

VOTERS' GUIDE

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Compare Candidates on the Issues

Candidates Forum Sunday, March 2, 2025

Consolidated Election April 1, 2025

Check out our League's [website](#)

LWW LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS*
OF HIGHLAND PARK-HIGHWOOD

Candidates Forum

Sunday, March 2, 2025, starting at 1:00 PM

“The Moraine Events” former Highland Park Country Club
1201 Park Avenue West - Highland Park

Park District of Highland Park

Starting at 1:00 pm

Three (3) Candidates Running for Two (2) Positions

Josie Beck

Steven Alan Greenberg

Thomas Vanden Berk

Highland Park City Council

Starting at approx: 2:00 pm

Three (3) Candidates Running for One (1) Position

Jonathan Center

Kevin Cullather

Kim Stone

North Shore District #112

Starting at approx: 3:00 pm

Seven (7) Candidates Running for Four (4) Positions

Lori Fink

Art Kessler

Jaret Fishman

Bennett W Lasko

Bradley Hergott

Sharone Levy Marck

Ryan Morgan

City Council of HP 2-Year Unexpired Term (3 Candidates—Vote for 1)

WRITE A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY THAT INCLUDES YOUR QUALIFICATIONS FOR THIS OFFICE.



**Jonathan Center
City Council**

Jon Center, 40, is a proud lifelong resident of Highland Park, growing up in the Red Oak area and now raising his family near downtown with his wife and two young children. Deeply committed to honoring Highland Park's rich history and natural beauty, Jon strives to preserve what makes the city special while guiding it toward a thriving future.

As a CPA, former Big 4 auditor, and small business CFO/COO, Jon brings critical financial acumen and to foster prudent economic development and responsible fiscal leadership. His civic experience includes a five-year term on the board of Resilience, where he served as Board President, and founding Foursomes 4 Philanthropy, a nonprofit that raised tens of thousands of dollars for local charities.

Jon's fresh perspective, deep community roots, and expertise in financial oversight uniquely position him to be a thoughtful and effective Councilmember, committed to strong leadership, open communication and a vibrant Highland Park.



**Kevin Cullather
City Council**

My family and I moved to Highland Park in 2011 because of its welcoming nature, vibrant and walkable business districts, and schools. With a degree in public administration, I have focused on the intersection between business and public policy. I have managed regulatory policies, directed educational programs, and launched an energy efficiency program here in Illinois.

As the director of education for a national association of municipal organizations, I oversaw the community and economic development initiatives, managed an educational curriculum, and taught courses in Board Governance. In this role, I worked closely with mayors, city managers, and local government employees from across the nation.

I served on Highland Park's Bird Friendly Task Force and the Zoning Board of Appeals (8 years). As Chair of the ZBA for 3 years, I always encouraged applicants to talk with their neighbors and asked city staff to identify variance trends in neighborhoods or districts.



**Kim Stone
City Council**

I am a second-generation Highland Park resident with more than 20 years of non-profit management experience. My husband and I raised our family here, and I remain committed to our community.

As your Councilmember, I have:

- Updated infrastructure, including improvements on Second Street and revitalizing the Ravinia business district, to support new and existing businesses.
- Enhanced public safety, including the new Ravinia Fire Station and safer streets for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers.
- Advanced community vibrancy, including the upcoming Library expansion.
- Led climate initiatives, including renewable energy purchases and expanded recycling and composting.

I hold master's degrees in Science and Public Policy from the University of Michigan and a bachelor's degree from Middlebury College. I co-chair Go Green Illinois, serve on the Union of Concerned Scientists National Advisory Board, and served on the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus' EV Readiness Advisory Committee and the Board of Community Partners for Affordable Housing.



**CUT
THRU
THE
SPIN.**

**BE INFORMED.
THE LEADERS
YOU ELECT**

**MAKE
DECISIONS
THAT WILL
IMPACT
YOUR LIFE.**

Just some of our 2024 League Programs:

- Voter Registration
- Candidate Forums
- Panel Discussion on Community Mental Health Boards
- Program on Immigration and Asylum
- Behind the Curtains in Springfield (how state gov works)
- Book Banning
- Hosting Early Voting at HWD Library & CC
- Film Series with HPPL
- Participation in Habitat HP
- And more ...

City Council of HP 2-Year Unexpired Term (3 Candidates—Vote for 1)

What do you consider key issues to be addressed in the next term?

Jonathan Center City Council	Kevin Cullather City Council	Kim Stone City Council	 <p>Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy.</p> <p><i>The League of Women Voters, LWVUS, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. The League shall not support or oppose any political party or any candidate. The League of Women Voters of the US was founded in 1920 prior to the ratification of the 19th Amendment granting the right to vote to women.</i></p> <p>Membership is open to all persons who subscribe to the purposes and policy of the League.</p> <p><i>League of Women Voters of Highland Park was founded in 1928. In 2011 we became the League of Women Voters of Highland Park/Highwood.</i></p> <p><i>Questions for the Voters Guide were posed by the Voter Service Committee of the LWVHP-HWD. Photos and responses are as provided by the candidates and were not edited by the LWVHP-HWD.</i></p> <p><i>Our local website lwvhp.org is a good place to find upcoming programs and voter information. New members are welcome to join!</i></p>
<p>Highland Park has an opportunity to balance thoughtful progress with preserving its unique charm. To meet the needs of our residents, we must revitalize business districts to attract diverse retailers and restaurants, expand the tax base, and ease the financial burden on homeowners. Our community should reflect how people live, work, and play, positioning Highland Park as the premier destination on the North Shore. My vision is to create a vibrant, modern city while preserving the natural character that makes it special.</p> <p>Equally critical is fostering transparency and fiscal accountability. Leveraging my experience as a CPA and small business CFO/COO, I will apply best practices to ensure responsible decision-making.</p> <p>Building a connected community ties these priorities together. By enhancing green spaces, hosting inclusive events, and improving amenities, we can create a welcoming environment for all. I am also committed to environmental sustainability and public safety to ensure Highland Park thrives for generations to come.</p>	<p>Creating HP's Future, Together. Put the Will of the People First.</p> <p>Ensure that OUR City Council represents US: create council districts, adopt term limits, and ensure that all citizens can serve on City Council. Commissions should reflect all areas of the city and its residents.</p> <p>Update the 25-Year-Old Comprehensive Plan.</p> <p>HP's Comprehensive Plan is outdated. The city needs to engage its residents and business-owners in this process. As the Chair of the ZBA, I asked: "have you spoken with your neighbors?" It's time for the City to speak with its residents.</p> <p>Proactively Use Economic Development Strategies.</p> <p>Reimagine "The LOT," the PETCO/ToysRUS property, the Solo Cup parcel, and others; make HP more welcoming to small businesses.</p> <p>Adopt Policies Combating Climate Change.</p> <p>Incorporate climate policies within the Code: mandate higher efficiency standards for new construction; transition new construction away from fossil fuels; and incentivize homeowners to invest in energy efficiency and renewable upgrades.</p>	<p>Financial Sustainability</p> <p>During my time on the City Council, we have maintained a balanced budget and a AAA bond rating. My budget experience enables me to make tough decisions that sustain the high level of services our residents deserve within tight financial constraints.</p> <p>Infrastructure Investment</p> <p>We have improved Second Street, constructed a new Ravinia Fire Station, and planned a library expansion to serve our community. We improved street safety for all users and repaired roads and sidewalks. We also revitalized downtown through zoning changes that increased foot traffic and supported local businesses. Continuing to strengthen our downtown remains one of my top priorities for 2025 and beyond.</p> <p>Environmental Leadership</p> <p>I led the City to adopt strong greenhouse gas emission reduction targets, save taxpayer money by integrating energy efficiency into purchasing, and adopt policies to enable residents to easily install renewable energy. Climate action remains one of my top priorities.</p>	

Park District of Highland Park (3 Candidates – Vote for 2)

WRITE A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY THAT INCLUDES YOUR QUALIFICATIONS FOR THIS OFFICE.



**Josie Beck
Park District**

I've called Highland Park home since 2013, where I live with my husband and two sons, who actively participate in Park District programs. With 20 years of professional experience, primarily in the medical device field, I've built a career rooted in leadership, innovation, and teamwork. As a successful sales leader for over a decade, I've learned the importance of trust, consensus-building, thoughtful decision-making, and fiscal responsibility.

As President of the Parks Foundation of Highland Park, I lead efforts to expand access to parks and recreational programs through fundraising, grant writing, and community partnerships. I also serve as Edgewood PTO Chair of Philanthropy and Sustainability, supporting key school initiatives.

By prioritizing efficiency, strategic partnerships, and community-driven solutions, I will work to keep our parks and facilities vibrant, inclusive, and reflective of Highland Park's values—ensuring opportunities for recreation, creativity, and connection for all.



**Steven Greenberg
Park District**

Husband, father, grandfather, and Highland Park resident since 1965, I have a deep commitment to the people, parks, and natural areas that define our community.

With over 45 years of experience in supply chain, engineering, and distribution, I bring problem-solving, partnership-building, and sustainable solutions to both business and community leadership. My approach combines innovative thinking with sound management.

Founder of the Park District's Natural Areas Volunteer Program in 1989.

Lead a 2000 seminar for visiting Ukrainian environmentalists, sharing practical insights from our program that would be useful in their country.

As a Commissioner of the East Skokie Drainage District, 1999-2005, I contributed to ecological restoration and flood control projects in the watershed.

Since 2003, I have served as Chicago River Day Site Captain, engaging hundreds of resident volunteers in trash removal, invasive species control, rain garden planting, and ecosystem education to support flood control and preserve the Skokie River.



**Thomas Vanden Berk
Park District**

- Resident of Highland Park for over 30 years.

- Retired President and CEO of UCAN (Uhlich Children's Advantage Network), an organization that currently serves 20,000 young people annually. UCAN has a residential treatment center, two Special Ed schools, a foster care program, teen moms, violence prevention, crisis intervention, and family counseling. It has a \$50M budget and employs nearly 800 people.

- Married with three children and six grandchildren.

- MBA from Roosevelt University, undergraduate degree from the University of Wisconsin – Madison.

- Founder and Chair of G-PAC, a nonprofit focused on funding political candidates who support sensible gun regulations.

- Presently serving on five Boards of Directors: First Nonprofit Unemployment Group, G-PAC, Grant Healthcare Foundation, Guitars Over Guns, Gun Violence Prevention Action Committee.

- Past service on the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, and state and national trade associations of nonprofits providing services to children and youth.

**“I think,
Therefore
I vote.”**

#GetTheFacts
**In Illinois,
any qualified
voter can vote
early without
an excuse.**



Park District of Highland Park (3 Candidates – Vote for 2)

What do you consider key issues to be addressed in the next term?

Josie Beck Park District	Steven Greenberg Park District	Thomas Vanden Berk Park District	 <h3 style="text-align: center; color: #0056b3; margin: 0;">ELECTION SCHEDULE</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March 2 Starting at 1:00 pm Candidates Forum “The Moraine” formerly Highland Park Country Club • March 4 Last Day for Deputy Registrars to register voters or register by mail • March 7 Vote by mail ballots are mailed and 1st day early voting at the County Clerk’s Office • March 16 Online Voter Registration Closes • March 17 Early Voting begins County-Wide • March 27 Last Day to Mail Vote by Mail Ballots • March 31 Last Day for Early Voting • April 1 Election Day! 
<p>The Park District Board will be undertaking its next 10-year capital planning process in Q3 of 2025. As Park District Commissioner, I will prioritize thoughtful stewardship of resources, innovative programming, and strategic partnerships to ensure Highland Park’s parks and facilities serve the diverse needs of all residents. My platform focuses on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximizing Efficiency in Land and Building Utilization, including optimizing the new West Ridge Center, planning a new location for the administrative offices, and exploring options to expand ice availability at Centennial Ice Arena. • Expanding Community Partnerships for Winter Sports and Creative Programming, advocating for collaborations to secure space for ceramics, indoor sports, and other programming. • Ensuring Programs Meet the Needs of Working Parents, supporting access to inclusive, flexible, and high-quality recreational opportunities. 	<p>As Commissioner, I will prioritize preserving and enhancing open space, ensuring our parks remain places of beauty, recreation, and environmental stewardship. Protecting natural areas, expanding ecological restoration, and inspiring the community to connect with nature and gardening will be at the heart of my work.</p> <p>I will advocate for sustainability efforts, flood control measures, and the protection of our lakefront and natural habitats. Thoughtful land management should prioritize open space while keeping community needs in mind.</p> <p>Maintaining world-class facilities while remaining financially responsible is essential. Our parks, trails, and gardens should be well-maintained, accessible, and inviting for all. Encouraging nature-based recreation, from walking trails to gardening programs, will strengthen our connection to the outdoors.</p> <p>A vibrant park system isn’t just about buildings; it’s about keeping nature accessible for all.</p> <p>Together, we can ensure our parks remain green and thriving for generations.</p>	<p>Highland Park is a special community. Its people care a great deal for their own well-being and that of their children. We are blessed with a park district whose facilities are equal to that of any community on the North Shore. Yet, there are always challenges: upkeep of current facilities, management of personal, budgets and the wise development of future plans.</p> <p>My background gives me a special insight in to program development, facility maintenance and fiscal management. For thirty years, I was President and CEO of one of Chicago’s largest child welfare agencies. In that capacity, I worked with a top-notch Board of Directors, building the organization from a \$2 M to a \$50 M annual budget. As a volunteer I have served on over 10 Boards for non-profits as well as for profits.</p> <p>I promise fiscal responsibility and sound management.</p>	

North Shore District 112 School Board (8 Candidates—Vote for 4)

WRITE A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY THAT INCLUDES YOUR QUALIFICATIONS FOR THIS OFFICE.



WITHDRAWN



**Lori Fink
District 112**

**Jaret Fishman
District 112**

**John Guy
District 112**

**Bradley Hergott
District 112**

I am a passionate leader and educator, dedicated community member, and proud parent of two District 112 students at Ravinia and Red Oak Elementary Schools.

I am deeply committed to fostering strong partnerships amongst schools, families, and the community. I hold advanced degrees in Education and School Leadership, and currently serve as a Board Member of the Parks Foundation of Highland Park, the Advisory Board President of ORT Chicago, the co-leader of Girl Scout Troop 47782, and the Red Oak Cultural Assemblies Coordinator. My professional expertise, combined with my personal experience as a parent with students in mono and dual language programs, uniquely positions me to serve our community with a perspective that balances educational and community insights.

I am committed to listening and ensuring exceptional academic and social outcomes for all. I believe we can create an environment where District 112 is the best place to work and learn.

I am the son of an educator, father of two NSSD112 students (Northwood & Red Oak), and have called Highland Park home since 2008. Professionally, I'm a practicing civil-rights attorney.

Since 2018, I've served in the leadership of the Bilingual Parent Advisory Committee and worked collaboratively with District leadership to enhance engagement with ESL and emergent multilingual-learner families (30+ events).

I was selected for the District's advisory committees on facilities planning (referendum)(2022) and strategic planning (vision, values & goals) (2024). I've also evaluated board candidates on the D112 Caucus (2018) and D113 Caucus (2024).

Additionally, I'm in my second term on the City of Highland Park's Human Relations Advisory Group, an active congregant at NSCI, and a member of the Yes to Invest in D112 (pro-referendum) campaign.

My professional background, extensive volunteer experience in NSSD112, and the institutional knowledge I have gained are what qualify me for the Board of Education.

Name Remains on the ballot

However, Candidate Withdrew

I care about the future of our education system and want to ensure NSSD 112 implements measurably successful policies that are financially sound.

Background: Born and raised in the North Shore, I know how fortunate we are to live in such a robust community. My wife and I moved to Highland Park in 2016, and our two children are in the district.

Professional Accomplishments: I started my career as a litigator and eventually moved into an in-house corporate role. Building on my strong legal experience and communication skills, I co-founded a successful consulting firm, Alactricity, in 2020.

Community Contributions: Served on two Boards: Erie Neighborhood House and Legal Prep Charter Academy. I also mentored kids, helped lead a *pro bono* law clinic, and participated on the Strategic Change Discovery Team for NSSD 112.

Education: JD from University of Michigan Law School & MBA from Northwestern University Kellogg School of Management.

North Shore District 112 School Board (8 Candidates—Vote for 4)

WRITE A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY THAT INCLUDES YOUR QUALIFICATIONS FOR THIS OFFICE.



**Art Kessler
District 112**

**Bennett Lasko
District 112**

**Sharone Levy Marck
District 112**

**Ryan Morgan
District 112**

During my eight years on the BOE, I helped oversee the district as it put its finances in order, standardized the curriculum across the district, increased students meeting state standards by 9% and 15% in Math and English (despite a pandemic which we navigated), implemented full-day kindergarten, repaired our Union relationships, passed a referendum with 72% approval, renovated three buildings with two more underway, committed \$6M to security, and earned a “Destination-District” reputation among educators.

My other Board experience includes 28 years on the Board of the Dystonia Medical Research Foundation, including 12 as its President. Additionally, I served three years on the Board of Congregation Makom Solel Lakeside.

I have 23 years of Private Equity experience and have served as CEO of four companies. I hold an MBA from Kellogg and am proud of my collaborative management style.

Growing up, I attended 112’s schools, as did my two boys.

I have served eight years on the District 112 Board of Education, including two years as President. Together with my colleagues, we have made enormous improvements. We stabilized the District’s finances, completed renovations of three schools (with two more underway and two in planning/design), established a positive culture, and improved student achievement, satisfaction, and engagement. I also served four years on advisory committees for the District. From deep experience, I understand District 112’s strengths, challenges, needs, and opportunities.

My wife and I were raised in Highland Park, attended District 112 schools, and returned here to raise our three children. I have a life-long connection to our community.

Professionally, I have been a business litigation attorney for more than 35 years. My education created great opportunities for me. I believe in the power of education to improve the lives of every child in our community, too.

My husband and I moved to Highland Park in 2013. We have two sons - a Braeside 4th grader and an Edgewood 8th grader. I hold a BA from Penn, a JD from the University of Iowa and a public policy masters from the University of Chicago.

I am a lawyer specializing in public finance and have a deep familiarity with Illinois school finance. That, combined with experience as a municipal credit analyst and in implementing public policy on the local, state and federal levels, equips me with the tools to make informed decisions to positively impact our schools and the financial health of D112.

I have advocated for policies that support working families, spearheaded Braeside’s zero waste program and regularly engage with the Board and the administration. Having served on, and led, boards, I understand the importance of collaboration between the Board and administration to best serve all our children.

Over the past 10 years I’ve become deeply involved in the local school community, particularly through the PTO. I have two young kids, enrolled in the dual language program. I have supported various school events, and I’ve had the honor of co-leading the Oak Terrace chess program for the past two years, and served as a judge for the D112 Robotics competition.

Beyond school, I’m an active member of the HP CERT program, certified in search and rescue as well as other emergency response tactics..

A lifelong learner, I hold a BS in Mechanical Engineering, a Master’s in Education, and an MBA. I work in Specification Sales for a US-based lighting and controls company, leveraging a decade of international experience. Prior to work at the corporate level I was a secondary education teacher for 8-years.

I am a dedicated leader and hold a strong commitment to serving our students and community with integrity and passion.

North Shore District 112 School Board (8 Candidates—Vote for 4)

What do you consider key issues to be addressed in the next term?

Lori Fink District 112	Jaret Fishman District 112	John Guy District 112	Bradley Hergott District 112
<p>The upcoming term offers an exciting opportunity to focus on multiple transitions, shifting our attention from infrastructure to teaching and learning. While we continue to complete building projects on time and on budget, we must prioritize supporting key transitions, including a new superintendent, the integration of special education programs at Ravinia, and the implementation of recommendations from our dual language consultant.</p> <p>Our priority must be to ensure a dynamic and inclusive curriculum that promotes equity and achievement for all students. Equally important is fostering both the social and academic growth of our students through engaging learning experiences, innovative teaching strategies, and strong community partnerships. By prioritizing these efforts, we will continue to strengthen our schools as vibrant centers of learning and connection. I am committed to collaborative leadership that supports the success of every student and staff member in District 112.</p>	<p>I'll identify five key issues in the next term:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Academic achievement. A key focus will be accelerating recent academic growth so that our community's children will have thriving lives and careers. The Board and District will continue to strive to ensure all students reach their full potential, including enhancing engagement, differentiated learning opportunities, and closing the achievement gap. 2. Fiscal responsibility. Financial oversight of the referendum construction, federal funding changes, and Phase 3 of the District's Long-Range Facilities Plan, will be important near term financial issues. 3. Safety. Maintaining student safety and security will remain of paramount importance for our community and the School Board. 4. Personnel management. Hiring great teachers during the teacher shortage and helping with the superintendent transition are key personnel issues. 5. Community partnerships. Partnerships between the Districts, community, and parents will remain critical to support student mental health, good governance, and to deliver high academic outcomes for all students. 	<p>Name Remains on the ballot</p> <p>However, Candidate Withdrew</p>	<p>As a Board member I will focus on three key priorities: an amazing education, smart finances, and safety and security. I believe in listening to all voices - parents, teachers, administrators, and community members - to make informed decisions that benefit our district.</p> <p>Our students deserve strong foundational and interpersonal skills and a balanced approach to technology. Financial responsibility requires carefully evaluating and prioritizing initiatives while considering both their short- and long-term impact. And we need to do all we can to ensure the physical, mental and emotional safety of our students, teachers and staff.</p> <p>I commit to working collaboratively with fellow Board members and maintaining productive relationships with district leadership to achieve these goals. Our school district is our community's greatest asset, and I will work diligently to protect and enhance its value through thoughtful governance and strategic planning.</p>

North Shore District 112 School Board (8 Candidates—Vote for 4)

What do you consider key issues to be addressed in the next term?

Art Kessler District 112	Bennett Lasko District 112	Sharone Levy Marck District 112	Ryan Morgan District 112
<p>With terms ending for all four of us elected during the crisis eight years ago, and to ensure a smooth transition for our new Superintendent, it's vital to maintain continuity and institutional knowledge on the Board. This is why I'm running for re-election.</p> <p>Three of our schools earned Illinois' Exemplary rating. We can earn that rating for our other schools by replicating what's working and further accelerating student growth. To reach that next level, we must improve instructional differentiation, increase rigor, and provide students with more choice. This will help us continue our 5-year 53% increase in home sale prices.</p> <p>Declining enrollment of English Learners in the DL program have caused issues, and the program itself can be improved. I have an open mind to our DL consultant's upcoming recommendations which may allow us to continue operations at two buildings, provided the program's integrity is maintained for all students.</p> <p>Finally, I'd like to finish the renovation projects we started.</p>	<p>Most importantly, District 112 faces a critical leadership transition as Superintendent Lubelfeld prepares to retire in 2025-26. This requires careful, multi-year planning across our entire leadership team - balancing strengths and needs, creating advancement opportunities, and developing our next generation of leaders.</p> <p>District 112 also faces an on-going challenge of attracting and retaining the best educators amid a worsening shortage. We've built a welcoming and supportive culture that makes us a destination district. We must continue strengthening this foundation.</p> <p>In addition, we need to build on our momentum by completing building renovations; keeping budgets balanced; supporting our teachers with best-in-class curriculum materials, coaching, and professional development; adapting to new technologies, including artificial intelligence; challenging every student with rigorous curriculum suited to their individual strengths and needs; building awareness around social-emotional wellness and expanding mental health supports; and most fundamentally, providing genuine, unconditional belonging to every student, every day.</p>	<p>The most critical responsibility of the D112 School Board in the coming years is to support the transition to our new Superintendent and ensure her success. Over the past eight years, the Board and Superintendent have worked together to achieve fiscal stability, rebuild community trust, and provide our students with outstanding facilities and resources. Next, we must return our focus to academic excellence, including robust programs for English-language learners, special education services and advanced learning opportunities.</p> <p>The key to achieving these goals will be the successful implementation of the new strategic change agenda, which prioritizes student success, well-being, and the development of strong partnerships among students, educators, parents and the community. Attracting and retaining exceptional staff is crucial. Especially in the current climate, we must remain focused on student well-being and safety, while preparing them for the AI-driven workplace of tomorrow.</p>	<p>Our district has undergone a major transformation, investing heavily in school infrastructure. I am grateful to the community for its support and feedback throughout this process. As we transition from construction to long-term maintenance, I will remain a responsible steward of this investment.</p> <p>Now, we must shift our focus to academics. A consistent curriculum across all schools is key to fostering inclusion and ensuring every student reaches their full potential. We must challenge advanced learners while providing essential support for those who need it.</p> <p>Financial self-sufficiency is also crucial. The community has made significant investments, and it is the board's duty to balance expenses and future investments responsibly. We must provide the best education possible while maintaining fiscal responsibility—without continuously seeking additional funding from the community.</p>

What is ???

AN UNCONTESTED

ELECTION IN ILLINOIS?

While this may be different in other election districts, for Highland Park and Highwood, an **uncontested election** is an **election** in which the winning candidate did not face a serious challenger. This often entails the number of candidates being the same as or fewer than the number of places available for election, meaning that all candidates are guaranteed to be elected unless there are provisions provided for this.

League of Women Voters of Highland Park-Highwood includes responses from Highland Park and Highwood candidates in uncontested elections **on the following pages**.

We believe this is an opportunity for residents to learn about their elected officials.

Please note the following uncontested Moraine Township elections will also be on the ballot:

- * Supervisor—Nancy Chausow Shafer
- * Clerk—Colleen Jenn
- * Assessor—Tom J. Healy
- * Trustees: Diana Guerrero, Mark Haggarty, Rachel Jacoby and Allison Levin

A CONSOLIDATED

ELECTION IN ILLINOIS ?

A consolidated election in Illinois is a type of election that takes place on the first Tuesday in April of odd-numbered years. It allows local governments, including municipalities, school districts, and park districts, to hold their elections at the same time. Voters can cast their ballots for multiple offices and referendums on the same ballot.

City Council of HP 4-Year Term and Park District of HP 2-Year Term unexpired

WRITE A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY THAT INCLUDES YOUR QUALIFICATIONS FOR THIS OFFICE.



Barisa Bruckman
City Council

I am a lifelong Highland Park resident, a dedicated public servant, and a current City Council member. I was appointed with unanimous City Council approval because of my deep commitment to our community and experience in government, policy, and public service. I have a Master's in Public Policy and Public Administration from Northwestern University and have worked at the White House Presidential Personnel Office, the Chicago City Treasurer's Office, and the General Services Administration, focusing on small businesses and economic development. As the City Council liaison to the Central Business District Alliance, the Business and Economic Development Advisory Group, and the District 112 School Board, I work to strengthen our local economy, support businesses, and enhance public safety. As a mother of a young family, I understand the challenges facing parents and am committed to being an independent voice for families and our community.

Annette Lidawer
City Council

I have served and loved Highland Park for decades and developed a strong understanding of the community's needs.

I am an attorney/educator and moved to Highland Park with my family in 1999. My husband and I raised our children in Highland Park schools and park district programs.

I served two terms on High School District 113, including as President/VP; PDC Commissioner; Co-founder/Chair District 112's Fun-d-Run; Chair Edgewood Food Days; and member Braeside, Edgewood, HPHS PTOs.

As a City Councilmember, I focused on improving the community's economic development, vibrancy, sustainability and enhancement of its inherent beauty.

Consistent with my commitment to inclusive local government, respect for the outcome of free, fair elections, and responsiveness to voters' wishes, I have been a strong, successful advocate for the liquor license amendment/related referendum -- which garnered 82% approval.

I bring an important perspective to the Council and am seeking reelection because my work is not done.

Andrés Tapia
City Council

I bring diverse lived and professional experiences that shape my perspective on Highland Park's opportunities and challenges. As a global strategist at Korn Ferry, I specialize in culture transformation, change management, and leadership activation. I'm also a generative writer, trend analyst, and innovator, developing solutions for complex organizational issues.

Raised in a bilingual, bicultural home in Lima, Peru, I studied journalism, history, and political science at Northwestern University. I was a founding proponent of Highland Park's 25-year-old Dual Language program and became the city's first Latino councilmember. My family has lived here for over 30 years, grounding me in our community while allowing me to bring fresh perspectives from living elsewhere.

Rafael Labrador
2-year Park District

I moved to Highland Park ten years ago with my wife Hallie and our three daughters now aged 15, 13, and 11.

My career is in marketing in the biotech industry specializing in medicines for cancer. Our children are in D112 and D113 and we have been regular participants in many different programs with the Park District.

Our family loves the amazing Highland Park community and I have been inspired to serve in a many volunteer leadership positions including:

- Co-chair of NSSD112 Reconfiguration 2.0 Committee 2016-17
- Board Member 2017-2021 and President, 2021-2024, Parks Foundation of Highland Park
- Commissioner, Park District of Highland Park, 2024-present

Under my leadership the Parks Foundation grew to raise millions of dollars in support of the Park District's capital projects and scholarship programs for families in need. I enjoyed strong partnership with Park District leadership, which inspired me to assume the Commissioner position in mid-2024.



City Council of HP 4–Year Term and Park District of HP 2-Year Term unexpired

What do you consider key issues to be addressed in the next term?

Barisa Bruckman City Council	Annette Lidawer City Council	Andrés Tapia City Council	Rafael Labrador 2-year Park District
<p>Strengthening Highland Park’s economy and supporting businesses are top priorities for the next term. We must carry on the momentum of our business development efforts and continue exploring new and creative ways to foster vibrancy. Attracting new businesses, supporting the success of existing ones, and making our central business district more family-friendly will help drive economic growth. Creating engaging spaces, enhancing accessibility, and expanding retail and dining options will strengthen our local economy and community. Public safety remains critical. I will continue working with law enforcement to prevent crime, ensure first responders have the resources they need, and lead the fight against antisemitism and hate in all forms to keep Highland Park safe and welcoming. Additionally, I am committed to maintaining strong city services, responsible fiscal management, and policies that support families. I will work to protect Highland Park’s character while ensuring a thriving future for residents and businesses alike.</p>	<p>Restoring public trust is paramount and illustrates many challenges we face.</p> <p>Economic development is gaining momentum, but more is necessary. Until Highland Park is viewed as business friendly, we won’t meet our potential/keep pace. Streamlining permitting, engaging businesses to understand their pain, continually reevaluating incentives, zoning, and working to fill vacancies while retaining existing businesses, is crucial.</p> <p>Fiscal balance will be difficult as we navigate infrastructure/initiatives with diminishing State/Federal support.</p> <p>Updating local laws to reflect current needs and to serve clear public desires.</p> <p>This challenge was tested this past year when an unknown liquor code surfaced. After 82% of Highland Park voters supported an advisory referendum, the Council took another three months to respect the public’s wishes -- thereby excluding several business owners from running in the current election.</p> <p>Respect and trust are garnered when we are transparent and open to residents. Tackling these challenges will build that trust.</p>	<p>I seek to prioritize a thriving and welcoming Highland Park through dynamic economic development and nurturing inclusion. I will continue to build on prioritizing Economic Development as a key City pillar, keep driving business incentives to attract new restaurants, help existing ones expand, and encourage improved storefronts. We need to make the most of our newly revitalized downtown by generating vibrant events that delight residents and attract visitors. We must rescind the outdated liquor license ordinance restricting public office eligibility. I also seek to brand Highland Park as a City of the Arts.</p> <p>On inclusion, I bring global DE&I expertise to most policy decisions. We can also do much more to encourage Latino residents to aspire to more leadership roles, given their meaningful presence in HP as well as create psychological safety for all residents, especially given the current antagonistic national climate against many due to their differences.</p>	<p>In eight years with Foundation and as a Commissioner, both successes and setbacks have taught me the vital importance of actively engaging with community stakeholders and Park District leadership to get things done. We are nearing the end of a 10-year strategic planning cycle of great accomplishment by our Park District. As Commissioner I will help to lead new long range planning for the next five to ten years, ensuring that we maintain our strong commitment to sustainability and addressing the needs of all residents. We have seen dramatic change over the past few years in utilization of Park District services. Understanding and tirelessly representing the evolving needs of our community is my highest priority and responsibility as Commissioner. Longer term priorities include a focus on the condition of our sports fields at Olson Park and ice capacity at Centennial Ice Arena.</p>

Township High School District 113 4-Year and 2-Year unexpired

WRITE A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY THAT INCLUDES YOUR QUALIFICATIONS FOR THIS OFFICE.



**Jaime Barraza
District 113**

**Rick Heineman
District 113**

**Jenny Lupa
District 113**

**Alex Brunk
2-year District 113**

Jaime Barraza is an experienced education leader and dedicated public servant with a passion for student success and community engagement. He grew up in the community and has lived in District 113 for the last 15 years. He currently serves as Chief Education Officer at the Education Research & Development Institute. With a background as a former teacher, district administrator, and nonprofit program coordinator, Jaime brings a wealth of knowledge to his role as Vice President of the District 113 Board of Education.

Elected to the board in 2021, he has played a key role in major district initiatives, including hiring a superintendent and navigating critical policy decisions. Jaime is also an active community leader, he previously served on the Highland Park Community Foundation Together Highland Park Unidos Committee and on the Highland Park Community Nursery School board. As a proud graduate of Highland Park High School and a parent of future District 113 students, he remains committed to ensuring equitable opportunities for all learners.

I have an MBA from Wharton and worked for companies in a Marketing, Sales Administration, Marketing Research, and Information Systems Management. I was also CEO of a software company.

Outside of my professional career I have spent many years following the activities and serving on committees in both 113 and 112. This started in 1985 in the Lincoln School PTO. Over the years I have developed expertise in school finance, school facilities, and the laws concerning property taxes, the tax cap (Property Tax Extension Limitation Law - PTELL), TIF districts and the role of the school board. I have been chair of both the Facilities and Finance committees of the board and currently chair Facilities.

I've been a member of District 113's board since March 2024. In that time, I've become a member of the Finance Committee and I'm also the District 113 representative for the True-North Leadership Council. Prior to moving to Highland Park in 2022, I served for eight years on Hampstead Parochial School's Board of Governors, two of those years as Vice Chair and four as Chair. In this context I served on many committees including: finance, curriculum progress and outcomes, and Headteacher Evaluation.

I graduated from The University of Michigan (BFA Theatre Performance) and with my background in the arts, I feel I can provide an additional perspective to District 113's Board meetings. Working together with my fellow board members and our Superintendent, I hope to continue to develop and improve our district for the benefit of our students, staff and wider community.

Alexander Brunk is an analytics leader and community advocate serving on the North Shore School District 112 Board of Education since 2017. As Board President (2021-2023), he led the successful passage of a referendum to modernize elementary school buildings. During his tenure, the district has achieved improvements in curriculum, student performance, and financial health.

Professionally, Alexander leads an analytics team at Health Care Service Corporation in Chicago, bringing expertise in machine learning, data engineering, and statistical modeling across healthcare, retail, and public affairs sectors. His work focuses on implementing analytical models that enhance operational efficiency and decision-making.

A Deerfield native and graduate of its public schools, Alexander holds a Bachelor's in Public Policy from Georgia Tech and a Master's in Political Science from Virginia Tech. He resides in Highland Park with his wife, Karuna, and their four children, who will attend District 113 schools.



Township High School District 113 4-Year and 2-Year

What do you consider key issues to be addressed in the next term?

Jaime Barraza District 113	Rick Heineman District 113	Jenny Lupa District 113	Alex Brunk 2-year District 113
<p>In the next term, District 113 must focus on key priorities to support students, staff, and the community. Building an inclusive school community has been a top priority for the superintendent and cabinet this year. The district is currently undergoing a process to update the strategic plan, which will help ensure the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Academic excellence by expanding rigorous coursework and preparing students for evolving career paths is essential. -Strong community engagement through partnerships and increased collaboration to help serve students. -Robust student mental health and wellbeing supports to ensure all students feel supported and are ready to learn -A safe school community that layers security efforts and balances proven security measures with a welcoming environment. -Financial stability in uncertain times to ensure we are adequately using our resources. 	<p>Our main task is to support our new Superintendent. We are moving from a period of consolidation to one of rapid change. There is much to do, and I believe that I continue to add value. Our Mission is to maintain an unwavering commitment to providing all students with opportunities to realize their unique potential through a rigorous and engaging curriculum, meaningful relationships, varied experiences, a positive school culture, and the cultivation of individual passion and resilience. The District aims to provide each student with the opportunities and support needed to reach their unique potential. Achieving this is going to be challenging in the current political environment.</p>	<p>ACADEMIC SUCCESS:</p> <p>As a District we must support every student, every day. We need to equip our students to attain state and national expectations, but more importantly ensure our students are making as much progress as they can. It is District 113's responsibility to provide teachers and students with the tools they need to access the next level of academic rigor.</p> <p>FINANCIAL PLANNING:</p> <p>District 113's finances are closely tracked and monitored well. As we recover from managing two major crises, I want us to focus our financial planning on building a strong future.</p> <p>MENTAL HEALTH and SECURITY:</p> <p>Students who feel safe and who feel like they belong are better learners. In these unsettling times, I want to do everything I can to make sure HPHS and DHS are places our students and staff can come to - and feel welcomed, safe, and appreciated for the people they are.</p>	<p>Township District 113, with its significant resources, must ensure these resources are brought to bear for each child that comes through our system. With enrollment projected to decline below 3,000 students by 2028, we face both challenges and opportunities. We need to focus on academic excellence while being responsible with taxpayer funds, mindful that residents are still making payments on the 2013 referendum bonds.</p> <p>Every class should be challenging and every teacher should ask a lot from their students. Academic excellence cannot be just a buzzword - it needs concrete goals and measurable outcomes. Students should have opportunities to participate in classes that push them to their limits while developing skills through diverse activities and programs.</p> <p>We must be transparent about how we define and measure success. Broad goals like helping students reach their potential must become actionable plans with clear metrics and honest assessment of outcomes.</p>

City of Highwood Mayor and City Council

WRITE A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY THAT INCLUDES YOUR QUALIFICATIONS FOR THIS OFFICE.



Charlie Pecaro
Mayor

Robyn Bauer
Aldersperson

Krista Hanson
Aldersperson

George Markoutsas
Aldersperson

As Mayor of Highwood, I am honored to serve this incredible community. I am a hard-working, proactive, and responsible leader, but above all, a dedicated husband and proud father of three remarkable children who inspire me daily.

Professionally, I have founded and helped grow several businesses, bringing an entrepreneurial mindset to local government. I am fiscally responsible and deeply respect taxpayer dollars, always seeking ways to maximize efficiency and impact.

I believe in listening first—I don't have all the answers, but by working collaboratively with the City Council and staff, we find the best solutions for Highwood's future. My only agenda is simple: How can I make this city even better?

As Mayor, I take pride in the progress we've made alongside our dedicated city staff, police officers, water plant operators, and Public Works team. Every decision I make is guided by one question: Will this leave future mayors and councils in a better place than today?

I have been a resident of Highwood for more than twenty five years. I was part of the group that formed Highwood Pride, an organization that supports the LGBTQ community in and around Highwood. I have also volunteered with the Celebrate Highwood festivals and events for years. Further, I have worked in Highwood for thirty years and seen it grow to a community that I am proud to be part of. Through these experiences I have met many members of the community and find I enjoy listening to their concerns and hopes for our small town. I believe I am well placed to listen to the voices of Highwood and want to participate in its future growth while retaining the small town aspects that many people love.

My husband and I moved to Fort Sheridan in 2000 and we raised our family in this community. We moved to Highwood in 2021 and absolutely love it. We walk to the restaurants, bars and festivals, enjoy the coffee shop, and are members of the bocce club. Highwood is a jewel on the North Shore.

My background is in commercial real estate and financial analysis. Currently I work as a property manager and finance manager for several companies. In Fort Sheridan, I served on the homeowners association board and social committee, and put together the HOA newsletter for 15 years. I served as Parent Association President at my kids' elementary school, and was a board member on the Giants Booster Club at HPHS.

I am proud to be part of such a wonderful community. What a great place to live and work!

I have deep roots in the Highwood community, having grown up on the North end of Highland Park and spending much of my youth in Highwood and Fort Sheridan. I initially studied Public Administration in college with the goal of becoming a Village Manager, but my passion for public service started long before that. I have always felt a strong responsibility to give back to the community. Today, as the owner of ABLAZE Design Group, I have called Highwood home for the past 12 years—my wife and I chose this community as the perfect place to raise our family. As the former president of the Highwood Chamber of Commerce for over seven years, I worked to support local businesses and was actively involved in Celebrate Highwood. I believe in civic duty and want to help ensure that Highwood continues to be a vibrant place to live, work, and play.



City of Highwood Mayor and City Council

What do you consider key issues to be addressed in the next term?

Charlie Pecaro <u>Mayor</u>	Robyn Bauer Aldersperson	Krista Hanson Aldersperson	George Markoutsas Aldersperson
<p>When I first became Mayor, our City Council’s primary focus was ensuring Highwood’s financial stability. Today, thanks to smart planning and a thriving economy, Highwood is stronger than ever—with new development, high housing demand, a safe community, a vibrant business district, and a diverse, engaged community.</p> <p>Looking ahead, we must ensure our city’s success doesn’t drive out affordability for residents and businesses. Preserving Highwood’s charm—the very essence of what makes our city special—is equally critical.</p> <p>Key projects requiring leadership, transparency, and thoughtful planning include MYA, the Patten Road townhomes, and two high-end apartment complexes on Sheridan Road. Financial priorities include lead service line replacement, water plant upgrades, and road improvements on Sheridan and Prairie.</p> <p>Finally, it’s time to update our Comprehensive Plan to guide Highwood’s future, and protect our traditions and our community.</p>	<p>I am aware that there is both concern and hopes for future expansion of both the business district and residential areas. Public Parking is an issue that will need to be addressed. Progress will need to be balanced with preservation of what makes Highwood a unique community. Affordable housing should be maintained even as development is encouraged. I value being an informed council member and look forward to serving the community.</p>	<p>Highwood is fortunate that its leaders in recent years have been extremely fiscally responsible. I intend to maintain those efforts. As a councilmember, I plan to help the town continue to move forward with its development and redevelopment, infrastructure repairs, and economic development. I will continue to support the library/community center, local businesses and of course the Highwood residents.</p> <p>The mayor, councilmembers, Highwood staff, Highwood Library & Community Center team, Chamber of Commerce and Celebrate Highwood members have done so much for our community; I’m excited to do my part!</p>	<p>Highwood is a vibrant city with a rich cultural heritage and a thriving business community, but there are key areas that need attention to ensure thoughtful growth and long-term success. Fostering a more family-friendly environment is essential, with improved parks, safe pedestrian areas, and expanded community programming. Supporting local businesses remains a priority, ensuring policies help small businesses thrive while encouraging mindful redevelopment that aligns with Highwood’s character and includes public input. Improved wayfinding signage and better identification of public spaces will enhance accessibility for residents and visitors alike. Additionally, strengthening collaboration between community organizations, such as the Historical Society, Library, and Chamber of Commerce, will create a more unified and engaged community. By balancing economic growth, cultural preservation, and community needs, we can ensure Highwood remains a welcoming, dynamic, and well-planned city for generations to come.</p>



CANDIDATE INFORMATION

Click on the Candidate's Name below to navigate to their biography page

** Emails and Websites/Facebook Pages were submitted by the candidates in response to the LWVHP-HWD questionnaire.*

Office	Candidate	* Email	* Website
CONTESTED ELECTIONS			
City Council of Highland Park 2-yr	<u>Jonathan Center</u>	JC4HP2025@gmail.com	jc4hp2025.com
City Council of Highland Park 2-yr	<u>Kevin Cullather</u>	KevinC4HP@gmail.com	Kevin4HP.com
City Council of Highland Park 2-yr	<u>Kim Stone</u>	kimstonehp@gmail.com	friendsofkimstone.com
Park District of Highland Park	<u>Josie Beck</u>	josiembeck@gmail.com	checkbeck2025.com
Park District of Highland Park	<u>Steven Greenberg</u>	steve@stevefortheparks.com	
Park District of Highland Park	<u>Thomas Vanden Berk</u>	tom@gpacillinois.com	
North Shore School District 112	<u>Lori Fink</u>	thinklorifink@gmail.com	Thinkfink.my.canva.site
North Shore School District 112	<u>Jaret Fishman</u>	friends4fishman@gmail.com	electfishmanforD112.com
North Shore School District 112	<u>Bradley Hergott</u>	nssd112Bradley@gmail.com	FriendsOfBradleyHergott.com
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North Shore School District 112	<u>Bennett Lasko</u>	Bennett.lasko@gmail.com	Reelectlasko112.com
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North Shore School District 112	<u>Ryan Morgan</u>	RyanMorganFor112@gmail.com	Ryanmorganfor112.com
UNCONTESTED ELECTIONS			
City Council of Highland Park	<u>Barisa Bruckman</u>	bforhp@gmail.com	Bforhp.com
City Council of Highland Park	<u>Annette Lidawer</u>	Annette@re-electannette.com	Re-electAnnette.com
City Council of Highland Park	<u>Andrés Tapia</u>	Andres.t.tapia@gmail.com	Re-electandres4citycouncil.com
Park District of Highland Park 2-yr	<u>Rafael Labrador</u>	raflab@gmail.com	
Township High School District 113	<u>Jaime Barraza</u>		
Township High School District 113	<u>Rick Heineman</u>	rhheineman@gmail.com	
Township High School District 113	<u>Jenny Lupa</u>	Jenny.R.Lupa@gmail.com	
Township High School District 113	<u>Alex Brunk</u>		
City of Highwood Mayor	<u>Charlie Pecaro</u>		
City of Highwood Alderperson	<u>Robyn Bauer</u>		
City of Highwood Alderperson	<u>Krista Hanson</u>	Kristahanson1311@gmail.com	
City of Highwood Alderperson	<u>George Markoutsas</u>		

About the Voters Guide

Questions were posed by the Voter Service Committee of the LWVHP-HWD.
Responses are as provided by the candidates and were not edited by the LWVHP-HWD.



The questions, receipt of information and publishing for this guide have been contributed by LWVHP-HWD members.

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