it has not been adopted in Fort Lauderdale, and asked how the Board can encourage the Commission to consider this possibility. Mr. Hagerty again emphasized the importance of partnership between City Staff and the Board in promoting options such as these.

Vice Chair Daoust expressed concern that without a community-wide approach to resilience, homes on raised lots would become even less affordable to the average homeowner. Mr. Hagerty recalled that Fort Lauderdale is already taking steps for which they are not getting CRS credit, including addressing resilience, stormwater, and floodplain management because paperwork substantiating these steps has not been documented properly thus far.

Ms. Rahmankhah requested additional information on the relationship between floodplain management and urban forestry, noting that trees play a role in rain gardens and water retention facilities. Mr. Hagerty confirmed that there is an ongoing partnership involving the Directors of the Building, Engineering, and Planning Departments, with whom he has worked to advance the initiative of improving the City's CRS rating. He reiterated that either incentives or regulations can help the City reach its goal.

Ms. Rahmankhah also requested more information on limits on the steps the City can implement. Mr. Hagerty referred to the recently passed Senate Bill (SB) 408, which does not allow municipalities to enforce new floodplain maps until FEMA has made them official. Broward County's maps took effect as of January 2024.

Ms. Jacobson-Bertanzetti asked if there are methods for community outreach other than the design and construction manual, explaining that some of the simpler solutions could be implemented by individual homeowners. Mr. Hagerty confirmed that the City is seeking to broaden its outreach, speaking to homeowners' associations and advisory bodies. He encouraged the Board members to contact his office if they would like their homeowners' or civic associations to see a presentation.

Ms. Barnett asked if it would be helpful for the Board to send a communication to the City Commission regarding the implementation of additional solutions. Mr. Hagerty stated that it would be useful for the Board to start this conversation with the City

Commission, emphasizing the importance of advisory bodies, consultants, and City Staff working together to advance nature-based solutions to help address flooding.

V. New Business

Ms. Barnett explained that Broward County's Sustainability Advisory Committee Coalition is a group consisting of members of other municipality's sustainability advisory boards which meet regularly and share resources. She and Ms. Bailey have each attended meetings of this coalition.

Motion made by Ms. Barnett, seconded by Mr. Lasday, for the Board to consider adding a recurring Agenda Item for the Sustainability Advisory Committee Coalition. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

Mr. Hadwen advised that this Agenda Item would allow Board members the opportunity to report on the Coalition meetings they attend.

Ms. Barnett continued that each of these advisory entities operates differently. The Coalition members recommend that each committee or board establish an annual meeting with their elected officials to review their accomplishments and the City's goals. The different committees can also recommend language from local ordinances, discuss the purpose of the advisory body, and share information about County resources. The different entities would share their agendas so they are aware of the issues addressed in other communities.

VI. Old Business

Mr. Hadwen briefly reviewed upcoming resilience-related events included on the Agenda.

Ms. Bailey provided the Board members with information on upcoming Residents 4 Resilience events and speakers.

VII. Proposed Communication

Motion made by Ms. Charles, seconded by Ms. Bailey, that we, in the next meeting, put some form of communication together on today's presentation. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

Chair Blattner recommended providing additional clarity on what the proposed communication would address. The Board discussed the topics addressed during the presentations, including low-impact development, encouragement of techniques in the design and construction manual, storm resiliency measures in parks, and more.

Dr. Nancy Gassman, Deputy Director of Public Works/Chief Resilience Officer - Sustainability, noted that when the current Parks Bond project manager was hired, one of the critical aspects that led to their selection was a criterion requiring the incorporation of sustainability into designs, particularly in relation to sea level rise and other effects of climate change. While some of these items were incorporated into design work, an analysis showed that these additional items would raise the costs above available funding levels, which led to the removal of some resiliency/sustainability features in projects.

Dr. Gassman added that the Parks Bond project manager was also expected to leverage additional funding acquired through grants. The City has applied for billions of dollars' worth of grant funding and has secured grants for between \$35 million and \$50 million toward resilience projects.

Ms. Charles suggested that the Board members review the Design and Construction Manual before the next meeting to familiarize themselves with some of the items recommended in it. They could then encourage the City to adopt as many of the manual's policies as possible, some of which are inexpensive and could be easily implemented by developers as well as homeowners. Mr. Hadwen characterized the manual as a palette of tools available for adoption.

VIII. Comments

Chair Blattner advised that he would be attending the June meeting via Zoom.

IX. Items for Next Meeting

Mr. Hadwen noted that topics on the June Agenda include living seawalls and mangroves. No speaker has been identified thus far.

X. Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Committee at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Any written public comments made 48 hours prior to the meeting regarding items discussed during the proceedings have been attached hereto.