



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

January 26, 2026 – 6:00 PM

Cumulative Attendance					
1/2026 through 12/2026					
	Members	Appt by	Attendance	Present	Absent
1	Robert Daoust	II	A	0	1
2	Kelly Charles (arr. 6:05)	IV	P	1	0
3	David Blattner, Chair	I	P	1	0
4	Suzee Bailey	C	P	1	0
5	Spencer Lasday, Vice Chair (arr. 6:03)	IV	P	1	0
6	Vacant	III	-	-	-
7	Vacant	M			
8	Sara Rahmankhah	IV	P	1	0
9	Idan Straus	M	P	1	0
10	Vacant	III	-	-	-
11	Vacant	II	-	-	-
12	Parker Jacobson-Bertanzetti, Non-Voting Youth Chair (arr. 6:03)	C	P	1	0

*attending via Zoom

Staff Present

Melissa Doyle, Division Manager, Public Works (via Zoom)

Glen Hadwen, Sustainability Manager

Silvia Duque Anez, Sustainability Coordinator

Luz Ramirez, Sustainability Administrator

Dr. Nancy Gassman, Deputy Director, Parks and Recreation / Chief Resilience Officer

Marco Aguilera, Chief Waterways Officer

Carl Williams, Director, Parks and Recreation (via Zoom)

Enrique Sanchez, Deputy Director, Parks and Recreation

K. Cruitt, Recording Clerk, Prototype, Inc.

Also Present

Ted Inserra, River Oaks Civic Association

Stacey Miscisin, Croissant Park Civic Association

Chris Wedge, FieldTurf (via Zoom)

Communication to the City Commission

None.

I. Call to Order/Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m. Roll was called and it was noted a quorum was present.

II. Approval of Minutes

I. December 15, 2025

Ms. Rahmankhah noted a correction to the spelling of her name.

Motion made by Mr. Strauss, seconded by Ms. Bailey, to approve the minutes as corrected. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

III. Liaison Report

- **Urban Forestry Master Plan Resolution**

Ms. Duque Anez reported that the Urban Forestry Master Plan was accepted by the City Commission by Resolution at the January 6, 2026 Commission meeting. City Staff is working to prioritize the Plan's recommendations and prepare necessary budget requests for fiscal year (FY) 2026-2027.

- **CDP 2025 A Score**

Ms. Duque Anez continued that Fort Lauderdale received a score of A by the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP), which recognizes companies and local governments that demonstrate leadership in environmental transparency. 120 cities worldwide received an A score. Accomplishments included creation of a Net Zero Plan, completion of a City-wide vulnerability assessment and adaptation plan, continuing improvements to the City's greenhouse gas emissions inventories, and advancements in urban forestry.

- **17th Annual Southeast Florida Climate Leadership Summit**

Fort Lauderdale recently participated in the 17th annual Southeast Florida Climate Leadership Summit, which was hosted by Palm Beach County on December 16-17, 2025. Relevant topics included collaboration and regional coordination, nature-based solutions, green infrastructure, and other programs to manage extreme heat. The 2026 summit will be held in Fort Lauderdale on November 4-6, 2026.

Vice Chair Lasday and Ms. Parker-Bertanzetti arrived at 6:03 p.m.

Ms. Charles arrived at 6:05 p.m.

IV. Presentations

The following Items were taken out of order on the Agenda.

- **Synthetic Turf on City Property – Enrique Sanchez, Deputy Director, Parks & Recreation**

Mr. Hadwen introduced Enrique Sanchez, Deputy Director of Parks and Recreation, to discuss how the City uses synthetic turf, as well as its benefits and the considerations made when selecting it.

Mr. Sanchez explained that artificial turf fields offer a range of benefits, particularly for parks and recreational facilities that undergo heavy use. He emphasized its durability, stating that unlike natural grass, artificial turf can withstand consistent foot traffic and organized play without developing bare spots or muddy areas. This allows fields to remain open and playable throughout the year, reducing cancellations and maximizing access for players, schools, and the general public. Artificial turf fields can also provide a more uniform surface which helps reduce uneven ground that can contribute to trips and falls.

As Fort Lauderdale has grown, artificial turf fields have provided the City with the ability to meet the needs of an increased population without having to purchase additional land or convert more land area to use for athletic fields. Artificial turf also requires substantially less ongoing maintenance than natural grass, which lowers long-term maintenance costs and helps conserve water. The reduced need for chemical treatments also supports environmental stewardship by minimizing nutrient runoff into stormwater systems.

Mr. Sanchez advised that Fort Lauderdale has artificial turf fields at Carter Park, Mills Pond Park, and Holiday Park. These fields were converted to improve durability, as natural turf resulted in bare spots and shutdown of spaces at the end of sports seasons.

Chair Blattner asked how long the City has used artificial turf. Mr. Sanchez replied that it was first installed at Carter Park approximately 15 years ago.

Ms. Bailey asked if the City considered other options when looking into the use of artificial turf. Mr. Sanchez explained that the City weighed all options, recalling that there were questions and concerns about the installation of artificial turf fields. The City considered studies by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and National Institutes of Health (NIH), but did not find evidence of harm. He pointed out that players of contact sports often sustain fewer injuries when playing on artificial turf fields.

Mr. Sanchez continued that the City is currently considering replacing the artificial turf used at the Carter Park stadium, as the existing turf is reaching the end of its useful life.

He added that the City has moved away from using crumb rubber infill and instead uses a clay product which makes the surface cooler.

Chris Wedge, representing provider FieldTurf, further clarified that Carter Park used a combination of sand rubber and crumb rubber. Crumb rubber is made from recycled tires. The updated turf will use a heavier sand-based infill system which includes “cool clay,” which helps control surface temperatures.

Chair Blattner recalled that when crumb rubber was widely used, there were concerns that it may have contributed to sports injuries, including concussions and “turf toe.” He asked if the new material reduces the likelihood of these injuries. Mr. Wedge replied that there are both pros and cons for the use of synthetic turf. With respect to concussions, data indicates no difference between soft grass and hard synthetic turf for football or soccer.

Mr. Wedge continued that in the case of soccer, most concerns were not for concussions, but were based on cases of non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma experienced among a group of soccer goalies. He stated that a separate study showed cases were lower among female soccer players than the general public.

With regard to turf toe, Mr. Wedge advised that there is nothing to indicate this injury is directly related to the use of modern synthetic turf. He concluded that additional health concerns, such as staph infections, are caused by factors other than turf. He concluded that while synthetic turf is known to be hotter than natural grass and can contribute to abrasions, reports of most lower-extremity injuries have been anecdotal.

Ms. Jacobson-Bertanzetti asked if studies have been done on flood levels before and after the installation of synthetic turf. Mr. Wedge replied that he was not aware of studies of this nature, but noted that every field in which synthetic turf is installed must be permitted by the appropriate Water Management District. Water is moved off the surface of artificial turf and collected elsewhere, such as retention ponds or swales.

Ms. Rahmankhah asked if the City examines water quality where synthetic turf is installed to ensure there are no raised levels of toxic chemicals or microplastics. Chief Resilience Officer Dr. Nancy Gassman clarified that she was not aware of any monitoring programs for microplastics at the City, County, or state level. She added that any fields on which synthetic turf is installed would not impact drinking water or groundwater.

Ms. Bailey asked if the breakdown of substances could impact the Biscayne Aquifer, from which the City receives its water supply. Dr. Gassman explained that drinking water is not impacted by playing fields. She concluded that the synthetic turf industry has existed for over 20 years, and any issues related to their use should have been revealed by this time.

Ms. Rahmankhah noted that the use of synthetic turf represents a significant increase in plastics, and asked if the City planned to implement its use in other parks, pointing out

that this contradicted a policy of reducing plastic use. Mr. Sanchez explained that there is a difference between single-use and long-term plastic uses, adding that plans for Carter Park include reusing some of its current infill material.

Mr. Wedge further clarified that the synthetic turf used in Fort Lauderdale has a backing which allows water to reach the ground. The infill profile is 70% sand by weight, which provides an infiltration process through the turf.

Ms. Bailey commented that the Board has not had the opportunity to see a presentation on synthetic turf from an opposing viewpoint. She pointed out that a recurring concern in South Florida is the heat associated with synthetic turf, concluding that artificial turf contributes to this concern and both heat and saltwater intrusion contribute to the breakdown of its plastics. Mr. Wedge acknowledged that there is degradation over time to the plastics used in artificial turf, as blades can thin, shrink, or break. He did not have information related to the possibility that this breakdown may affect water systems.

Ms. Bailey cited concerns with per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) and other synthetic materials entering the water supply. Dr. Gassman advised that the City is currently investing in a new water treatment system which will be subject to updated requirements of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). She reiterated that the City's drinking water is not impacted by the use of synthetic turf fields within City limits.

Ms. Bailey stated that she did not agree, and planned to provide additional materials related to the opposition to use of artificial turf. Dr. Gassman pointed out that Staff had provided information on why the City chose to use artificial turf in some locations. Ms. Bailey asserted that the Board members raised concerns with this use at their previous meeting, but were not being presented with both sides of the issue.

Chair Blattner asked if standards for synthetic turf also apply to its use in residential settings, or if the requirements of that turf are different. Mr. Wedge replied that there are typically lower standards for and fewer regulations for general residential use. These include different rules associated with water management.

Ms. Duque Anez stated that in November 2025, the City Commission received a communication informing them of a new Florida Statute related to the regulation of synthetic turf in single-family residential properties smaller than one acre in size. The Statute preempts municipalities from regulating this use in those locations until the state has created new regulations.

Chair Blattner recalled that at the December 2025 meeting, the Board had raised the issues of both single-family use of synthetic turf and the City's use of this turf on some recreational fields. He concluded that after today's presentation and discussion, the Board may wish to determine if there are environmental or other reasons why they might recommend that the City reconsider its use.

Vice Chair Lasday requested additional information on drainage and water storage related to artificial turf, recalling that extreme flooding has affected all of Broward County in recent years. Mr. Wedge replied that natural grass fields drain at a rate of roughly 6 inches per hour, while synthetic turf fields drain between 75 and 120 inches per hour. He emphasized that synthetic turf is not widely used across Broward County and does not appear to make any difference to Fort Lauderdale's waterways.

Ms. Rahmankhah asked if the City plans to install more synthetic turf in its parks. Mr. Sanchez reiterated that there are plans to replace the existing artificial turf at Carter Park; in addition, Sunrise Middle School will replace grass with an artificial turf field for its flag football program, and there are discussions regarding use of this turf at Hardy Park. There are no plans to install artificial turf on baseball or softball fields. Mr. Wedge added that all Broward County public high schools are converting their stadium fields to synthetic turf.

Ms. Bailey asked if the City felt synthetic turf did not present any health risks. Mr. Sanchez replied that the City is comfortable using that material due to the studies and other information it has seen.

- **Exploring Options to Reduce Single-Use Plastics on City Property and Events – Silvia Duque, Sustainability Coordinator**

Ms. Duque Anez provided an overview of the City's research exploring options for the reduction of single-use plastics at City properties and events. Staff looked into the environmental and economic impacts of single-use plastics, as well as existing local and state policies that may override municipal actions.

Single-use plastics, as well as polystyrene (Styrofoam) and glass, contribute to debris as well as accumulation of microplastics. Staff began its research considering only single-use plastics, but broadened the scope of this research to include the other two materials as well.

Action taken at the state level limits what the City can do to regulate single-use plastics and other materials of concern. These include the preemption of regulation of:

- Disposable plastic bags and other plastic auxiliary containers
- Product packaging
- Polystyrene in regulated businesses

Staff's research considered where the City has authority to regulate single-use plastics. Senate Bill (SB) 958, which was filed in December 2025 and is being discussed in the current legislative session, would establish statewide rules allowing certified compostable or biodegradable options in lieu of plastic straws. State Statutes require municipalities passing these types of regulations to prepare a business impact statement before moving forward with an ordinance. Florida Statutes also provide businesses with avenues to challenge local ordinances.

Elements of existing policy in Fort Lauderdale include:

- Prohibition of the sale and distribution of plastic straws on a City-wide basis;
- Prohibition of use of polystyrene products on City properties;
- Litter, beach, and event-related Code provisions;
- Sustainable purchasing policy for internal City operations;
- Different event concession and vendor agreements

Opportunities identified by Staff for the regulation of single-use plastics apply to City-owned properties, City-sponsored and City-permitted events, City vendors, concession agreements, and purchasing policies.

Staff developed a set of nine recommendations, which are divided into two categories:

- Code amendments:
 - Regulating single-use plastic service items used by vendors, contractors, and permittees operating on City properties or facilities or at City events;
 - Prohibiting use of unencapsulated expanded polystyrene in floating docks, platforms, and buoys on City properties and facilities;
 - Formalizing prohibition of glass containers on public beaches and beach access areas in City Code;
 - Expanding and strengthening enforcement of the plastic straw Ordinance to include plastic stirrers, and clarifying compliance mechanisms;
 - Enhancing existing polystyrene restrictions to require event organizers to formally attest to compliance;
 - Prohibition of intentional outdoor release of plastic confetti, glitter, or balloons
- Additional opportunities:
 - Updating the City's purchasing policy to align with the existing and proposed recommendations;
 - Expanding education and outreach efforts to improve awareness, compliance, and internal coordination;
 - Amend the City's event and vendor agreements to explicitly reference and enforce existing and future single-use plastic regulations

These recommendations have been transmitted to the City Manager's Office for review. While Staff is awaiting feedback from City leadership, they have also identified opportunities to have a more direct impact on the regulation of single-use plastics. Staff has drafted recommendations for a Parks and Recreation request for proposal (RFP) on beverage and food concession which include plastic-reduction language and emphasized the broader idea of regulation, including bans on single-use plastic utensils, polystyrene containers, and single-use plastic decorations.

Staff was also able to influence an ordinance entitled "Temporary License Agreement for the Sale, Service, and Delivery of Food and Alcoholic Beverages on City Beaches" to include bans on plastic straws and polystyrene. They will continue to look for additional opportunities for action.

Mr. Hadwen advised that Staff has invited a representative of the City of Hollywood to attend the Board's February 2026 meeting and discuss that city's plastic reduction efforts. He added that the representative may also be able to share information and insights on Hollywood's policies for use of synthetic turf.

Ms. Charles addressed the recommendation regarding confetti, glitter, and balloons, asking if it would be possible to add a ban on balloons at City parks. Dr. Gassman explained that Florida Statutes prohibit the intentional release of balloons to the air. In addition, City parks already have certain prohibitions, and signage is being updated to clarify that balloons are not permitted on City beaches. She cautioned that it could be difficult to pass a prohibition on balloons in parks.

Motion made by Ms. Bailey to bring this in front of the Commission.

Mr. Hadwen reiterated that another presentation is scheduled for February, and suggested that the Board wait to hear information from Hollywood before taking action. He pointed out that the Board may be able to offer direction to the Commission as they implement some of the measures to reduce single-use plastics.

The **motion** died for lack of second.

Vice Chair Lasday asked if prohibitions for vendors and licensees apply to events such as the City's wine and seafood festivals, the Farmers Market, and the Tortuga Festival. Ms. Duque Anez advised that the recommendations would apply to any City-sponsored and/or City-permitted events and the vendors and concessionaires at those events. There is already language in some event contracts that address these concerns. She noted that the City must also identify better ways to enforce these requirements.

Ms. Duque Anez added that some recommendations are nuanced, including economic hardship waivers that would allow smaller businesses making less than a certain income threshold to waive the requirements.

V. New Business

- **Presentation by Marco Aguilera, Chief Waterways Officer, about the proposed Living Seawall Permit Fee Assistance Program**

Chief Waterways Officer Marco Aguilera advised that the City Commission has requested that he provide a presentation on the Living Seawall Permit Fee Assistance Program to the SAB. This presentation will be made at the February 2026 meeting. The presentation will focus on the proposed Living Seawall Permit Fee Assistance Program, which has been discussed by the City Commission. The Commission would like the Board to provide feedback on the proposal.

VI. Old Business

- **Sustainability Advisory Committee Coalition (SACC)**

Ms. Rahmankhah reported that she and Ms. Duque Anez had attended this meeting, which included discussion of expectations and goals for 2026. The Committee emphasized the importance of aligning sustainability policies across municipalities, and addressed plastic and waste reduction, Fort Lauderdale's Urban Forestry Master Plan, composting at community gardens, and more.

Ms. Rahmankhah added that the Committee also discussed changing the day of their regular meetings to the first or third Monday of each month. Ms. Duque Anez requested Board input on this proposal. It was noted that the Board may meet occasionally on the third Monday of the month to accommodate holidays. There was consensus to recommend a change to the first Monday of each month.

It was determined that the Board would continue sending different members to the Committee meetings rather than establishing a single representative.

VII. Proposed Communication

None.

VIII. Comments

Ms. Duque Anez informed the members that the Wild Florida 5K is scheduled for Saturday, January 31, 2026. A public interest and environmental conference is scheduled for mid-February in Gainesville, and a Disasters Expo USA will be held in Miami Beach in March. The University of Miami will hold a Resilience 365 conference scheduled for March 17-18, 2026.

Ms. Bailey reported that a monkey sanctuary located in Dania Beach is offering a program for interested students and others on February 21-22, 2026.

IX. Items for Next Meeting

Mr. Hadwen noted the following items for the February meeting:

- Discuss environmental impacts of synthetic turf;
- Speaker from Hollywood to discuss that city's single-use plastic policy, possibly addressing synthetic turf as well;
- Mr. Aguilera's living seawall program presentation

X. Adjournment

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There being no further business to come before the Committee at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 7:29 p.m.

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

[Minutes prepared by K. McGuire, Prototype, Inc.]