

VILLAGE OF HOFFMAN ESTATES
SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION MINUTES

Tuesday, February 17, 2026 @ 6:00pm
Alexa Room – Village Hall

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 PM.

Members Present:

Chairperson Amy Hartsough; Commissioners Lorraine Leisenberg, Alina Dekirmenjian, Hannelore Conley, Gayle Vandenberg, and Sheila Schwartz.

Members Absent:

Commissioners Amy Decker, Deepak Bhojwani, George Tuhowski, Trustee Anna Newell, and Sana Zafer.

Others Present:

Aaron Howe, Staff Liaison; Michala Sage, Schaumburg Township Library District Hoffman Estates Branch Manager; Natalia Taseff, resident.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Michala Sage of the Schaumburg Township Library District addressed the Commission regarding potential collaboration opportunities in conjunction with the Library's upcoming Plant Seed Read summer reading program, which runs from early June through the end of July.

Ms. Sage described a proposed sustainability-themed component of the program, potentially involving activities such as planting seeds, gardening education, recycling education, pollinator awareness (e.g., bee hotels), and other environmentally focused crafts. She noted that craft-based programs generally generate stronger participation than lecture-style events and suggested options including a multi-hour drop-in format or a registered program consisting of multiple one-hour sessions. She indicated flexibility in scheduling, with most days available except Thursdays, and stated that additional details would be provided at the Commission's next meeting.

Commission members discussed opportunities to provide educational materials and increase public engagement through the partnership. It was noted that the Library newsletter deadline is April 1, with distribution occurring shortly thereafter and reaching approximately 65,000 households in the region. The newsletter will cover summer programming, and additional promotion may occur through on-site displays and media.

Chairperson Hartsough inquired about funding and volunteer support. Ms. Sage stated that the Library has a program budget available to assist with materials, as needed. Several Commissioners expressed interest in volunteering. Ms. Sage also indicated that, if available, the Library would be willing to distribute additional yard waste decals and noted that Recycling Coach information is currently featured on the Library's Hoffman Estates branch bulletin board.

The Commission agreed to continue discussion of the potential partnership later in the meeting or at a future meeting, once additional details are available.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Commission reviewed the draft minutes from the January 20, 2026 meeting.

Corrections included:

- Correcting the spelling of Commissioner Gayle Vandenberg's name.
- Moving the Public Comment section from the previous meeting out of the Staff Liaison Report section.
- Confirming the next meeting date.

A motion was made by Commissioner Conley and seconded by Commissioner Dekirmenjian to approve the January 20, 2026, meeting minutes as amended. 6 – 0 Aye.

4. STAFF LIAISON REPORT

a. Updated Commission Roster

Staff Liaison Howe reported that an updated Commission roster will be distributed in the near future.

Commissioner Conley inquired whether the Commission's Google Drive continues to be updated. Chairperson Hartsough confirmed that documents are still being maintained and uploaded as appropriate.

Mr. Howe also provided a brief update regarding battery recycling efforts. Additional information will be shared as it becomes available.

5. OLD BUSINESS

a. Sustainability Expo Planning

i. Subcommittee Report

Commissioner Conley reported that the subcommittee met with Village Manager Eric Palm and Assistant Village Manager Jon Pape to discuss the proposed Sustainability Expo event. Based on feedback received, including a request for a more developed marketing plan and concerns regarding competing October/November events (including fire station open houses, Hispanic Heritage Day, French Dinner, voting activities, and the Public Works Open House), the subcommittee recommended deferring the large-scale Sustainability Expo event until 2027. Commissioner Vandenberg is currently working on a draft marketing plan to support future efforts. The subcommittee has also identified six to seven potential dates for consideration next year to allow flexibility in scheduling.

Staff Liaison Howe noted that an updated budget request will be needed in conjunction with future planning efforts.

The Commission also discussed whether a smaller-scale event or a focused educational topic may be more appropriate for 2026, rather than proceeding directly to a large-scale event. Commissioner Conley relayed concerns raised during discussions with Village leadership that the Commission may benefit from incremental steps before advancing to a comprehensive Sustainability Expo.

Additional outreach strategies were considered, including tabling at existing events such as farmers markets or other adult-oriented venues. While the Commission has previously participated in events such as Bon Appétit, Fourth of July festivities, the Fire Department Open House, Public Works Open House, and the annual Recycling Event, members noted that these events tend to be family-focused and may not effectively reach adult learners.

Possible alternative venues discussed included events at Goebert's Farm, Barrington Square, Now Arena, Village Green concerts, and other community gathering locations. Commissioners suggested developing low-engagement educational handouts that attendees could take home. It was also noted that outreach materials should be tailored appropriately, as some attendees may reside outside Hoffman Estates and may not directly benefit from community-specific information.

The Commission discussed the continued need for foundational recycling education, as confusion remains regarding acceptable materials. The possibility of attaching educational messaging to promotional bags was suggested.

Commissioner Conley emphasized the continued need for public education regarding recycling and composting. She inquired whether the Commission maintains an active contact at SWANCC and requested that Staff Liaison Howe provide updated contact information to the subcommittee.

Considering the proposed deferral, the Commission discussed alternative outreach opportunities for 2026. The Commission plans to participate in the Village's Bon Appétit event on April 9 by hosting a table to distribute sustainability-related information to attendees. Several Commissioners volunteered to assist.

Discussion followed regarding promotional materials and giveaways. Commissioners noted that yard waste decals have been well received in the past. Commissioner Vandenberg is designing a new commission logo for use on promotional materials. Staff suggested approximately 250 items as a standard order quantity. Staff Liaison Howe will provide the existing pop-up signage logo to Commissioner Vandenberg to ensure brand consistency.

Commissioner Schwartz requested information regarding green aggregation funds and asked that a report be prepared outlining how those funds have been expended. Commissioner Dekirmenjian suggested looking for programs in other communities that may be successful initiatives in Hoffman Estates as well. For example, Oak Park uses its green energy aggregation funds to supplement sustainability-related employee salaries.

b. Green Business Program Revival

i. Subcommittee Report

Chairperson Hartsough provided an update regarding proposed website revisions associated with the Green Business Program. Discussion included improving accessibility and visibility of the Green Business Strategy page to ensure it is more easily located by users, correct or remove inactive links, and other improvements.

Ms. Hartsough noted that the Village staff member overseeing building permits and Village codes (Sanyokta Kapur) should be involved in Green Business strategy web page maintenance.

Commissioner Schwartz shared feedback received regarding perceived delays in the permit review process over the past year. Staff Liaison Howe acknowledged that the Village recently transitioned to new permitting software, which may have contributed to processing challenges, but stated that the transition does not excuse delays and that Staff continues working to improve efficiency.

Commissioner Conley inquired about timelines for roadway restoration work associated with recent and/or past projects. Staff Liaison Howe responded that restoration areas are typically monitored into the growing season to evaluate establishment and performance before final determinations are made. He further indicated that he would follow up with the Engineering Division regarding the specific locations referenced. Mr. Howe had previously taken photos from Commissioner Conley's neighborhood, and Chairperson Hartsough has provided additional photographs from her own neighborhood on the Commission's Google Drive.

c. Solar Incentives Update

Chairperson Hartsough provided an update regarding recent changes to solar incentive programs at the federal and state levels. She reported that certain federal incentives previously anticipated to extend through 2030 are no longer available; however, the State of Illinois has implemented supplemental programs to support solar adoption.

The Commission discussed updates to renewable energy credit (REC) structures, noting that credits for energy production are now administered through utilities. It was further noted that new state incentives include financial support for residential solar installations with battery storage, including an incentive of approximately \$300 per kilowatt of installed system capacity, in addition to compensation from energy providers for electricity returned to the grid. The updated program is anticipated to begin June 1.

Chairperson Hartsough shared that the Citizens Utility Board (CUB) is preparing an updated video webinar and has released a revised fact sheet outlining the new incentive structure. She noted that the Commission's solar webpage currently features a 2024 CUB presentation that references incentives that are no longer available. Discussion occurred regarding adding a temporary disclaimer directing users to updated resources, including the CUB fact sheet and ComEd's informational webpage, until the Village website can be fully revised. Staff Liaison Howe will coordinate potential updates to the webpage.

It was also noted that a CUB representative may be willing to provide an updated solar presentation in the future, potentially as part of a larger sustainability-focused event.

Commissioner Dekirmenjian referenced community solar options for residents who may not have the ability to install rooftop systems, including apartment dwellers, such as Community Solar. She also mentioned group discount solar purchasing programs such as Switch Together. Chairperson Hartsough noted that Illinois Shines is a State-administered program and that CUB has cautioned that not all third-party solar programs may be advisable.

6. NEW BUSINESS

7. OTHER

Commissioner Leisenberg referenced Open Meetings Act rule ILCS 120/2.07 regarding public meetings on election days.

Staff Liaison Howe will distribute a Doodle poll to Commission members to identify a potential alternative March meeting date. Proposed dates will exclude the first and third Tuesday of the month.

8. ADJOURNMENT

This meeting was adjourned at 7:20 PM.