



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

April 27, 2026 – 6:00 PM

<b>Cumulative Attendance</b>					
<b>1/2026 through 12/2026</b>					
	<b>Members</b>	<b>Appt by</b>	<b>Attendance</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Absent</b>
1	Robert Daoust	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	Idan Straus, Vice Chair	M	P	4	0
6	Vacant	III	-	-	-
7	Fabiana Ahumada	M	A	2	1
8	Sara Rahmankhah	IV	P	4	0
9	Aida Nesimi	I	P	1	0
10	Vacant	III	-	-	-
11	Vacant	II	-	-	-
12	Parker Jacobson-Bertanzetti, Non-Voting Youth Chair	C	A	3	1

**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)

Enrique Sanchez, Deputy Director, Parks and Recreation

K. Cruitt, Recording Clerk, Prototype, Inc.

**Guests**

Mary Herring, Rio Vista

Stacey Miscisin, Croissant Park

Jane Kish, River Oaks Civic Association

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m. Roll was called, and it was noted that a quorum was present.

● **Approval of Minutes**

- **March 23, 2026**

**Motion** made by Ms. Charles, seconded by Ms. Rahmankhah, to approve the minutes of the March 23, 2026, meeting as presented. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

Chair Blattner welcomed the members of the public to the meeting and noted that a public comment section is available during the meeting.

- **Liaison Report**

- **Welcome Aida Nesimi**

Ms. Duque Anez, Sustainability Coordinator, advised that Mr. Lasday resigned last month due to scheduling conflicts. An agenda item for the Election of Vice Chair is on today's agenda.

New Board member Aida Nesimi introduced herself and stated she moved to South Florida in 2021. She began working in the sustainability space in 2017 and earned her LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) AP ND (Advanced Professional, Neighborhood Development) credential this past summer. Ms. Nesimi is one of 438 people with this certification, which is part of the reason she decided to join the Board. Ms. Nesimi stated she is very excited to work with the Board and staff to make a difference.

Chair Blattner welcomed Ms. Nesimi and stated he is glad to have her join the Board.

- **Annual Board Member Information Update**

Ms. Duque Anez stated that a reminder email was sent to the Board to update their contact information. Ms. Duque Anez also asked the Board to check if they need updated parking passes as she will request new ones and will have them for next month.

- **EV Test Drive Event**

Ms. Duque Anez mentioned that the first EV Test Drive event for City vehicle operators was held, and it was a success. Thirty-two (32) drivers tested cars from four (4) vendors, including Rivian, Toyota, General Motors, and Volkswagen. Attendees provided good feedback, and Ms. Duque Anez is looking forward to a positive impact in future versions of the test drive event to help the City move toward its electrification goals.

- **Earth Day and Arbor Day Activities**

Ms. Duque Anez stated that the City participated in Earth Day events at St. Thomas Aquinas High School and at Delmar Arts Academy. Both events featured various activities for the students, focusing on trash, the waste we produce, and incentivized the use of

alternatives, such as reducing single-use plastics. For Arbor Day, the City team also participated in a tree dedication with the Garden Club at Snyder Park.

The Board thanked Ms. Duque Anez.

- **Presentations**

- **Private Property Resiliency Outreach Program** - Silvia Duque Anez, Sustainability Coordinator

Ms. Duque Anez stated the Private Property Resilience Outreach Program is a city-wide effort that is part of the Fortify Lauderdale Initiative, and it will support residents and businesses in becoming more resilient to climate risks. The City recognizes that relying solely on public investment is not enough; private property owners also need to contribute to increase their resilience. The Outreach program will focus on flooding and extreme heat, as the City's main climate risks, and will encourage practical actions on private property. The program will provide education and outreach activities for business owners and homeowners and help the City earn more points in the Community Rating System (CRS). The CRS points will contribute to improving the City's score which can provide larger discounts on flood insurance premiums for our residents. The program has five main tools:

- HOA and Civic Associations presentations,
- Flyers and handouts,
- Resilience Resources Website,
- Neighborhood-Scale Resilience Snapshots, and
- Feedback Collection

Ms. Duque Anez stated that the program is a multi-year project starting in 2026, with residential outreach. Planned activities include 15 HOA presentations, development of website materials, and development of four (4) resilience snapshots, at least one for each Commission District. City staff will also coordinate with the Sustainability Advisory Board and the Council of Fort Lauderdale Civic Associations.

Ms. Duque Anez explained that the program aims to have tailored information for each neighborhood and showed the board an example of some materials homeowners with flood risk could receive. Ms. Duque Anez explained what climate resilience is, what it looks like in practice, and the economic case for resilience, highlighting how resilience provides economic benefits and avoided costs.

Ms. Duque Anez continued explaining that resilience takes the whole City. Multiple stakeholders must work together to address a single major risk. Ms. Duque Anez also explained how resiliency pays off, by protecting a family's biggest investment, keeping families safe, reducing repair costs, lowering insurance costs, and supporting stronger

property values. Resiliency also helps communities recover faster and reduces stress on City services.

Ms. Duque Anez continued by sharing actionable steps a family can take before, during, and after a storm, as outlined in a guidance document the City will publish from its Fortify Lauderdale work.

Ms. Duque Anez mentioned she has also requested an opportunity to present before the Council of Fort Lauderdale Civic Associations to receive feedback on the program. Ms. Duque Anez requested that the Board share its thoughts and provide direction on this project.

The Board made no comments.

- **Public Comment**

Jane Kish of the River Oaks Civic Association opposed the use of synthetic turf, and noted that there is already too much plastic in the world. Ms. Kish does not want the turf in their neighborhood, and she referred to real plants that yield trees.

- **New Business**

Chair Blattner stated that the Vice Chair election will now be held. Chair Blattner asked for volunteers. Ms. Nesimi and Mr. Straus volunteered for the position. Chair Blattner opened the agenda item for the Board nomination.

**Motion** made by Mr. Daoust, seconded by Ms. Charles, to nominate Mr. Straus as Vice Chair. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

Chair Blattner congratulated Mr. Straus as Vice Chair.

- **Old Business**

- Sustainability Advisory Committee Coalition (SACC)

Ms. Rahmankhah and Ms. Duque Anez both attended the April SACC meeting. Ms. Rahmankhah stated that two new members were present, one from Miami Beach and one from the village of Key Biscayne. Ms. Rahmankhah highlighted that The Village of Key Biscayne requested funding for their Sustainability Advisory Committee to implement programs and also held a Sustainability Summit in the fall of 2025.

To provide context to the new Board Member, Ms. Nesimi, Ms. Bailey shared that the SACC is an inter-city coalition created by the City of Hollywood's Sustainability Advisory Committee Chair. Sustainability Advisory Committee members from other municipalities are invited to attend, they started in Broward, but have now expanded to Miami-Dade

County as well. One representative from each municipality's board may attend the meeting. Ms. Duque Anez attends every meeting as the Staff Liaison, and one representative from the Sustainability Advisory Board attends once a month. Information is shared about what each municipality is doing to further sustainability initiatives.

Ms. Duque Anez confirmed that the next meeting is scheduled for Monday, May 4, 2026, at 6:00 p.m., virtually via Zoom. Ms. Nesimi stated she could attend the next meeting.

### ● **Proposed Communication**

- Single-Use Plastics Regulation

Chair Blattner confirmed that nine possible actions could be recommended to the City Commission. The Board has been working on this item for about two months, and a copy has been distributed to the Board for review.

Chair Blattner briefly reviewed the four (4) options to present the recommendations to the City Commission:

1. Support all nine recommendations,
2. Advance the operational and policy strategies,
3. Support the code amendments only, or
4. Support selected recommendations

A discussion was held on the requested changes to the Communication.

Ms. Bailey recommended narrowing the choices to improve the chances of success and approval from the City Commission. Ms. Bailey suggested three or four recommendations. Ms. Nesimi also supported simplifying the request.

Chair Blattner asked Board members if the focus should be on policy or code amendments. Board members were generally more interested in the policy and operational strategies. Ms. Duque Anez stated that three recommendations are present in the operational policy strategies:

1. Updating their sustainable "Green Purchasing" policy,
2. Renew and expand educational outreach, and
3. Amend key City agreements, such as outdoor event agreements, temporary beach license agreements, and mobile food concession agreements, to explicitly reference explicit City Code provisions related to the prohibition of plastic straws and polystyrene products.

Mr. Daoust stated he is in favor of putting forward the strongest language possible, but he is concerned that the recommendations could be preempted by the state. Mr. Hadwen

explained that state preemptions are a valid concern and that the Governor just signed a bill (HB1217) prohibiting cities from adopting or implementing net zero plans; but the recommendations the City staff have put forward are all focused on items the City directly controls.

Ms. Duque Anez explained that the team started by analyzing the state-level policy to understand where the City's actions are preempted. All the recommendations are aligned with State level regulations and are aimed at City-controlled spaces, events, facilities, policies, and agreements.

Ms. Nesimi mentioned that she has relationships in the manufacturing space and could receive discounted pricing directly from the manufacturer that would support these policy amendments. Mr. Hadwen stated that resources would be helpful for vendors to get information on new products. Dr. Gassman stated that Ms. Nesimi's support should be purely contact-related and not procurement related. Dr. Gassman explained that the City must be careful not to recommend vendors, but only to provide resources that people can review, without specific endorsements.

Chair Blattner suggested considering ordinance recommendations as they would strengthen the tools the City has available to support the mission of reducing single-use plastics. Ms. Rahmankhah agreed.

Dr. Gassman suggested that the City Commission could redirect the Board to bring the item back once the items are prioritized. Chair Blattner liked the suggested direction.

Members of the Board suggested edits to the original document, and Ms. Duque Anez made the revisions in real time. Dr. Gassman shared that the City Manager prefers to inform the City Commission and suggested keeping part of the background information. Board members reviewed the adjustments and agreed on a final text for the communication.

The final language was as follows:

Fort Lauderdale's identity as the "Venice of America" and much of its economy depends on beaches, waterways, and reefs that support marine recreation. However, these natural assets are increasingly threatened by pollution from single-use plastics, glass, and expanded polystyrene (EPS), which contribute to marine debris, harm wildlife and degrade public spaces.

Staff conducted research on this topic at the request of the City Manager's Office, including a review of applicable state legislation and preemptions, analysis of actions taken by other municipalities in Florida, and consideration of the City's sustainability priorities. This work resulted in nine (9) recommended

strategies, including six (6) amendments to the City Code and three (3) operational or policy actions intended to reduce plastic pollution and protect Fort Lauderdale's waterways, beaches, and natural environment.

The Sustainability Advisory Board discussed this topic across its 2026 meetings, allowing members to better understand the regulatory context and explore potential options for Fort Lauderdale.

Based on this review and discussion, the Sustainability Advisory Board urges the City Commission to implement the three operational and policy recommendations and strongly recommends the adoption of the six amendments to City Code (see attached).

**Motion** made by Ms. Rahmankhah, seconded by Mr. Daoust, to adopt the communication as revised. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

Mr. Hadwen stated that the next City Commission meeting where the Communication could be presented is scheduled for May 19, 2026, at 1:30 p.m. and suggested that a Board member volunteer to represent the Board. Ms. Nesimi volunteered.

Mr. Hadwen suggested that if a second City Communication is approved, the items should be presented a separate Commission meetings, and the Board agreed.

- Synthetic Turf

Ms. Duque Anez distributed a proposed communication with background and context, including the language shared by the City of Hollywood from their Sustainability Advisory Committee discussions.

Ms. Bailey provided the board with another proposed communication and distributed a hard-copy document, she referenced the two presentations recently made to the Board, and her desire to make an informed recommendation to the City Commission. Ms. Bailey stated that in the last meeting there had been interest from some Board members to make a recommendation to the City Commission to move toward an ordinance limiting the use of synthetic turf in any of the improvements made to new and existing parks, often through the Parks Bond.

Ms. Charles stated she likes the proposed communication presented by Ms. Bailey as it is more comprehensive.

A discussion was held on the requested changes to the communication proposed by Ms. Bailey. Ms. Rahmankhah shared a concern about not having enough documentation and

information to share with the City Commission to explain where the Board's concerns come from.

Mr. Daoust stated that no consensus has been reached regarding the actual environmental and health impacts of synthetic turf and the proposed communication does not reflect that. Ms. Rahmankhah stated that in previous conversations, the Board has not agreed on a single position on the topic.

Ms. Bailey stated, regarding the issue of maintenance and costs, that if planning is done effectively and properly, grass can accommodate for the needs of athletic fields and recreation. Mr. Daoust stated that if the Board is planning to ask the city to put cost and maintenance considerations aside, then the communication should capture that there has been a consideration of the economics and does not plan to put additional burden on the City. Chair Blattner agreed and suggested that the Board should put forward a more reasonable recommendation to have a more receptive audience.

Chair Blattner stated he agrees with most points in the communication proposed by Ms. Bailey, but some must be adjusted to present a reasonable recommendation where the Board supports grass and nature-based surfaces but is not telling the City it should not use synthetic turf, particularly on high-use fields.

Ms. Nesimi stated that to prioritize the natural grass option, the Board should consider adding information from California Proposition 65 warnings.

Ms. Rahmankhah stated that the City argued that the cost to maintain artificial turf is about \$1,000.00 per year, and the cost to maintain natural grass is about \$30,000.00 per year. Mr. Straus requested a cost analysis.

Mr. Sanchez stated that he and his team looked into the costs of maintenance, including labor, equipment, water, fertilizer, herbicides, and pesticides. He explained a grass field gets mowed 80 – 100 times a year. Mr. Sanchez explained that after analyzing these costs across the parks system and divided it by acre to normalize the numbers because fields and parks have varied shapes and sizes. The result is an approximate cost of \$20,000 for an acre of Bermuda grass field and \$1,800 for an acre of synthetic turf field. Mr. Sanchez continued to explain that for the maintenance of grass fields they are shut down for about eight weeks to have treatments performed during their slowest season. Mr. Sanchez stated synthetic turf fields can take four (4) to five (5) times the amount of activity than grass fields can. If the City were to use grass for ten (10) or twelve (12) fields, it would need to acquire 40 acres of field space, to maintain the status quo.

Dr. Gassman stated that part of the Parks Bond was approved to acquire additional land within the City boundaries to expand fields and recreational opportunities, but it has proven to be very limited. To Mr. Sanchez's point, to meet the demand for the fields, the City would need to look into synthetic turf options to meet the demand of the community.

This process would not diminish potential environmental health concerns but would meet the demand for playing fields.

Ms. Bailey stated that the dog park on Los Olas, by the beach, has natural grass, and the community park has artificial turf. The park is in an area by the ocean with no trees to cool down the turf. Ms. Rahmankhah added that she understands there is limited space for sports fields, but that when there is not a need for a sports field like in Las Olas or Huizinga, we are disrupting the ecological corridors by putting in synthetic turf.

Ms. Nesimi suggested clover fields for the parks instead of Bermuda grass. Fort Lauderdale is the South Florida hub for vitality. If turf fields are installed, additional money will not be coming into the area, and the intellectual capital from coming to the area will also be lost. The City should consider pricing for clover fields in parks to support biodiversity.

Ms. Bailey stated that a defense of natural grass is that it mitigates flooding, and plastic does not. Mr. Daoust stated that lawn is also not a natural system and is ecologically destructive. Dr. Gassman added, related to the topic of stormwater, artificial turf fields go through the same stormwater management permitting process as a grass field, both must mitigate the exact same amount of water. Mr. Sanchez added that the South Florida Water Management Permit could be provided.

**Motion** was made by Mr. Daoust, seconded by Ms. Nesimi, to revisit the communication at the next meeting by streamlining some topics that have reached consensus, focusing on heat islands, and excluding items where consensus has not been reached. In a voice vote, the motion was tabled unanimously.

Ms. Duque Anez confirmed that the materials that have been used for discussions will be shared with the Board again.

### ● **Comments**

Ms. Charles stated there is an immediate need for trash bins on the beaches. Ms. Charles was on the Fort Lauderdale beach Saturday evening, around 8:00 p.m., and the trash bins were overflowing. Ms. Charles sent a message to Ms. Doyle requesting that the trash bins be emptied. There were no events that weekend, and people were simply enjoying the beach, with nowhere to put the trash. A huge amount of that litter will end up in the ocean. Ms. Charles asked about the beach pickup schedule for trash bins and stated that the bins should be emptied more frequently.

Ms. Duque Anez confirmed she will follow up on this concern.

### ● **Items for Next Meeting**

- Automated Metering Infrastructure (AMI) presentation by Ingrid Kindbom, Program Manager, Utility Services Department

Mr. Hadwen stated that the City began a pilot phase to install smart water meters to support water conservation. With the new meters, residents could set alerts for detailed water usage, see summaries and diagnose bill increases.

Ms. Duque Anez briefly reviewed the following upcoming events:

- Sunday Jazz Brunch Tree Giveaway on May 3, 2026, from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Esplanade Stage in Fort Lauderdale
- National Adaptation Forum from May 12, 2026, to May 14, 2026, in Pittsburgh, PA
- Ms. Rahmankhah added the Broward Social Resilience Gathering on May 1, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. at the Wharf

## **X. Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the Committee at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 7:44 p.m.

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