



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

March 23, 2026 – 6:00 PM

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

Staff Present

Glen Hadwen, Sustainability Manager

Silvia Duque Anez, Sustainability Coordinator

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

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

K. Cruitt, Recording Clerk, Prototype, Inc.

Guests

Dr. Sarah Evans Ph.D., MPH, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai (via Zoom)

Susan Chapnick MS, Vice Chair, Arlington Conservation Commission (via Zoom)

Ted Inerra, River Oaks Civic Association

Pat Roth, R4R

Michelle DiMaria, Croissant Park Civic Association

Mary Herring, Rio Vista

Patricia Halliday, R4R

Lorraine Saunders, South Middle River Civic Association

Julia Poliadis, Chair of the Sustainability Advisory Committee, City of Hollywood

Chris Stachowski, Tarpon River Civic Association

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m. Roll was called and it was noted a quorum was present.

- **Approval of Minutes**

- **February 23, 2026**

Motion made by Ms. Charles, seconded by Ms. Ahumada, to approve the minutes of the February 23, 2026 meeting. In a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.

- **Liaison Report**

- **State Legislative Actions**

Ms. Duque Anez reported on several legislative bills being tracked which are relevant to the Board's work in sustainability in the City detailing the following:

- House Bill 1217 is related to net zero policies and greenhouse gas emissions. The bill is proposed to prohibit local governments from adopting or implementing net zero policies, including limiting the use of public funds and programs that support those efforts. The bill has been passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate, but has not yet been sent to the Governor. The City Attorney and Internal Government Affairs staff will be evaluating this bill's effect on City's initiatives.
- House Joint Resolution 203 is proposed to amend the state Constitution to make homestead properties exempt from property taxes with the exception of school district levies. The resolution has a provision to prevent local governments from reducing funds for essential services including law enforcement, firefighters, and other first responder services. The current bill will not advance as the resolution did not pass in the Senate, but did pass in the House of Representatives. Additional legislative sessions on this topic are anticipated.
- Senate Bill 1134 is related to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI). The bill was passed through legislation restricting local governments from funding, promoting, or taking official action related to DEI initiatives.
- Senate Bill 302 focuses on Coastal and Environmental Protection with legislation that protects sensitive aquatic lands by limiting activities such as dredging and filling. The bill proposes streamlining the permitting process and supports the use of new technologies for coastal resilience.

Ms. Bailey spoke in favor of Senate Bill 302. She also recognized Julia Poliadis, Chair of the Sustainability Advisory Committee for the City of Hollywood, who was in attendance, also noting that Ms. Poliadis has been the Chair for the last five years and is interested in the topic of artificial turf and the impacts.

- House Bill 1417 addresses environmental rulemaking by eliminating the Environmental Regulation Commission, which the Florida Department of

Environmental Protection considers outdated. The bill would also manage water supply protections in North Florida and stormwater management around solar energy installation projects.

Ms. Duque Anez also reported that the State budget has not yet been finalized; however, the House and Senate will be addressing the budget at a future session.

● **EV Test Drive Event**

Ms. Duque Anez confirmed that the Sustainability and Climate Resilience team is planning and coordinating with the City's Fleet Services Program and the Executive Airport to organize an electric vehicle test drive event for City vehicle operators. The goal of this event is to support the City's transition toward fleet electrification by giving vehicle operators the opportunity to become more familiar with EV technology. Several vehicle vendors have registered for the event to be held on April 8th.

● **Arbor Day Events**

Ms. Duque Anez stated that Laura Tooley, the City's Urban Forester, is coordinating three tree-planting events at schools to celebrate Arbor Day.

● **Presentations**

Chair Blattner provided context of the Board's prior discussions on the presentation topics. Chair Blattner referenced the January meeting where Enrique Sanchez, Deputy Director of Parks and Recreation, gave a presentation regarding the operational considerations for artificial turf use in the City. Mr. Sanchez's presentation highlighted several benefits to the City, including durability under heavy use, the ability to keep fields open year-round, reduced land requirements for athletic fields, and reduced maintenance needs, such as eliminating the use of fertilizers and significantly reducing water consumption. Chris Wedge, representative of Field Turf, the City's current synthetic turf vendor, was also present and responded to questions regarding injuries, referencing research and studies which have found no significant difference in injury rates between synthetic turf and natural grass fields. Chair Blattner also noted that City staff and Mr. Wedge addressed other Board concerns by noting that synthetic turf installation has evolved and that an impact to drinking water will not be expected.

Chair Blattner also referenced the February meeting where the Board heard from Elaine Franklin, Environmental Sustainability Coordinator for the City of Hollywood, Florida. Ms. Franklin briefly shared that the City of Hollywood's Sustainability Advisory Committee is considering a recommendation to their City Commission to consider alternatives to synthetic turf each time an athletic surface is installed or replaced.

Chair Blattner finished his introduction by highlighting that synthetic turf is not an easy issue with multiple factors to consider, including operational needs, environmental impact, public health, and long-term planning.

❓ **Artificial Turf & Children's Health**, Dr. Sarah Evans, Associate Professor, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai

Dr. Sarah Evans, Associate Professor with the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai New York City, provided a presentation. She shared her perspective on artificial turf with evidence-based factors to communities, highlighting the following:

- Funding for her research is provided from New York State and the federal government.
- Environmental pediatrics has determined that children are not “little adults” and have the potential to take in more air pollutants than adults with ongoing vulnerability risks as artificial turf is a complex surface made of plastics and rubber. The health impacts of turf chemicals include inhalation, dermal contact, absorption and ingestion.
- A federal turf study was completed in four parts to include a literature review of recycled tire crumb characterization and exposure characterization with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) determining that the presence of approximately 150 chemicals such as non-infill exposures and metals with cancer-causing chemicals were of concern, not tire crumb.
- The conclusion of the study determined there was insufficient information to prove safety issues with these products.

Dr. Evans pointed out that many communities have now moved to other types of infill.

Dr. Evans continued regarding:

- Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) which represent a large class of about 1,500 chemicals.
- EPA identification of PFAS found in artificial turf fields and plastic grass as an urgent matter indicating that microplastics and nano plastics can get into the brain causing cardiovascular health concerns in children.
- Artificial turf fields dangerously hot surfaces in hotter climates resulting in health concerns.

Dr. Evans encouraged moving towards enforcing special regulations when the surface temperature is too high. Dr. Evans's presentation continued regarding:

- Mixed data suggesting that artificial turf compared to natural grass has higher rates of risk to the lower extremity injuries and abrasions with youth being at a greater risk and an increased risk for concussions when not well maintained.
- Natural grass being a safe and viable option.

Environmental Impacts of Artificial Turf Fields, Susan Chapnick, Vice Chair, Arlington Conservation Committee

Susan Chapnick, Vice Chair of Arlington Conservation Commission and an Environmental Chemist, provided a presentation on the environmental impacts of artificial turf, including environmental chemical concerns and hazardous toxic metals. She pointed out that fields shed infill, as well as weathered, broken plastic blades with chemicals leaching off of these materials goes back into the environment.

Ms. Chapnick's presentation summarized the results of multiple scientific studies which showed elevated concentrations of multiple chemicals of concern including, but not limited to, lead, zinc, per- and polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) substances, 6PPD-quinone, microplastics associated with artificial turf fields. Concerns from artificial turf fields also include excess heat and wildlife and biodiversity impacts.

In Florida, the Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) has proposed synthetic turf standards that products must not contain heavy metals or added PFAS. In addition, the University of Florida has stated that artificial turf is not considered a Florida Friendly surface. Ms. Chapman also shared a cost comparison which showed that life cycle costs of natural grass fields were significantly cheaper than artificial turf fields.

Chair Blattner asked about the health risks to humans and the environmental risk to waterways if fertilizers and pesticides are used in a natural grass field. Ms. Chapnick responded that pesticides and insecticides have a huge impact on birds and the environment. Organically managed fields are a viable solution as well as for the cost.

Dr. Evans stated that in New York City, there is a strict requirement to maintain natural grass with strict use of pesticides.

It was noted that the City of Fort Lauderdale is not currently managing the fields organically and that the fields are taken out of service to minimize human contact when being treated.

Dr. Evans confirmed training in organic management methods is available for organizations with park management employees along with resources and grants that can be pursued.

Discussion continued regarding the use of organic and synthetic pesticides, current infill use, and lifetimes of differing field materials.

Ms. Bailey announced that at the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting last week, "heat islands" had been discussed. Dr. Gassman pointed out that the City will be looking into guidelines for employees and operations; however, only a generic heat island study has been completed so far. Dr. Evans highly cautioned converting a park from natural grass to artificial turf since the cooling space would be lost.

Dr. Gassman referenced a California study of 35 fields. Dr. Evans clarified it was conducted by CalRecycle on recycled tire rubber, identifying 400 chemicals similar to an EPA study. However, the study was limited in scope and did not include the full range or total number of chemicals.

Mr. Pat Roth (Residents of Resilience) asked about cost and maintenance differences between turf and organic grass fields. Dr. Gassman said she did not have the data, noting challenges include field usage, spot treatments, and chemical management.

Ms. Poliadis, who has researched the issue since last year, recommended the City adopt a new policy and move away from unsustainable solutions, noting that Florida has a ban but decisions rest with local officials.

Ms. Bailey asked whether at high heat index levels sports should be suspended. Dr. Gassman said this is under study and highlighted challenges in managing field use. Dr. Evans added that some communities use signage and heat guidelines (e.g., Montgomery County, MD), but research on airborne particulates affecting children and athletes is still lacking.

Ms. Chapnick noted that as of January 2026, environmental biochemists are studying risks of microplastics and nano plastics, particularly chemical exposure from artificial turf.

Ms. Mary Herring (Rio Vista) asked the City to reconsider policies for homes with artificial turf; Chair Blattner said the City cannot prohibit turf on private property.

Mr. Chris Stachowski (Tarpon River Civic Association) cited evidence of toxicity and asked about removal; Chair Blattner said the Board will review recommendations.

Dr. Gassman said key health data is still incomplete, while Dr. Evans emphasized uncertainty about what children absorb during play, though existing data suggests potential health concerns. She encouraged informed, community-specific decisions.

Ms. Chapnick highlighted environmental harms from plastics and questioned the impact of large turf fields. Dr. Gassman noted broader environmental challenges in Florida, including waterways and urban policy trade-offs, and said heat impacts also require evaluation.

Chair Blattner thanked Dr. Evans and Ms. Chapnick; the Board appreciated the input and information.

- **Exploring Options to Reduce Single-Use Plastics on City Property and Events**, Silvia Duque Anez, Sustainability Coordinator, City of Fort Lauderdale

Ms. Duque Anez stated the Board had requested a recap with researched information by staff on what was proposed to reduce single-use plastics, as well as a review of the case of the City of Hollywood as it compares to Fort Lauderdale's proposal. Ms. Duque Anez began explaining that this research started with a request from the City Manager's office and staff conducted research on environmental and economic impacts of single-use plastics, existing City policies and practices, state regulatory constraints, and regulation examples from 26 municipalities and five (5) counties in Florida.

Nine recommendations were proposed in two categories:

- Code amendments
 - Regulate single-use plastic food service items used by vendors, contractors, and permittees operating on City property and at City facilities and events;
 - Prohibit unencapsulated expanded polystyrene in floating docks, platforms, and buoys on City property and facilities;
 - Formalize the prohibition on glass containers on public beaches and beach access areas within the City Code;
 - Expand and strengthen enforcement of the plastic straw ordinance, including adding stirrers and clarifying compliance mechanisms;
 - Enhance existing polystyrene restrictions by requiring event organizers to attest to compliance; and
 - Prohibit the intentional outdoor release of plastic confetti, glitter, and balloons on City property.
- Operational and policy strategies
 - Update the City's Sustainable "Green" Purchasing policy;
 - Expand education and outreach efforts with a focus on education and compliance; and
 - Amend the City event and vendor agreements to include existing and future single-use plastics regulations.

Ms. Duque Anez continued by reviewing the main points of the regulations from the City of Hollywood:

- Food establishments east of the Intercoastal Waterway may not dispense disposable or non-biodegradable food service products;
- City vendors and special event permittees may not use single-use plastic food service products in city facilities or on city property;
- Individuals, vendors, and renters cannot bring or use single-use plastic or polystyrene products in city facilities or on city property;
- Unencapsulated polystyrene foam products are prohibited in beaches, parks, marinas, piers, docks, and boat ramps;
- Intentional outdoor release of helium or lighter-than-air balloons is prohibited with limited exceptions; and
- Violations carry fines from \$50 - \$500, with escalating penalties for repeat offenses.

Ms. Duque Anez compared Hollywood's ordinance with the proposed recommendations for the City of Fort Lauderdale. Both approaches focus on regulating the use of single-use plastics within city facilities and on city-owned property, they use city vendor contracts and event agreements as tools to regulate the use of single-use plastics, incorporating state regulations prohibiting the intentional release of balloons, and addressing expanded polystyrene products.

Ms. Duque Anez highlighted that the key difference with the City of Hollywood is that they are able to restrict certain businesses in a specific area because they adopted their ordinance before the state preempted municipalities from broadly regulating single-use plastics.

A handout was provided as a draft for a proposed Communication to City Commission, containing a preamble with the background and context of the conversations the Board has had regarding this topic, as well as a proposal of four scenarios pertaining to the nine supported recommendations.

Dr. Gassman confirmed the Board is expected to choose one of four options on the handout. Ms. Duque Anez explained these options: support all nine recommendations, support the six related to code amendments, support the three focused on operational and policy strategies, or support a mix.

Ms. Rahmankhah noted the City of Hollywood could not determine return on investment and suggested adding measurable goals, such as reducing plastic use by a set percentage. She proposed tracking collected plastic during beach sweeping. Ms. Doyle confirmed the City actively participates in cleanups but cannot weigh collected materials because dumpsters are serviced with other routes.

Ms. Poliadis shared that her annual Hollywood cleanup uses luggage scales to weigh collected plastic. Ms. Doyle agreed this works for small events but is impractical for larger operations using front-load containers and multiple disposal points. Dr. Gassman added that items like glitter and plastic confetti, though lightweight, have significant environmental and aesthetic impacts. Ms. Rahmankhah clarified that weight was only an example and emphasized the need for measurable goals to assess education, outreach, and new restrictions.

Dr. Gassman suggested considering a statement for the Communication to City Commission as a recommendation that as the City moves forward with these types of initiatives that the City tries to set a performance metric.

Ms. Rahmankhah asked if the City requires permits for events like weddings to be performed on beaches. Dr. Gassman confirmed yes, a special use permit has to be obtained. Ms. Doyle added that the beach does fall underneath sanitation operations and the City is required to stop the event if they do not have a permit. Dr. Gassman

added that event agreements contain language related to these issues, and that when the City talks about opportunities for policy, it is those types of agreements that are being targeted to add new regulations.

Chair Blattner returned to the Communication to the City Commission recommendations and requested feedback. The Board agreed unanimously to wait on this discussion until the next meeting to make adjustments to the proposed communication and agree on the language.

Chair Blattner invited Board members to discuss recommendations they would like to bring forward on the topic of synthetic turf.

Discussion continued regarding factors, including environmental impact, cost, and demand, the City considers when making a decision to install synthetic turf, as well as the cost of maintenance comparing synthetic turf to natural grass fields.

Ted Inerra, President of River Oaks Civic Association, spoke on the use of synthetic versus natural fields.

Chris Stachowski, Tarpon River Association, spoke regarding demand for more parks and fields, requesting a cost comparison for turf fields versus natural grass fields.

Motion made by Ms. Charles, seconded by Ms. Bailey, to provide a communication to the Commission to go back to natural grass on public lands, replacing artificial turf fields with natural grass on public lands.

Discussion continued regarding the number of public playgrounds with artificial turf, conducting a lifecycle cost comparison for synthetic turf versus natural grass, and the single-use plastics recommendations.

Ms. Charles subsequently withdrew her motion.

- **New Business**

None.

- **Old Business**

- Sustainability Advisory Committee Coalition (SACC)

None.

- **Proposed Communication**

- Single-Use Plastics Regulation

None.

- **Comments**

Dr. Gassman stated the Board should separate the communications on single-use plastics and synthetic turf.

Ms. Duque Anez briefly reviewed the following upcoming events:

- Fort Lauderdale Tree Giveaway, March 27th at Carter Park
- Earth Week Miami 2026, April 22-26 at Miami-Dade and Broward County
- National Adaptation Forum, May 12-14 in Pittsburgh, PA

● **Items for Next Meeting**

- Urban Forestry Master Plan Update
- Communication on single use plastics
- Communication on artificial turf

X. Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Committee at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 8:11 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 A. Moore, Prototype, Inc.]