

Highland Park Neighborhood Association

May 2019 Minutes

Meeting Date: May 14, 2019

6:00pm: President Sanfelippo called the meeting to order. She welcomed everyone and introduced herself and Secretary Judy Jones and shared that Vice President Jessica Powers would not be in attendance that evening.

Sanfelippo stated the April 2019 meeting minutes had been distributed and asked if there were any changes or corrections. None were offered so she announced the minutes were 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. A resident expressed concern about three cars being ticketed in front of her house when they were in valid parking spaces.

Sanfelippo confirmed the area was not posted and that the spaces were valid.

Officer King said he was uncertain why they would have been ticketed, explaining that typically the police would not ticket cars for parking violations unless there was a complaint or the cars were in a clearly marked 'no parking' zone.

A resident asked about an abandoned *tag-less* car in front of Avalon. Further discussion indicated that the car had been previously 'stickered' but that the sticker might have been removed. Officer King said he would put another sticker on the car and after the required 72 hours, if the car had not been moved, it would be towed.

Sanfelippo shared there had been a couple of armed robberies in the area. One, in Crestwood at 7 am, involved a gold Chevy Equinox. The second was in Forest Park and there was a newer model Mercedes involved. She said Officer King suspected the cars to be stolen. She shared that camera footage had caught one of the cars and was subsequently turned over to the police. She emphasized that if residents ever caught a crime or related activities on a camera to please send that footage to the neighborhood or directly to the police.

Public Works Update

Sanfelippo shared that our Public Works representative Tammie Wheeler was not in attendance this evening. She encouraged residents with issues to report them to the neighborhood's email address:

HighlandParkNeighborhoodAL@gmail.com. She remarked the apartment building near the golf course on 12th Ave South seemed to be a frequent offender, often having mattresses and furniture on the road side. She said she

would share that with Wheeler and ask that the building owner/manager be contacted.

Fire Department Update

Representatives from the Fire Station #22 Department were welcomed. Robert Tillis reported they still had smoke detectors available at the station and that if assistance was needed installing the detectors, the Fire Department could help. A question was asked whether Fire Station staff still assisted with installation of baby car seats; they replied they no longer provided this service due to liability concerns. Another question was asked about the traffic light in front of the station, whether it only turned red when the Fire Department was dispatched on a call. Tillis replied that yes, they do control the light, they trigger it when they receive a call to stop traffic. Sanfelippo asked them about their upcoming Crawfish Boil event, Tillis replied the event would be at Sloss Furnaces on June 1 at 4 pm.

Miscellaneous Questions/Discussion

A resident asked if Sanfelippo could invite someone from the Birmingham Water Works to attend a meeting. He specifically referenced multiple recent leaks on 31st. He said it seemed there were always so many leaks that went long lengths of time before being fixed and observed that had to represent a significant expense that affected everyone's water bills. There was also discussion about partial repairs made that left deep indentions in the pavement. A resident said he measured one hole and found it to be four inches deep. In further discussion Alison Glascock shared there was a law that required streets to be fixed after work, even if temporary and that she did not think it was well enforced. Sanfelippo encouraged everyone to continue watching for issues like these and to notify the neighborhood at HighlandParkNeighborhoodAL@gmail.com. AND report light problems via this link: <https://customerservice2.southerncompany.com/Outages/Report/Information?mnuOpco=APC>. For water issues: Use this link for water leaks: <https://form.iotform.com/62703728023956> and other water problems (hydrant theft, missing meter covers, water theft, water discoloration or odor, low pressure, etc.) via this link: <https://form.iotformpro.com/70025444560953>. She reminded residents that links to report street lights out and water leaks and other water issues were included at the bottom of the last neighborhood email distributed. A resident asked about management of street lights on Highland Avenue. Sanfelippo confirmed that all city lights (exclusive of ones inside parks) were managed by Alabama Power. He said he had complained about exposed wires where poles were down, that Alabama Power had come out and bolted down "plastic baskets" over the sites and didn't put the poles back up. He shared that at the present time no lights were working inside Rushton Park. He also stated the metal panels bolted onto the base of some light poles were very unpleasant in appearance. Another resident reported talking to Power Company

employees while they were working on Highland, that they stated the Power Company was responsible for the lights on the street but that the City was actually responsible for the park lights. She said the Power Company fixed one light that they pronounced so archaic that they had never seen that type of light before - but that they had gotten it working! She shared several lights were still out in Rhodes Park and at 26th and Highland. Sanfelippo said that she would be sure all these issues were reported.

A resident asked who was responsible for the sidewalks, Sanfelippo replied that it depended on how quickly he wanted it fixed. When residents stopped laughing she added that while sidewalks were the city's responsibility and that they were indeed concerned about them, there wasn't always money to repair them and that they were working on a Sidewalk Master Plan to schedule repairs. She said in the interim, she knew of residents who had just taken it on themselves to do the repairs.

A resident reported an issue at 28th Street and 11th Avenue, stating that cars parking illegally at the apartments there frequently park around the corner such that cars coming down 11th cannot see approaching vehicles on 28th. Sanfelippo encouraged her to call the Southside Precinct when that happens, to provide an exact location and report it as a dangerous situation.

Agenda Items:

Request for Fund Allocations

Sanfelippo reported requesting some funds for some door hangers and notices that could be put on doors and cars to gently share 'this isn't a parking spot', 'aren't you glad this wasn't a ticket' or 'we noticed you had valuables in plain sight in your car' to remind people not to make their own parking spots, park in no-parking zones - also to let property residents who don't bag their leaves know of the problems with storm drains being blocked. Someone pointed out the offenders were often landscapers. Sanfelippo said she would follow up on these if residents would let her know the name of the company and where they observed the infraction occurring. Sanfelippo said they may also have a notice reminding people of the poop scooping law. She also shared about the FIDO flags currently along neighborhood streets, explaining they would start to come down the next day, that FIDO volunteers would be taking collecting them and the poop they marked. A resident relayed that someone had remarked in social media how much she didn't like the flags and a whole host of people responded, emphatically explaining and supporting the neighborhood effort. Sanfelippo said the person had likely not understood the project goals and that the flags were to be cleaned up and she thought it spurred a good discussion to let people know what FIDO was doing.

Sanfelippo reported the neighborhood had also requested 1) 10-12 new meeting notice signs (because they keep disappearing in spite of requests to the city not to throw them away), and 2) 8-10 signs for FIDO next year (because group

members have been funding them themselves since the project started). She shared that they had received a \$450 quote for these materials and subsequently asked the spending committee to approve a request for \$500. Larry Contri moved the expense be approved, David Dinehart seconded. The motion passed – all in favor, 0 opposed.

Sanfelippo also reported the spending committee approved a \$500 expenditure for a Holiday Gathering for residents. She added that city workers and staff would also be invited to show our appreciation for their hard work and support through the year. Larry Contri moved to approve the expense, Melanie Jackson seconded. A resident asked for more information about the ‘gathering’ - Sanfelippo responded that planning had not yet started but that the city, because of expected delays in receiving funds, had encouraged associations to go ahead and allocate funds now. The vote was held and the motion passed with one abstention, the remainder in favor, 0 opposed.

Shoppe & Spring Plants/Mark Thompson

Sanfelippo introduced speakers Mark Thompson from Shoppe on Clairmont in Forest Park. Thompson shared he and his partner and business partner Jay Draper were owners of the little Clairmont garden store opened about a year ago and were happy that it was centrally located to the neighborhoods of Highland Park, Forest Park, Crestwood and Avondale. He told the group that he had managed Leaf and Petal in Mountain Brook Village for a number of years and that Draper had worked there also. He said Draper had long had a dream of having a garden shop and they had looked for a site for years. They had attempted to buy Plant Odyssey but were unable to reach an agreement on that site. The dream took a back shelf until one evening when they were walking their dog down Clairmont and noticed a ‘For Lease’ sign at the property where they are now located. Thompson said they decided they could make it work and started things moving, that he left his job at Leaf and Petal and six months later they opened Shoppe in October of 2017. He said the location within these neighborhoods, this community, the people here, had been a joy. He shared they had just experienced their biggest weekend yet with Mother’s Day. Thompson shared that Shoppe was first a garden shop and that they deal primarily with local plants, perhaps 90% of what they offer is grown within a 1-1/2 to 2 hour radius of Birmingham. He said Shoppe is a ‘seasonal store’, that they indeed change with the seasons but more than just the four seasons, that very often their plants can vary every 4 weeks with what is being grown and available to them. He explained this was part of the fun of being a small business and working with sources who were also small businesses, they get access to potential inventory as their sources have things available which allows their inventory to constantly change.

He said that if you drove by Shoppe you would notice their 'glass house' and shared it was one of the first features they decided on for the property. They had brought in the greenhouse from a company in England called Hartley Botanic. He said what appealed to them was that the greenhouse was small but good quality, which is what they decided early on what they wanted Shoppe to be - small but good quality, and the greenhouse is a symbol of that. Thompson shared the greenhouse could be used for events. But that also, the whole Shoppe footprint could be rented. He said a seated dinner in the greenhouse works best for a party of 14, 16 max. He said his favorite parties in the space are with 50-60 people mingling with food inside and a bar on the deck. Thomson said they did not set out to do events in the space but that it had been a fun addition.

Thompson explained Shoppe carried more than plants. He said invited artists or anyone with a craft who wanted to have items sold there to come by and talk with them. He said two examples of local products were Bonnie's Brittles (sold in three flavors, chocolate, peanut and butterscotch) and honey from Eastaboga Bee. He said Shoppe does gift baskets and complimentary wrapping, that customers can call ahead and tell them what you want or come in and select their own items for the basket.

He explained that Shoppe makes an effort to keep prices reasonable, that they offer quality items both on the high and affordable ends of the spectrum. He showed the group a pair of garden gloves from Shoppe's tool company Bergen and Ball, explaining they were an old English company. He said there are some hard goods they obtain locally but that they also bring in a lot of inventory from different larger companies from all over. He reiterated the majority of their plant sources are local, the only two out of state growers being a topiary grower and a grower for boxwood and some shrubberies out in Oregon.

Thompson showed the group some of the specialty items carried by the store, including a line of candles boxed in 'seed paper' (seeds of sunflowers, poppies, tomatoes, different plants); French soaps (many scents available), wares of a local potters (egg containers, berry baskets, etc), books (home and garden books and a huge section of local history books) and hand-painted gift cards made by Caitlin, a Shoppe staff members (Caitlin and her company, Everbloom Paper, will also make customized stationary, invitations, etc). Thompson said we were very fortunate in Birmingham to have many local people who are nationally recognized for their interior, floral gardening and architecture talent and Shoppe has had book signings for their publications. He said they love to offer good quality pots with drainage holes and saucers when they can find them, adding that many plants do better in those type containers with regular watering schedules. He shared that they also have drills at the store so if someone wants to purchase a pot without a hole, Shoppe can usually drill one for them. He showed the group a book by a former Roebuck Springs neighbor titled 'Vegetable Gardening Wisdom' by Kelly Smith Trimble. He shared that Smith

was certified as a Master Gardener, had worked for Bonnie Plants and HGTV and written for Southern Living, Coastal Living and the National Park Foundation. He shared that Trimble had emailed and asked them if they'd carry her book. Thompson said that was one reason that being small was so satisfying, that they could easily respond to local requests of this nature.

Thompson described Shoppe as a little bungalow house, the main store had three rooms with a glassed-in front porch. He shared they had recently leased the Silvertron space and are planning a breakfast/lunch café that will be open 7 days a week. They will likely serve breakfast from 7:30 until perhaps 10:30 and lunch from 10:30 until 3 pm. From 3 - 6 pm they plan to stay open for coffee, tea, beer or wine. In response to a question, he said they had not decided about breakfast on Sundays.

A resident described a very positive experience visiting the store. Thompson shared he felt one of their key assets was their staff, that they had really great people working with them.

Thompson explained more about the plants they offer being seasonal, saying that at Christmas they have paper whites, wreaths and garland - but currently they were in the peak of flowers and bedding plants. He shared examples of the spring plants currently being offered, sharing that when they can get them, they enjoy offering plants in cell packs. He showed varieties of zinnias, salvia, gaura, hydrangeas, white cleome, butterfly weed (he shared this is the plant that the Monarch Butterflies lay their eggs on), lollipop verbena, angelface angelonia (various colors), red flame ivy, silver germander (which will survive our winters), a hybrid vinca called tattoo papaya (various colors), and kent ornamental oregano. He shared they had a large variety of succulents, herbs and vegetables.

Thompson said they had been terracing the area behind the greenhouse to make it easier to walk. He reported completing the top two terraces this spring and having moved Shoppe's herbs offerings to the top back terrace.

Thompson was asked about plants that residents might want to avoid, specifically privet. He replied that he felt that plants to use or avoid should be based on a person's own sense of responsibility. He said he liked privet but it was a problem when people didn't keep it trimmed and allowed it to go to seed. He said Shoppe did carry large wax leaf ligustrum (a type of privet). He shared there were many varieties of ligustrum, that our climate is more or less subtropical and similar to Japan where privet (and kudzu) originated and that is why those plants tend to do well and as a result become invasive. Thompson said he tends to dislike the overwhelming availability of hybrid plants, that he prefers the native plants and the historical simplicity of propagating plants from clippings. He said they try to carry a good selection of native plants - native azaleas, native ferns, etc. He laughed and said they tended not to sell plants that people could go somewhere and dig up, like lilies, hosta or shasta daisies. He encouraged folks that if they were interested in these sorts of plants to just go ask a neighbor like in past times.

He shared they try to do plants at Shoppe near the peak of their season. An example is that Shoppe won't have peony plants in September/October as it's dry here in those months and there's a good chance the plants won't make it. But they will have peonies about mid-March, at that time they will be little fresh green leaves coming up. He said they'd have them until a few weeks after they were finished blooming and then wouldn't have them again until the next year. He added, for example, right now, they have oak leaf and snowflake hydrangeas but that they wouldn't likely have them in December.

He was asked about catering for Shoppe/greenhouse events. Thompson shared that Shoppe does not cater and has no rules about who can cater there. He said that Little Savannah, Whistling Table and Brick and Tin were examples of caterers who had done events there. He shared Shoppe had even had one customer event that was a potluck.

Thompson was asked when they planned to open the Silvertron space, he replied likely October. He was asked about the menu. He shared he had written the initial menu and that it would be small, simple and casual. They would not have lattes and espressos, they planned to have good quality brewed coffee. They would have loose leaf teas and French press coffee available to stay in or take out. He said if something was trendy customers likely wouldn't find it there. He said they had hired a consultant who was working on sourcing things, portion sizes, margins, making the business side of it work, that this individual would also be working on job ads and interviewing potential staff.

Judy Jones asked how many in attendance had already been to Shoppe, upwards of 75% raised their hands. Thompson thanked the group for coming to Shoppe and the opportunity to speak at the meeting.

Report from City Council President Valerie Abbott

Sanfelippo said that our Councilwoman Valerie Abbott was not in attendance but introduced her new assistant, (Beatrice) Trice Collins. Ms. Collins shared her email address, Beatrice.Collins@birminghamal.gov. Sanfelippo asked whether anyone had any issues they wanted Ms. Collins to take back to Councilwoman Abbott. Secretary Judy Jones said she would like to know something about the concrete plant; Sanfelippo elaborated on the issue for the group, sharing the issue was related to a proposed relocation of a Sherman Concrete Batch Plant to Five Points West. Jones said that she would appreciate Ms. Collins communicating back to Abbott that there were people in attendance tonight that were interested and concerned about the issue. She explained further that someone, a Highland Park resident, had posted in social media referencing the plant relocation and stated that people in our area of town didn't care what happened in other areas of town. Jones said she felt challenged because she doesn't read a lot of local news and had been unaware of the issue; that she set out to learn more about it and was concerned about what she read. She said that along the way the City Council had passed a resolution opposing the relocation and that Mayor Woodfin

had also come against it - but that initially it was only environmental organizations and affected neighborhoods in West Birmingham who were fighting this. Jones likened it to the Major League Baseball issue that was planned without neighborhood involvement and pointed out how cranky Highland Park would be if something like that was pushed on them. She said at a minimum these sorts of things should go through the proper channels with the neighborhoods involved early on, that we in Highland Park should want the same thing for other neighborhoods in Birmingham that we'd want for ours. Sanfelippo shared that the period for public comment on the relocation had been extended and that information on this had gone out in the last neighborhood email. Someone asked for clarification on who had responsibility for the lights in parks, Ms. Collins was not certain. Sanfelippo said she would follow-up on the issue and confirm where maintenance responsibility for park lights resided.

Old Business

Sanfelippo asked for any items of old business. A resident asked about an update on the 'Sister hHuses'. Sanfelippo reported that the original court date in April had been postponed because they had wanted to include more of the owner's properties. She said she planned to attend the city condemnation hearing the next day and expected to have first hand information to share about what happened. A resident asked what they were considering, Sanfelippo replied 'to formally condemn them... again'.

Rushton Park Community Garden/Tori McDonald

Sanfelippo introduced Tori McDonald. McDonald shared she had been attending neighborhood meetings for almost two years now, to present about the Highland Park Community Garden and that positive progress was being made. She shared a summary of how the project started, saying that at the end of 2016 there were several people interested in doing something with the unused volleyball court in Rushton Park; she thought they may have originally interested in creating a native plant garden or something similar and David Seamon, the Missional Engagement Director at Independent Presbyterian Church, began talking to people in Highland Park and the idea of a 'community garden' started to form. She shared that throughout the process they have worked with several residents who have contributed to the project. She pointed to Morris Hiatt, saying he had worked with them since the beginning, going with them to Birmingham Parks and Recreation Board meetings. She shared they went to those meetings for the first time in the spring of 2017. They learned their effort to create a community garden in a city park was the first ever in the city of Birmingham and for this reason, the city was interested in the group's project becoming a community resource for similar projects within the greater Birmingham area. McDonald said she talked to a friend at Architectural Works and they subsequently came up with a beautiful design for the project pro bono. She

displayed the design and explained that since then they had been working with the Neighborhood Association and the Park Board to gain approval for the design; that they also had to create a license agreement for the garden from scratch because there was no precedent for this within the city. McDonald explained at that point they realized they needed a legal entity to enter into the agreement with the Parks and Recreation Board and started working with Independent Presbyterian Church (IPC) who is now their 501c3 backer for the project; that IPC is basically covering liability for the project and their name will be on the agreement with Parks and Rec. She shared they sent the license agreement to the city attorney last May (May 2018) and they received it back this May (May 2019). She reported they went to their final Parks and Recreation meeting on May 1st and got the license agreement signed. This means they are now legally able to start construction on the garden as soon as they can. She said the license agreement is only for 2 years, that initially the city wanted it to be annually renewable and the final decision to renew the agreement every 2 years was the compromise. McDonald said that what she needed now, what she'd like to recommend, is the creation of a neighborhood committee that she would be willing to chair, that consisted of 4 other people; that the mission of this committee would be to oversee the garden to ensure long term sustainability and maintain neighborhood and community investment in it. A motion was made by John Somerset to create the committee; Mary Helen Crowe seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

A question was asked whether the organizers had talked with the people at Jones Valley Urban Farms. McDonald replied that Jones Valley primarily works with schools throughout Birmingham, so they are very much part of the 'farm to table' school-based garden program. She said she had been very interested in involving them because she thought having a city park garden went well with what they were doing with the Birmingham Board of Education in putting gardens at schools. She said they hope the project in Highland Park will set an amazing precedent in the city and inspire other community gardens. McDonald said the assistant manager at Jones Valley was a friend of hers and on their contact list to receive ongoing information on the Highland Park project. She added that as impressive as Jones Valley was, they had a lot on their plate with their current projects/efforts. She said they had approached Jones Valley early in the project their response had been, 'This sounds great! Good luck!' Sanfelippo asked how residents could get in touch or engage with this effort, apply for a plot or make a donation. McDonald responded all of those things were needed and that residents could email her at HighlandParkGardens@gmail.com. She also said that people could follow the garden on Facebook by searching Highland Park Community Garden. She asked residents to 'follow' the Garden on Facebook, shared that a website would be forthcoming - and said she would be in front of O'Henry's on Do Dah Day with a table to share information, build their email list to kick off fundraising efforts.

Someone asked what this effort was going to cost. McDonald replied the project wasn't cheap. She said that Architecture Works does amazing work and for that reason it comes with a price tag. She said they were also trying to do some things that other neighborhoods might not attempt, such as drip irrigation for the beds. She shared they were also attempting to make the garden ADA compliant. She said the materials planned would substantially level the landscape improving access regardless of ability level. She shared that the two year renewal period meant garden construction and materials needed to be portable enough that if needed, it could be moved. The question was asked whether someone could get down there, to the garden, in a wheelchair. McDonald replied that if you started at the north end of the park, near IPC, and you had an adventurous spirit, you could get there. She said that Bob McKenna, the owner of Clubhouse on Highland, had been working with them throughout the process - and that he could access it. She said she hoped that their activities within the park would motivate the city to increase the accessibility of everything within the Rushton footprint.

A question was asked about how a 'community garden' worked. McDonald explained each bed would be 4 feet by 8 feet and that there would be 19 of them; that current plans were to rent out each bed for an annual fee of \$35. She feels the fairest way discussed so far has been to have a two week period where people apply followed by some sort of lottery system whereby participants will be chosen. Alison Glascock pointed out that there is a significant list of rules that participants would have to adhere to. McDonald agreed and said she felt the rules would be perceived as reasonable.

Meeting attendees gave McDonald a round of enthusiastic applause for her efforts.

Other Business **Announcements**

Sanfelippo announced that the next day FIDO would be doing their neighborhood flag and poop cleanup and that if anyone wanted to help they could join this really fun group at 5:15 at parking area at the end of Rushton Park closest to IPC.

Sanfelippo shared that Do Dah Day was this coming weekend, Saturday May 18 and the parade would kick off at 11:01, starting at the corner near IPC and the Golf Course and proceeding down Highland until it reached Niazuma. She reminded the group that festivities would be in only Rhodes Park this year and end at 6:01 pm Saturday evening.

Sanfelippo told the group there had been a budget hearing tonight and that she had given our representative feedback about the late notice about the meeting, that we might have been willing to change the time of our meeting to be able to attend that meeting.

Mary Helen Crowe asked if the neighborhood had heard anything from the folks opening 'Eats' on Highland. Sanfelippo replied no and said she suspected they were having last minute issues with final inspections but felt their opening was imminent. Alison Glascock said she had spoken to the owner and would keep us updated on any news.

Judy Jones shared the next 'Path to Compassion' Speaker event would be held on May 19 at the Clubhouse on Highland at 3 pm. She said the May speaker would be Scott Douglas, Executive Director of Greater Birmingham Ministries. She shared June speakers would be from Episcopal Place, a facility in Highland Park that provided housing and independent living for seniors and adults with disabilities. Jones said her goal for the series was to continue developing ideas for creating 'compassionate community' in Highland Park.

A question was asked about the potholes in front of the St Vincent's entrance by McDonalds and whether they were created by the people that put out the pine straw there, and that shouldn't those contractors be responsible for fixing those holes. Sanfelippo said she would check that out.

Sanfelippo gave an update on the surface lot along 28th, between 10th and 11th, explaining that landscaping here was part of the agreement with St Vincent's, that they would install and maintain the landscaping in perpetuity. She stated they have not installed the landscaping and as a result had been issued a violation. She expressed hope that the violation would motivate St Vincent's to follow up on the commitment they had made.

Adjournment: With no further business the meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:30 PM.

Next meeting will be Tuesday, June 11, 2019 at 6 pm upstairs at Highland Golf Clubhouse.

Respectfully Submitted,
Judy Jones
Secretary, Highland Park Neighborhood Association