

Highland Park Neighborhood Association

April 2019 Minutes

Meeting Date: April 9, 2019

7:00pm: President Sanfelippo called the meeting to order. She welcomed everyone and introduced herself, Vice President Jessica Powers and Secretary Judy Jones. Sanfelippo stated the February 2019 meeting minutes had been distributed and asked if there were any changes, edits or corrections. None were offered so the minutes were considered approved.

Police Update

Sanfelippo introduced Highland Park Beat Officer, Officer King (11 am to 9 pm, Monday - Thursday). He asked the group for any complaints or questions related to crime in the neighborhood. Several people offered the suggestion that Officer King focus on speeders along lower 31st St South near Clairmont. Carl Sosnin asked what happened earlier that day at CVS. Officer King replied it was a robbery, that the suspect had come in and passed a note to the pharmacy asking for pain medications, was told to wait, the manager came in, reportedly threw him to the ground and detained him until the police arrived. Sanfelippo observed CVS had been hit a number of times in the past six months, Officer King concurred. Alison Glascock asked about general crime, Officer King replied it had been a good month other than the recent burglary at Richard Dickerson's house on 31st. Several people shared the details of the break in, to include the burglars had entered through the front door in broad daylight on a Saturday. Officer King shared the alley behind the house was fairly secluded, that they likely went to the front and knocked, when no one answered they broke in.

Sanfelippo shared a post she had noted on Nextdoor, where someone had been told by a stranger, assumed to be a neighbor but may not have been, that they had been robbed and asked if that individual might have surveillance video that could help him. Sanfelippo explained that could have been a future burglar determining the existence of cameras for a future burglary. She shared a good reply to that question might be 'they didn't have any that would have included their apartment' - or 'yes I'll review my footage' so that the existence of cameras wasn't confirmed or denied. Sanfelippo cautioned for folks to be wary of people asking them about surveillance footage.

Fire Department Update

Lieutenant Craig Johnson introduced himself and two of his crew members from Station 22 on 5th Avenue South in Avondale. He said they wanted to visit and share some safety tips with the group.

Check smoke detectors - a good rule of thumb, check them/change batteries when you move your clocks ahead or back (with 'spring forward' and 'fall back'), but at a minimum to change your batteries at least annually. The recommend replacing smoke detectors every ten years and CO2 detectors every seven years. Alison Glascock asked if they still gave away free detectors, Lt Johnson said they had recently received a grant for this and did.

People could drop by, make arrangements and staff from the Fire Department would even come and install them. He shared there was a limit of 2 per household.

Fire extinguishers - Lt Johnson encouraged everyone to keep fire extinguishers in their home. He said they recommended having one per floor and shared it was a good idea to check them at the same time you checked your smoke/CO2 detectors. Judy Jones asked how to dispose of fire extinguishers, Lt Johnson replied if there was concern for compression, one could take them in the yard and just release them - but otherwise there were no special instructions on disposal.

Home Safety Plan - Lt Johnson said to always go over a safety plan with you and your loved ones in your home, that is was a good idea to have a 'plan' in case of fire or other disaster that included safe places and escape routes in case of an emergency.

Spring Cleaning Tips - Good ideas for spring time attention: Check dryer vents and hoses (he said it was a good idea to replace the dryer hose every year or two) and the exit point for the air from the outside; Check for clutter around extension cords and emergency exits; Check your cords on appliances (and other corded electrical things throughout the house) for cracks, frayed areas, wires showing, etc. Sanfelippo suggested that if you find something with a bad cord to cut the cord off before disposing of it so that no one would pick the item up and reuse it with the bad cord. A resident shared that company employees doing warranty inspections would also sometime check vents and hoses.

Lt Johnson shared the Birmingham Fire and Rescue had already made 17,000 runs since 2019 started, that the total for 2018 had been 70,000.

A question was asked about where the Fire Department would like a sticker to be placed so that they would know there were pets inside a residence. Lt Johnson replied the front door or a window near the front would be best, that the majority of the time, they would initially attempt entry through that front door. He explained pets were very dear to the Fire Department also. He suggested that when a call was placed with the dispatcher, to share there were pets in the house.

Public Works Update

Sanfelippo introduced Public Works representative Tammie Wheeler who is the Environmental Code Enforcer for Highland Park. She explained Wheeler deals with abandoned or inoperable cars and overgrown yards. Wheeler explained she could not do anything about cars on public streets, that those complaints she refers to South Precinct. A question was asked about people who put trash and brush out between the 3-week pick-ups, if there were enforcement options available. Wheeler responded that whoever was reporting it to the magistrate for a summons needed to have witnessed it happening and that a birthdate and social security number was required. She explained city enforcement officers had a system they used to find that information when they wrote a summons. A question was asked about residents near Virginia Samford Theatre who were leaving trash cans out on the street, Wheeler explained the residents were attempting to keep the parking places open in front of their homes. She said she explained to them they couldn't leave trash cans out in that way and recommended they use cones. Sanfelippo thanked Wheeler and said if residents had other issues they can email HighlandParkNeighborhoodAL@gmail.com and she would pass them along.

Agenda Items:

FIDO Request for Annual Flaggin' and Baggin' Campaign

Sanfelippo said she was part of FIDO and would share their request. She explained FIDO is an organization 'Friends in Dog Ownership' that was formed a few years ago by residents were fed up with the number of people not cleaning up after their pets. The group started a campaign where a few weeks before Do Dah Day they put small flags with messages next to poop piles, encouraging people to clean up their poop. She said FIDO would like to begin their 2019 campaign on May 3 and then later would have a clean up day where they'd start at IPC and basically work around on Highland over to Freddy's; that the FIDO volunteers would pick up all the flags and the dog piles as well as any trash they see. Someone shared that one year the Public Works had mowed after the flags were put out and that created problems; they asked if FIDO could coordinate their schedule with Public Works.

Sanfelippo said they had involved Public Works this year in their planning. A question was asked about availability of 'bags' for residents who forgot their bags or ran out. Sanfelippo shared there were bag stations in the parks. A question was asked about who replenished these stations, several folks answered the FIDO folk manage that. Sanfelippo shared they were awaiting a bag shipment now trying to gear up for Do Dah Day. Alison Glascock moved to approve FIDO's 'Flaggin' and Baggin' Campaign. Judy Jones seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Sanfelippo added that the project was fun, satisfying and with a great group of people, that if anyone wanted to be involved to email

HighlandParkFIDO@gmail.com Someone asked if there was any law/regulation against someone picking up poop with a scooper and dropping it loose into a private trash can. The consensus was that it was very inappropriate behavior but likely not illegal. Various suggestions were made to include posting signs on the trash can/dumpster discouraging this. Sanfelippo also offered to contact the offender.

Curbside Recycling/Laney DeJonge and Leigh Shaffer

Sanfelippo introduced Laney DeJonge and Leigh Shaffer and said they were going to talk to the group about Birmingham Curbside Recycling. DeJonge explained she was one of the owners of Rojo and had previously lived in the neighborhood. She introduced Leigh Shaffer as a neighborhood resident who is the Sales Manager for Birmingham Recycling and Recovery. Shaffer explained that this company was the processing facility for all the residential recycling programs in the greater Birmingham area which represents about 25 municipalities, that any community in our general area who has curbside recycling, it goes to that facility. They started by addressing the trucks the city uses; explaining that some people think because a 'trash truck' is picking up the recyclables, they question that it is really going to a recycling facility. DeJonge said they indeed use the same trucks but that the trucks are thoroughly cleaned before recycle pick up date and that recycling is taken to Birmingham Recycling and Recovery, right down the street from Avondale Brewery. She also shared that residents did not have to have a 'city authorized' recycling bin, that anyone could use their own tubs, boxes, bins, etc for their loose recycles. She suggested that the container indicate that it is for recycling so that public works employees can clearly see that it isn't trash. Shaffer said paper bags could also be used - but absolutely do not use plastic grocery or trash bags- or even blue recycling bags, that these bags cause a big problem by *gunking* up the system. She encouraged residents to take the plastic grocery bags back to a

store that has the bins for recycling them. Alison Glascock asked specifically about putting all types of recycles in the same container, confirming that no sorting was required. Shaffer confirmed that it had been 'single stream' recycling (which means all materials being recycled are put in the same bin) since at least 2006 when her company bought the previous location that had been operating a recycling facility.

Shaffer explained that people sometimes put things in their bins that they *want* to be recyclable but that in Birmingham's facility are not. She listed the only materials able to be recycled at the Birmingham facility: paper, cardboard (whether it's corrugated or like a cereal box), #1 and #2 plastics, and aluminum and steel cans. She went through a brief demonstration with some example materials explaining detergent, shampoo and other types of dark plastic bottles are #2; #1s (sometimes labeled PET or HTPE) are water and soda bottles, etc. - and that caps are okay. She also listed things that are unacceptable, explaining most would damage the equipment: garden hoses, cables, cords, plastic bags, electronics, yard waste, diapers, used HVAC filters, scrap metal, #3-#7 plastics, food waste, clothing and textiles, boxes with a wax coating, plastic in them or food residue on them (because wax is considered a contaminant and non-recyclable). DeJonge shared an easy way to tell if a box has a wax coating or plastic inside is whether it can easily tear. A question was asked about bottle caps, if it was better to leave them on or off. Shaffer replied that if you were going to recycle the caps also, then it was better to leave them on because if they were loose they wouldn't make it through the system. She added the caps were actually not #1 or #2 but that plastics facilities had a way to separate them. DeJonge asked about the utility of putting something in the bin if you weren't sure; Shaffer said she learned a phrase when she was in Seattle, which had a very robust recycling program - that "when in doubt, throw it out". She said residents could also call to find out if something specifically was or wasn't recyclable in our local facility. She shared that non-recyclable items included in bins increased their costs (and therefore everyone's) because all they could do with it was landfill it. Someone asked about tape on boxes, Shaffer replied that a small amount of tape was ok. There was a question about whether oversized pieces of metal, for example high grade aluminum, could be handled by the facility. Shaffer explained the grade of aluminum they sell is 'used beverage containers', that they are not set up to separate 'scrap metal' out; that any scrap metal they receive has to be separated out by the recycling facility and taken next door to Jordan Scrap Metal. A question was asked whether Shaffer thought there was any possibility in the foreseeable future that the facility could handle more than #1 and #2 plastic. Shaffer replied she didn't but suggested that for the #3-7 plastics, that people try to find alternatives and to reduce your use of those products. Someone suggested using some of the non-recyclables in the bottoms of plant containers. Shaffer was asked the percentage of a recycle load that was ultimately sent to the landfill; she explained it varied, depending on whether the load was commercial or residential - and how educated the community was on what was recyclable, but that a good estimate for loads would be from 25-40%, which was consistent with the national average. Alison Glascock asked if we had tried to work with manufacturers regarding the materials they use. Shaffer shared that KW Plastics in Troy Alabama is the largest plastics recycler in the world and they take #5s. A question was asked about paper coffee cups, Shaffer explained that they usually had coffee in them so were considered contaminated. Someone shared that coffee cups sleeves would often be recyclable. Someone asked about compostable

coffee cups, Shaffer replied they recommended that anything considered 'compostable' be composted at home. DeJonge shared that there was not a commercial composting facility in Alabama and that the best thing to do was to pressure our government representatives to address these issues, to have commercial composting facilities, to have glass recycling facilities- that we couldn't only rely on industry to address these issues because they were in the business of minimizing costs. She shared that companies were already being currently challenged because, for example, China used to buy our commercial and unrecyclable materials but no longer did. She also shared that our state government was right now trying to pass a law making it illegal for municipalities to ban plastic bags. A question was asked whether there was any location that accepted glass, Shaffer shared that both cities of Auburn and Tuscaloosa had glass recycling programs that had drop off locations. Shaffer shared that another phrase to remember was 'empty, clean and dry'. She shared it was not necessary to crush containers, that they actually had an optical sorter for #1s that recognizes the three-dimensionality of the container so that crushing them was counter-productive as then they were recognized as 'paper', that it does get picked out of the paper, but like the rest of manual processes, increased their costs. She said that crushing cans was acceptable. Shaffer was asked about China and its involvement in our recycling programs; she explained that for a long time China purchased much of the materials that the United States didn't have the recycling infrastructure to deal with but in recent years have been adding restrictions and increasing standards related to what they would accept. She stated that Indonesia was an alternative site but had also recently been restricting what they would receive also. The result of this was the glut of material was staying domestic and flooding domestic markets and driving prices down because either the mills can be more selective in what they accept or there is no mill for it and it simply goes into a landfill; that this dynamic made it a exceedingly challenging time right now for recycling markets efforts. But, Shaffer shared, we were fortunate because Birmingham Recycling and Recovery has regional markets, that most of their markets were actually in Alabama - but that the markets had plenty of customers and product so that the prices were down. She emphasized that while we would continue to hear news about China and the related challenges for recycling markets that we could be reassured that our recycling service/location had markets for our materials, that what they received (on the list of recyclable materials) was absolutely being recycled. DeJonge added that the facility in Troy accepted #5s - but also accepted #2s; that our aluminum goes to Muscle Shoals, which had the largest aluminum recycling in the country. Shaffer shared that some 17,000 people were employed in the recycling industry in Alabama; that companies like KW turned the plastics into flakes/pellets and then sold it to companies who used that material to make other products. Paige Klein shared her mantra - 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle'; to first consider, how much can I reduce what my consumption; second how can I reuse things (for example taking your own containers to coffee shops, that all the coffee shops in town would use them and some would even discount your purchase; keeping a container in the car so that you didn't have to take 'go boxes' from restaurants). A question was asked if Birmingham Recycling and Recovery gave tours of their facility and Shaffer said they could. The group enthusiastically thanked Shaffer and DeJonge for their presentation.

Report from City Council President Valerie Abbott

President Sanfelippo introduced Valerie Abbott, District 3's council member and Council President. She reported the council meeting that day had gone well and there was nothing out of the ordinary to share about it but that several things had come up in the meeting tonight that she wanted to speak to. The first was regarding a concern expressed earlier about neighborhood cats being killed by speeders down roads, she explained that it was illegal to let cats run loose in the same way it was illegal to allow dogs to run loose. She then asked a question about glass recycling, especially businesses like Target who have accepted recyclables. Laney DeJonge said she had called Target and attempted to find out where it goes but had not been given much information. Councilor Abbot mused that it was be good if glass could be added to paving materials for the city's paving projects. DeJonge asked Councilor Abbot if perhaps the city could get businesses to move to Birmingham who required glass for their products; Abbott said they'd love to recruit some of these businesses. Shaffer said the only good options for glass at the current time was Tuscaloosa and Auburn, that even if a company like Target said they would receive glass, if they wouldn't reveal what they were doing with it, that she was skeptical about their program. She asked for resident questions. One gentleman asked about a project he had read about, the replacement of 30,000 street lights and whether it was a project that was starting soon. Abbott replied that the only project of this nature of which she was aware had been mostly completed (downtown lights and LED installation) but that the Council didn't always know the details of projects the mayor's office was considering. She said she was aware of a project that Alabama Power Company was doing the work on, to change out the street lights in city parks to LED lights. She also shared that once ALDOT finished work on highways that the responsibility to maintain the interstate/road lights was passed to the city. Abbott referred back to an earlier discussion about using cones to save residential on-street parking places, sharing that on-street parking belongs to citizens at large, that as long as they park legally in a legal parking place, it was okay. Abbott was asked for an update on the residential parking permit program. She said she did not have an update but said she had confidence in the new head of Traffic and Engineering, that he was trying to be an out-of-the-box thinker and committed to considering creative solutions to issues. She said she would communicate with them and see if she could get an update. Someone mentioned they knew the Park and Recreation Board had another meeting coming up about the project involving George Ward Park and the Major League Baseball Academy. Abbott shared there would be another meeting set for April 16 to discuss the project again, that the residents absolutely don't want it but that the Park Board and the City Council are insistent about the effort proceeding. Abbott said her concern was if this could happen to this park that the same thing could happen to any park in the city. She shared that the only thing that had saved the neighborhood thus far was that the Major League had a public relations requirement that they didn't want to try and go somewhere they weren't wanted, they didn't want bad publicity; that if the community didn't want them, they would not come. She explained there had been one option on the table to add field(s) to help with the displacement of groups/events but that the city wasn't interested in spending that money at George Ward. A question was asked about the legality of these efforts, Abbott replied there are attorneys who say that giving part of a dedicated city park to a private entity for their exclusive use is illegal, that it violates the state constitution and several other tenets of state law. She said she had just received a communication from a

city attorney about the issue but that she hadn't yet reviewed it. She explained there were examples of city contracts with private entities for the management of certain park areas/activities but she felt the important consideration in these instances was that the facility continue to be available to citizens for their use. Abbott was asked about the council vote, she shared she was the only vote against the proposal, that even though the park was in her district that many people across the city used it, there was a softball complex there and a number of softball tournaments there during the year - but also on any given day, kickball games, frisbee golf, walking trails, picnic areas and tennis courts. She shared that to many the \$10 million investment sounded wonderful but it was all the displacement of people already using the park that turned people against the idea. Abbott said that she has prepared a resolution, that has not been presented to the council yet, to suggest to the Park Board that in the future, that if there's going to be a major change like this, that six months ahead of time the neighborhood association, all of the existing users and stakeholders - and the council member - all be notified six months ahead of time so everyone could be informed of plans and issues. She said the meeting on the 16th is simply to allow all parties to meet one last time and be sure that no one has changed their position. Sanfelippo asked if this meeting was open to the public; Abbott replied yes. Sanfelippo asked if people attending would be able to speak, Abbott replied yes. Someone asked if there was available land at the Crossplex to develop this project, Abbott replied no, that there were a number of projects pending for that space.

Abbott asked whether there were any more questions. Someone asked about a new apartment building possibly being built near Railroad Park; Abbott said she had heard about the project. The resident asked about the City giving the builder an incentive, Abbott replied, that is what she understood as apparently there was a sewer line running through the property that they couldn't build over which meant the builder couldn't build as densely on this property as they had intended. The resident asked about the logic of giving a tax break for more apartments, Abbott explained that the break only comes out of tax revenue produced by the property, that if nothing is on it, as in the property stays vacant, there's no revenue produced.

Sanfelippo thanked Councilor Abbott for attending the meeting.

Announcements

Sanfelippo announced that clarifying information about bulk debris and trash pick-ups had been posted on Nextdoor and that she would post it on the neighborhood's Facebook page. She said pickups were now every three weeks and that basic guidelines for placement of debris/trash were that it should not be placed near mailboxes, guidewires, retaining walls, fences, parked cars, electrical boxes, or utility boxes. Judy Jones added that everyone just needed to remember that the claw truck needed to be able to get to the material.

Sanfelippo shared they do pick up large furniture and mattresses but that some misunderstandings had occurred because the city does not pick up these items from apartment buildings. Sanfelippo shared that if offenders were reported to our Code Enforcement Officer, Tammie Wheeler, she would work with building management to take care of the situation. Sanfelippo also reminded residents that trash cans were supposed to be put out the night before pickup and removed from the street later the day of pickup.

Sanfelippo shared the traffic light at 29th and Highland had been blinking and that people had reported it as dangerous on Nextdoor. She said she checked it out and agreed that it was quite dangerous. She reported contacting James Fowler of Traffic and Engineering who shared it had not been an intentional change to the light and that he would work on getting that corrected.

Sanfelippo shared reminders about Magic City Smooth Jazz's event this Friday, April 12, 7 pm at Ramsey High School and that the First Lutheran Church was having their Easter Egg Hunt 11:30 am Saturday, April 13. She added that anyone wanting to volunteer for the free, open to the public event to arrive in advance of the 11:30 start time.

Sanfelippo updated the group on 'Eats', which is next to 2600 Highland Ave. She said owner Wendy Cruse thinks they will be open in 2-3 weeks and invited residents to stop by and say hello and see how things were coming along.

Sanfelippo announced a condemnation hearing for some of the abandoned properties in the neighborhood was supposed to be last week but had been moved to May 15, that it will be held at the Municipal Court. She confirmed the properties in question belonged to Robert Keller. Jessica Powers shared that Municipal Court hearings were public and that anyone could attend, but whoever attended should be prepared to wait because cases were all set for 9 am and could be called anytime and without notice. Sanfelippo said she understood Floyd Gaines would attend and that she planned to take the day off and attend as well.

New Business

Paige Klein shared that she was trying to find the owners who are missing a male cat she found on March 20th around 28th St. S. and Highland Ave. She said she strongly feels the cat is someone's missing pet as he was obviously well taken care of as his nails were clipped which is unusual to find on a true stray. She shared she has posted flyers and photos on Facebook, Nextdoor, and PawBoost. She said a friend has the cat is happy to be his forever home but her primary goal is to get the cat back to his family.

Sanfelippo gave a shout out to the Graffiti Busters, specifically David Dinehart and Anne Sunkel, who spent several hours working on the wall on Highland in front of Avalon Condos and the Townhomes. She shared they planned to get back out this coming weekend and work on it some more.

A question was asked about the Community Garden. Sanfelippo said they were moving ahead, that required coordination with the city was slow and that she expected to have an update at the next meeting.

Announcements

Judy Jones shared they were still doing their 'Path to Compassion' Speaker events each 3rd Sunday at the Clubhouse on Highland at 3 pm. She said they would not have an event in April as the third Sunday was Easter. She announced the May speakers would be from Greater Birmingham Ministries and June speakers would be from Episcopal Place. Jones said her goal related to the series was to develop ideas for evolving Highland Park into a 'Compassionate Neighborhood'.

Sanfelippo introduced the neighborhood's new Community Resource Officer, Alexis Barton. Barton shared that she had multiple neighborhood meetings on a single night but would definitely be attempting to attend ours on a regular basis. She said when attending our meetings she would provide an update on our budget standing and that if she couldn't

attend, she would send that information via an email. Alison Glascock shared that she thought that Barton wouldn't need to attend all of the meetings, Barton replied that she would like to, that she planned to do her best to attend all she could. Barton said she had lived in Birmingham for many years, that professionally she was coming from the University of Alabama and the Division of Strategic Communications, prior to that she worked for Price Waterhouse Cooper so would be bringing a combined background in accounting and strategic communications. She shared that she will be the neighborhood's connection to the city's resources. She said some of her focus would be on coordinating feedback on missed trash/brush pickups. They also want to increase number of ride arounds in our neighborhood to identify streets that need to be paved, where mattresses have been left, where structures are dilapidated - identify anything the city should be touching quicker, more efficiently. She said she would be attending our meetings to hear what our concerns are, what concerns are specific to Highland Park neighborhood. Everyone welcomed her with a round of applause. Barton then recognized Sanfelippo's hard work, saying that she had been nominated as 'Most Passionate' Neighborhood Association member as part of the 'Other Awards' which celebrates unsung heroes in our city.

Alison Glascock asked about the single monthly pick-ups and that sometimes it was once a month and sometimes twice. Barton explained it depended on where Highland Park falls in the schedule and Sanfelippo reiterated it is every 3 weeks. Judy Jones shared that part of the problem was that the city used to do was publish the schedule quarterly instead of monthly, this was less confusing because people could see where their neighborhood was in successive months and better understand the 3 week intervals. Barton said she would look into that.

Adjournment: With no further business the meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:40 PM.

Next meeting will be Tuesday, May 14, 2019 at 6 pm upstairs at Highland Golf Clubhouse.

Respectfully Submitted,

Judy Jones

Secretary, Highland Park Neighborhood Association