



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

February 23, 2026 – 6:00 PM

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

*attending via Zoom

Staff Present

Glen Hadwen, Sustainability Manager

Silvia Duque Anez, Sustainability Coordinator

Dr. Nancy Gassman, Deputy Director, Parks and Recreation / Chief Resilience Officer (via Zoom)

Marco Aguilera, Chief Waterways Officer

Jorg Hruschka, Chief of Volunteer Services

K. Cruitt, Recording Clerk, Prototype, Inc.

Also Present

Elaine Franklin, Environmental Sustainability Coordinator, City of Hollywood

Ted Inserra, River Oaks Civic Association

Stacey Miscisin, Croissant Park Civic Association

Communication to the City Commission

None.

I. **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 6:11 p.m. Roll was called and it was noted a quorum was present.

II. **Approval of Minutes**

I. **January 26, 2026**

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

III. **Liaison Report**

- **Welcome Fabiana Ahumada, new Board Member**

New Board member Fabiana Ahumada introduced herself at this time.

- **Reappointments and absences**

Ms. Duque Anez reported that Chair Blattner, Ms. Charles, and Vice Chair Lasday have all been reappointed to the Board. She briefly reviewed attendance requirements.

- **State legislative actions**

Ms. Duque Anez continued that the 2026 Florida Legislative Session began on January 13, 2026 and is set to conclude on March 13. Mr. Hadwen explained that Staff is monitoring several topics, including a bill which would prohibit local governments from adopting Net Zero policies or setting policies or goals specific to a Net Zero plan. If passed, this bill would significantly affect the City's sustainability work.

Another topic under consideration by the Florida Legislature is an effort to reduce property taxes. The House of Representatives has passed a bill which would eliminate all property taxes except those needed for schools. The Senate is working on its own bill, and the Governor is interested in calling a special session for further discussion of these issues.

Chair Blattner requested additional information on the rationale behind prohibiting cities from establishing Net Zero policies. Mr. Hadwen replied that the Florida Department of Governmental Efficiency (DOGE) had conducted several audits and reached the opinion that spending on Net Zero policies was wasteful. He noted that the recommendations in the DOGE audits are reflected nearly verbatim in the bills being put forth by the House and Senate.

Mr. Hadwen continued that the proposed bills would mandate that local governments implement the recommendations of DOGE, which include the conclusion that implementing Net Zero policies are harmful to the state's energy security.

Ms. Duque Anez advised that the City's Floodplain Manager oversees Fort Lauderdale's Community Rating System (CRS), which is a program managed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). This is a voluntary program which allows cities or communities to earn points that translate into savings for flood insurance premiums. Fort Lauderdale participates in this program and is currently ranked in Class 7, which provides for a 15% discount on flood insurance premiums. Staff is working on a portion of the CRS called the Program for Public Information (PPI), which could contribute to an improvement in the City's CRS score and, consequently, greater flood insurance discounts for City residents. The PPI requires the convening of a committee with membership including City staff and residents specifically representing the real estate, banking, and insurance industries. Ms. Duque Anez invited Board Members to share this information with their networks as the City is looking for residents to participate in this committee.

IV. Presentations

- **Single Use Plastics and Synthetic Turf in Hollywood, FL, Elaine Franklin, Sustainability Advisory Coordinator**

Ms. Duque Anez introduced Elaine Franklin, Environmental Sustainability Coordinator for the City of Hollywood. Ms. Franklin provided an overview of what Hollywood has done regarding single-use plastics and polystyrene, adding that she would also briefly address the use of artificial turf.

Hollywood passed a ban on single-use plastics and polystyrene in 2020, motivated in part by the fact that the City is a habitat for filter-feeding animals and other wildlife. The ordinance prohibits single-use plastics for food and beverages in any City facility or on City property, including Hollywood's beach and Broadwalk. This includes City facility rentals. The ordinance also prohibits use of unencapsulated polystyrene products at the beach, marina, boat ramps, and public parks. This includes coolers, ice chests, and pool/beach toys.

The ban includes any items used for transporting or consuming prepared food or beverages, including single use utensils, containers, lids, plates, cups, straws, bottles, bags, wrappings, and bioplastics. Bioplastics are included in the ban because they behave like regular plastics in a marine environment, which means they can trap, choke, or be eaten by wildlife.

Ms. Franklin provided examples of outreach materials associated with the ordinance, explaining that these materials were emailed to all City hotels and vacation rental

properties. A one-page document in English and Spanish provides details on the ban and lists all City parks. Documents including tips on how to go plastic-free and how plastics and polystyrene can impact sea turtles at every stage of life were also shared. This information was shared with civic associations as well.

Ms. Franklin further clarified that a separate ordinance prohibits the use of single-use plastics by restaurants on Hollywood's beach. The City-wide ban passed in 2020 applies to anyone using City facilities or properties, but does not apply to restaurants on the mainland portion of the City. Ms. Franklin noted that restaurants often used by staff members were targeted for outreach. The City prepared a "cheat sheet" that was shared with restaurants, as well as a card provided at outreach events, to encourage these businesses to switch to biodegradable options.

Restaurants with outdoor cafés in Downtown Hollywood are not affected by the ordinance; however, restaurants on the beach are subject to the prohibition through a separate ordinance. Preemptions at the state level make it challenging to extend the prohibition to mainland restaurants, although legislation is being considered that would allow local ordinances to apply to state parks.

Another way to raise awareness of the ordinance was to encourage staff members who regularly work outdoors wear organic cotton shirts with a "Pass on Plastic" or "Pass on Foam" logo. The shirts were created by the City and distributed to all outdoor staff. The City also provided staff with insulated reusable water bottles.

Information is available at community centers and on park signage. Banners were used on the beach and signs were deployed at bus stops. Compliance is supported by providing bottle fillers in City parks and community centers and on the beach. Hollywood has held a Sustainable Products Expo which invited businesses to see alternative items and encouraged them to use these products instead of single-use plastics and polystyrene. The City has held events and competitions that support staff efforts to be compliant.

Ms. Franklin briefly addressed artificial turf, stating that Hollywood currently has three sports fields which use this turf. Two of these fields installed artificial turf within the last two years. Hollywood's Sustainability Advisory Committee has discussed this issue in recent months and plans to make a formal recommendation to its City Commission, asking the City to consider whether or not use of this material in large areas is the best practice going forward. The recommendation proposes that the City reevaluate how artificial turf compares with natural grass and suggests that when the existing fields need to be replaced, the City consider switching back to natural grass.

Mr. Daoust asked if Hollywood also reaches out to tourists to educate them on the prohibited materials. Ms. Franklin replied that the City emailed all of its hotels and vacation rentals with this information with the intent of including it in booklets provided for visitors.

Ms. Rahmankhah asked how compliance is enforced. Ms. Franklin advised that Hollywood's Code Enforcement Officers include an individual assigned to the beach district who focuses on compliance by beach businesses; however, that Officer does not speak with the public on the beach, and Police and community service Officers do not typically raise the issue with the public. Since the ban was passed, the City has focused more closely on outreach and education than enforcement.

Ms. Ahumada requested additional information regarding artificial turf. Ms. Franklin noted that this material is expected to last at least 10 years. The Sustainability Advisory Committee's recommendation proposes that when those fields reach the ends of their useful lives, the City consider switching back to natural grass. The Committee perceives artificial turf as harmful to the environment and to health; while this information is more anecdotal than statistical, the intent is to promote well-being by changing back to natural turf.

Ms. Rahmankhah asked if beach cleanup has provided the opportunity to measure the effectiveness of the ban. Ms. Franklin replied that the City's recycling coordinator organizes monthly beach sweeps that weigh the amount of litter collected. She was not certain whether the makeup of the litter is measured or documented.

Ted Inerra, president of the River Oaks Civic Association, addressed artificial turf, noting that the materials used in this surface are often the same as single-use plastics or polystyrene. Chief Resilience Officer Dr. Nancy Gassman recalled that the information provided at the Board's January 2026 meeting was based on independent studies conducted by universities and sports institutes, which indicated that artificial turf was not responsible for sports-related injuries.

Mr. Hadwen advised that at the March 2026 meeting, the Board would hear two additional speakers on artificial turf.

- **Living Seawall Permit Fee Assistance Program, Marco Aguilera, Chief Waterways Officer**

Chief Waterways Officer Marco Aguilera gave a presentation on the Living Seawall Permit Fee Assistance Program, which has been proposed to the City Commission. Living seawalls are shoreline protection structures that mimic natural habitats and offer a sustainable, environmentally conscious approach to coastal management. They provide multiple benefits, including habitat enhancement, biodiversity support, water quality improvement, and enhanced aesthetic value for communities. They are typically developed with 3D printing technology.

The proposed initiative would establish an assistance program to cover base permit fees when a living seawall is installed instead of a standard seawall. The program currently proposes a dedicated fund of \$50,000, which will be available to property owners in a first

come, first served basis. An individual who chooses to install a living seawall could apply to the program with their contractor. The program would cover base permit fees.

The property owner must plan to install a living seawall on over half the linear length of the actual seawall in order to be eligible for the fee assistance program. The top of the seawall must reach the most recent NAVD elevation requirements, which are required of all new seawalls in the City. The structure must also meet the City's definition of a living seawall.

The program will provide 100% coverage of the 1.75% base permit fee, with residential properties receiving a maximum rebate of \$3,500 and commercial properties receiving a maximum of \$7,000.

Mr. Aguilera explained that the City's definition of a living seawall is sufficiently broad to encompass multiple types of these structures without being specifically tied to any one company or manufacturer. Any structure which increases surface area and provides a habitable environment for marine life could qualify as a living seawall. He concluded that he is currently seeking feedback from City advisory entities and will take that feedback to the City Commission.

Ms. Rahmankhah asked if the program is restricted to the replacement of existing seawalls. Mr. Aguilera replied that it applies to either replacement of existing seawalls or installation of a new living seawall.

Ms. Ahumada asked if Florida's proposed ban on Net Zero efforts would affect the program. Mr. Aguilera explained that seawalls are usually designed to last 50 years and were unlikely to be impacted by such a ban.

Ms. Ahumada also requested additional information on the materials that would be used to construct living seawalls, emphasizing the need to ensure that they would not release harmful materials into the water. Mr. Aguilera replied that the City's definition of a living seawall refers to pH-neutral concrete, steel, reinforced vinyl, or other material designed to act as a rigid tidal barrier. He noted that these materials are most often steel or concrete; vinyl is a less popular option at present.

Dr. Gassman observed that the City's existing seawall/tidal barrier Ordinance includes special requirements and protections for the replacement of natural shoreline with a tidal barrier such as a seawall. Broward County also has specific requirements for instances in which mangroves are removed, including mitigation.

Dr. Gassman also pointed out that a rebate is money given back, while a discount is money that is not collected, and requested clarification of which of these terms applied to the City's proposed program. Mr. Aguilera stated that the City is not allowed to discount building permit fees; the program would lessen the property owner's payment of the fee and reimburse the Building Department.

Mr. Straus asked if the program applied only to waterfront property or if it extended past the Fort Lauderdale Beach. Mr. Aguilera replied that it would apply to anywhere a seawall may be installed or replaced.

Mr. Daoust asked how much a seawall and the required permit would cost. Mr. Aguilera estimated that the average seawall replacement cost is roughly \$100,000, of which the permit would cost approximately \$1,750. The program can provide a discount of up to \$3,500 in recognition of the size disparity of seawalls across various Fort Lauderdale properties.

Ms. Charles expressed concern that the expense of creating a seawall through 3D printing could outweigh any savings. Mr. Aguilera advised that the cost of a standard concrete seawall is comparable to the cost of a 3D-printed seawall, depending on the size of the property.

Mr. Inserra asked if the City plans to install a living seawall along the Riverwalk. Mr. Aguilera stated that this is currently the City's plan, and some Commissioners have expressed interest in living seawalls near other City facilities.

Mr. Aguilera encouraged the Board members to email Mr. Hadwen or Ms. Duque Anez with any additional questions.

V. New Business

Chair Blattner asked how an ordinance similar to Hollywood's regulation of single-use plastics and polystyrene might work in Fort Lauderdale. Mr. Hadwen replied that Staff can look into Hollywood's ordinance more thoroughly and bring information back for further discussion. Fort Lauderdale currently has an Ordinance addressing plastic straws and polystyrene; the polystyrene Ordinance applies only to City facilities, while the ban on plastic straws is City-wide. The City also has agreements with vendors that use City facilities and service City-permitted events.

Ms. Duque Anez noted that Staff can bring back a more specific comparison of the two cities' ordinances, as well as Fort Lauderdale's proposed recommendations presented at the January 2026 meeting. Mr. Hadwen further clarified that Hollywood focused on the prohibition of specific materials at City facilities, which is not preempted by state law. Hollywood also implemented their prohibition before the state preemption, and the ban does not apply throughout that municipality. The City can establish policy for the facilities and properties that it controls.

It was clarified that City facilities include open properties, such as the Fort Lauderdale Beach and City parks.

Ms. Ahumada asked if Staff has considered regulations in place in the cities of Deerfield Beach or Pompano Beach. Dr. Gassman stated that the City has reviewed ordinances from several nearby municipalities in order to understand what they are doing. Staff's current recommendations, which were presented at the January meeting, encompass the best of those recommendations from other municipalities.

Dr. Gassman also clarified that smoking and vaping are prohibited on the beach, as are glass, coolers, and plastic products. The City is currently updating its beach signage to include icons demonstrating these core rules for beachgoers. City Park Rangers and Police Officers can enforce these rules.

Ms. Duque Anez stated that she can share a spreadsheet used to prepare the recommendations discussed in January, which includes more than 30 Florida municipalities with ordinances related to single-use plastics.

Mr. Daoust suggested that Staff provide a draft of a proposed Ordinance prior to the next meeting so it can be discussed by the Board. Dr. Gassman explained that Staff had analyzed other municipalities' ordinances to develop the nine recommendations presented in January. Mr. Hadwen added that if the Board wishes to see the City take action on single-use plastics, they may send a communication to the City Commission highlighting specific concerns or recommending the implementation of specific proposals.

Ms. Duque Anez advised that an Ordinance has not been drafted in relation to the nine recommendations; only one or two of those recommendations would require any amendment to City Code. She concluded that she would bring the recommendations back to the next meeting, but there is no accompanying draft Ordinance.

Ms. Rahmankhah asked if Staff's recommendations addressed compliance and enforcement, or if there is existing language in Code on enforcement. Ms. Duque Anez explained that the proposal focuses on education rather than enforcement, as it is very difficult to enforce the proposals with limited Staff. Mr. Aguilera pointed out that Code Compliance Officers are not allowed to issue citations directly to individuals under Florida Statutes.

VI. Old Business

- **Sustainability Advisory Committee Coalition**

Ms. Duque Anez recalled that the Sustainability Advisory Committee Coalition (SACC) recently voted to reschedule their meetings to the first Monday of each month. The next meeting will be held on March 2, 2026 at 6 p.m. Mr. Daoust will attend that meeting.

VII. Proposed Communication

None.

VIII. Comments

None.

IX. Items for Next Meeting

- **Participation from Dr. Sarah Evans and Susan Chapnick on the topic of synthetic turf**

Ms. Duque Anez advised that Staff has worked with Ms. Bailey to schedule two speakers for the March 2026 meeting to discuss artificial turf. Both speakers will appear virtually. She concluded that she will reach out to both speakers to make information on their presentation available to the Board members in advance of the next meeting.

Mr. Hadwen clarified that in addition to the two speakers, Ms. Duque Anez will recap her presentation on recommendations for single-use plastics as reported at the January meeting. The Board will also review Hollywood's ordinance on this topic and may consider sending a communication to the City Commission on the recommendations.

Ms. Duque Anez briefly reviewed the following upcoming events:

- February 25: Saving Our Seas event in Boca Raton
- February 26: Resilient Broward
- March 4-5: Disasters Expo in Miami Beach
- March 17: University of Miami Resilience 365 Conference
- April 22-26: Earth Week Miami
- National Adaptation Forum: May 12-14 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

X. Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Committee at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 7:26 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.]