

Highland Park Neighborhood Association

August 2020 Minutes

Meeting Date: August 11, 2020

At 6 pm President Elizabeth Sanfelippo welcomed everyone arriving into the virtually held Highland Park Neighborhood Association August meeting. The meeting was being held virtually using Zoom because of ongoing health and safety concerns related to the Covid19 virus. She called the meeting to order and introduced herself and Secretary Judy Jones, saying she wasn't sure whether Vice President Jessica Powers is out of town and unable to attend tonight. Sanfelippo thanked Highland Park resident Jamie Whitehurst for use of his Zoom account to hold our neighborhood meetings over the past few months. She noted attendance for these meetings had been very good.

Sanfelippo asked if everyone had the opportunity to look over the minutes from the July meeting. Larry Contri moved to approve the minutes, Carla Youngblood seconded the motion. Sanfelippo asked the group to vote via Zoom chat. The motion passed and the minutes for the July meeting were approved.

Roll Call

Sanfelippo verbally went through the names of attendees to confirm attendees as per city instructions (additional names were added later as individuals joined the meeting).

City Updates

Sanfelippo reported the area had been quiet in terms of crime over the last month with exception of a murder that occurred in Underwood Park near the Nick bar. Sanfelippo said she didn't have a lot of information but understood from what had been written about the incident was that the woman lived nearby and was a very dear soul. She said the tragedy was a sad reminder for everyone to stay safe and to please call 911 (emergencies) or 205-328-9311 (non-emergencies) and report suspicious activity.

Sanfelippo said she had not received any updates from Public Works or the Fire Department. She shared the next Large Trash and Brush pick up was this coming Thursday, August 13. She said she thought some issues related to missed pickups had been resolved but as always, to email 311@birminghamal.gov to report any problems. Sanfelippo reported hearing unscheduled pickups had occurred for recycles and that she had reported that to the city - but that she hasn't heard back.

Janice Fuqua Memorial Bench/Susie Strauss

Susie Strauss reported she was calling in from Denver to seek the neighborhood's permission for a special project. She shared she had lived in Rhodes' Townhouses until December, and one of "our neighbors", Janice Fuqua, who was very special to all of them, recently passed away. Strauss said they wanted to do something in her memory and after talking to her husband, they decided they would like to do something in Rhodes Park. She said the project would be accomplished using contributions by Fuqua's neighbors and family. Strauss said the Birmingham Park and Recreation Board wanted them to get the neighborhood's permission to do this. She explained they were not asking for money, only approval for a bench with a plaque in Rhodes Park. Sanfelippo asked for a motion. Larry Contri moved to approve the group's plan for a bench in Rhodes Park. Horace Hulsey seconded the motion. Sanfelippo asked everyone to vote yea or nay on the motion via the chat feature. The motion carried. Sanfelippo said the neighborhood would share the vote with whoever necessary so the project could go forward. Strauss thanked everyone and added that she missed the neighborhood.

Dog Waste Stations

Sanfelippo reminded the group that the neighborhood had purchased 'doggy waste stations' and put them throughout the parks. She reported that we had been refilling them on a periodic basis but that she thought we needed to go ahead and allocate some funds for additional bags because we were getting down to the last couple of boxes of them and didn't want to run out. Sanfelippo said the bag supply had been replenished last January and that order had been right around \$1100 and purchased 32,000 bags. Sanfelippo said she recommended the neighborhood approve \$1200 this time to be certain there were no issues with the city and overages. She added one of the stations, they think it was a good Samaritan perhaps trying to put some of their own bags in, but that their efforts had broken one of the dispensers. Sanfelippo said they would like to add on \$59.99 to this allocation for a replacement dispenser. She said the total would be roughly \$1300 to replace one of the dog stations and purchase one case of the dog bags. Lisa McCormick moved that the \$1300 allocation be approved. Mark Ritter seconded the motion. Sanfelippo again asked the group to vote yes/no on approval of the allocation via the ZOOM chat feature. The motion carried.

Sidewalk Film Festival/Chloe Cook

Sanfelippo introduced the first speaker for the meeting - Chloe Cook from Sidewalk Film Festival. Cook said she was not a Highland Park neighbor but did live nearby in the Glen Iris neighborhood which was also in Birmingham's Southside. She thanked the group for the opportunity to share about the festival. She shared that Highland Park resident/Secretary Judy Jones was a longtime volunteer for the Festival. Cook said that typically the Festival takes place in downtown Birmingham in the historic Theatre District. She said this year, due to the current health crisis that the city is

facing, they will not be able to hold the festival in this footprint downtown. As a result they have made the decision to mount this year's festival in an 'all drive in' format at the Grand River Drive In in Leeds, which was about 20-25 minutes from Highland Park. She said the Festival would be August 24-30 and that they would be streaming over 150 films. She said over these 7 nights they would have feature films and short films, that typically the short films were combined into a block that would last approximately 90 minutes. Cook said the schedule and descriptions for all films could be found on their website - www.SidewalkFilmFest.com and also that they were on all the major social media channels, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, etc. She said information could also be found there on ticketing and other details on this year's event. She said it would be a dramatically different event from what they usually offer, not just in it being a different location but also in the drive in format as opposed to the beautiful theatre venues in downtown. Cook said they also typically have some 550 volunteers assist with the event. She said given the smaller format this year and that they have eliminated many of the personal interaction elements of the festival (due to the health crisis) that they will this year produce the festival with a fewer number of volunteers. Cook said they would have films by Alabama filmmakers and also some of what Sidewalk felt were some of the best films making debuts around the world. Jones asked which festival the 2020 festival would be - Cook replied this year would be the 22nd Annual - and the first time the festival had been held outside the downtown theatre district. Jones told the group that she had participated in the event for a number of years and could attest to this event being a top shelf beautiful event for our city. She said there were actually a number of Festival volunteers who lived in Highland Park. Jones said she felt it very important to support Sidewalk and help it keep going through this health crisis. She suggested that everyone within earshot share it with their friends. Jones said while this format might not be the preferred one for the festival that she thought it was likely going to be a whole lot of fun and that she guaranteed anyone going would be having a great time. Cook said every year they survey their festival goers, that one question is how they learned about the festival. Cook said every year, regardless of how they focus their advertising, the number one way people hear about the festival for the first time is 'word of mouth'. Cook said that if you have attended the festival, have enjoyed it, want it to stay alive and well in the city, to help them by spreading the word. She said even if you haven't attended the festival before, that this format would be a great way to start, that it will be something new and different - and you don't even have to leave your car! Cook said this year they had lots of the usual Indie films but because the film industry is in utter chaos right now, they decided to take advantage of the drive-in format and screen some format-appropriate films like Teen Wolf and Teen Witch and the Patrick Swayze cult flick Road House. Cook said it would really be a good and fun year to sample the festival if you haven't been before. Sanfelippo asked about ticket purchases. Cook said they always like for people to buy tickets in advance, that it helps them plan, know about the audience in advance

to help ensure everyone attending has the best experience possible. She said you could purchase tickets at the gate. She said you could also go on their website and buy a ticket for your car. She said if you have been quarantining with people/friends but aren't yet sure if they all want to go to the movie, you can reserve a spot for your car for \$15; then as you approach the day of your screening, if you know that everyone does indeed want to come, you can adjust your reservation, print your digital ticket - then just hold it up for socially distanced scanning as you enter the gate. She added that they of course were requiring that all Sidewalk staff wear masks. She said they would also be requiring that anyone outside their vehicle wear masks as well. She said again in addition to these online tickets you would be able to buy tickets at the gate. Cook said they would post information on sellouts to their social media channels. She said at the present times, they didn't have any sellouts. She said the entire drive-in facility would be operated at 50% capacity in accordance with public health related ordinances right now.

A resident asked if she bought a pass for her car and brought friends, whether they brought their own beer, wine and popcorn or whether there would be some concessions there. Cook replied there was a policy at the facility that did not allow for outside food or drink but that they do have a full bar on site - beer, wine, mixed drinks - and they also have all the standard movie theatre concessions - popcorn, candy, etc - but then they also have expanded options as well - hamburgers, hot dogs. Cook said the fellow who oversees the kitchen there was actually a former employee of Frank Stitt and has a great food background, that he has been able to put together a really great drive-in appropriate menu that varies from week to week.

Sanfelippo thanked Cook for joining the meeting and that we all look forward to the festival.

League of Women Voters of Greater Birmingham/Leonette Slay

Sanfelippo introduced Leonette Slay President of the League of Women Voters of Greater Birmingham. Sanfelippo said there seemed to be a lot going on right now with voting for November and we invited Slay to come and share with us what she knew about it.

Slay thanked Sanfelippo for the opportunity to speak to the neighborhood. She started off sharing there were other cities in the area who would be having municipal elections on August 25 but that Birmingham was not. She explained there would be 3 ways to vote in November. The first is to actually go to the polls in person, which is now problematic for certain subsets of people. She shared the polls are open in Alabama from 7 am to 7 pm and that if you are in line at 7 pm you get to vote. Slay said voters must present a photo ID, that they use that to compare

with their list to be certain you have not already voted. Slay said if you have moved since you last voted you will want to make sure that you have updated your voter registration, that your precinct could have changed even if your move was only a few blocks over. She said this is something that you can verify on the Secretary of State's website which is AlabamaVotes.gov, adding there is also lots of helpful information there. She said there was also a League site for national, state and local called Vote411.org. She said on this site they have asked people running for office a series of questions and to which respondents from federal to local elections have uploaded their answers. Slay said you can see candidate answers and also which candidates chose not to respond. She said she heartily recommended that people visit the site, that it is being used successfully across the country.

The second way to vote is Absentee-In Person. She said this method involves either downloading an absentee ballot application or going in person to your voting registrar's office and asking for an absentee application. She said you present your photo ID and they will give you the application right then in the registrar's office. You would then fill out that application, submit it back to the registrar and they will give you a ballot. You then complete the ballot, put it in the required envelope, and submit to the registrar. She said that this office is on the 5th floor of the County Courthouse. She explained that Jefferson County is unique in the state because we actually have 2 courthouses and 2 absentee voting managers. Slay said where she lives she has to go to the Bessemer County Courthouse. But residents of our neighborhood would go downtown to the 5th floor of the Jefferson County Courthouse from 8 am to 5 pm and you can request an absentee ballot, show your voter ID and complete your ballot there. The ballot is turned in to the registrar, they put it under lock and key and will count it on November 3.

Slay said the third way to vote is absentee ballot and this method is a little tricky. She said she had sent Sanfelippo a flyer with explaining in detail the absentee voting process (attached). As with method 2, voters may download an Application for Absentee Voting or request one from the registrar. She said the Secretary of State's website has an icon for 'Absentee Ballot Questions and Answers', that you can download the application but that obtaining this application is the last thing you can do online. Slay said that once you complete the application you may mail or deliver it in person to the registrar's office with a copy of your voter/photo ID. She explained the deadlines that applied to the process, saying you could request an absentee ballot up to five days before the general election. She said the tricky part was that it had to be postmarked by the day before the election (November 2) and it must be received by noon on election day and that it was going to be tricky for the Postal Service to be able to do this quite that efficiently. She went on to say that Alabama requires an 'excuse' to vote absentee and that the Secretary of State has given permission to Alabama voters to select excuse block #2 on the application

which says you're sick. She said perhaps you're not sick, but it's that you just don't want to get sick. She said once you receive your ballot you must have 2 witnesses or a notary attest to your signature before you can send it in. She said Absentee-In Person voting doesn't have this witness requirement because you are standing in front of the registrar. Slay said some states furnished postpaid envelopes to return the ballots but not Alabama. Slay said she voted in the July runoff by absentee ballot, there were not many races, only the back and front of one sheet, but it cost her \$1.20 in stamps to mail the ballot back. She said this method of voting is full of opportunities to mess up, even simply putting enough postage on the envelope. She said unfortunately there are many absentee ballots across the country that are not being counted for some small irregularity. Slay pointed out that most of us are not used to voting absentee, that we don't necessarily know or are comfortable with the process. But she says many more people will be voting absentee this election cycle, that it may not just be people over a certain age but other people of all ages who have underlying health issues. She said that the League is trying to provide non-partisan, factual information so you can be assured that your vote will be counted. Slay said if you have gone to all this trouble to obtain and submit your ballot they did not want some peculiarity to cause the ballot to be cast aside.

Slay shared that the League had filed a lawsuit against the Secretary of State to force him to relax some of the rules surrounding Absentee Voting because the Alabama Constitution does say in case of emergency state officials do have some power to change voting laws. She said this case this week was thrown out of court in Montgomery so that lost this lawsuit - but that they will continue to do what the League has done for 100 years which is to try and educate voters. She said she was particularly pleased that Sanfelippo had contacted her this week as it is the anniversary of Tennessee putting us over the top to ratify the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. She said this occurred in Nashville on August 18, 1920. She told the group that a Birmingham resident, Pattie Ruffner Jacobs, had been one of the key suffragists in that movement and was nationally known for her work. Slay said, that Jacobs lived in Birmingham gives us a very strong connection to the 100+ years it took to achieve this milestone.

Slay asked if there were any questions. Larry Contri spoke up saying he had a copy of the absentee ballot application in front of him and ask to confirm that we had 'permission' to check box 2. Slay said that the 'box 2' she mentioned was in the 'list of reasons' why you're voting absentee, for example whether you're in the military or out of the country. Contri said he understood, his question was that 'box 2' was the only selection that said 'ID Required' - and that if someone was going to be out of the country, was the ID still required? Slay said yes. Contri said -so if you sent one in without an ID, it will go into File 13 and asked if that was correct. Slay told Contri that was a great question and the answer might depend on who your registrar is.

She went on to say that in an ideal world they might contact you and inform you that there was a material error with your ballot but that she feels that in this particular election, the registrars were going to be overwhelmed. She said that is why they were trying to get the word out in every medium, to help people navigate this process. She said the form is not clear cut, there were multiple ways to misinterpret things on it. She said when she requested her absentee ballot in July it came with a whole yellow sheet of instructions. Contri asked if the correct course of action for him would be to submit another application and include a copy of his driver's license. Slay said yes - but suggested that before he do that, he go to the Secretary of State's website and track the status of your absentee ballot request, that you can see whether it's been received and processed. She said from her own personal experience, she requested her first absentee ballot in May. She said she didn't get one for a long enough time that she finally called - and they had no record of having received her request. She then initiated her second ballot request the end of June and it came with a few days. Contri asked for the website again, Slay said it was the Secretary of State's website - sos.alabama.gov. She shared you could also get to it using [AlabamaVotes.gov](https://myinfo.alabamavotes.gov). (The specific page that has the link to status check is <https://myinfo.alabamavotes.gov/VoterView/>)

Another resident asked Slay where she could find a sample ballot, one that would be what she would see when she went into her polling place, that the sources she had found were confusing with, for ex., multiple and different selections for Jefferson County, that she wanted something that showed all candidates down to the municipal judge elections. Slay said she could go to Vote411.org, that you can put in your street address and zip code and see a copy of the ballot for that address. Slay added that was the League of Women Voters' site and that if anyone had any issues with it to let her know.

Sanfelippo said we would indeed share the document that Slay had forwarded with Highland Park residents.

Jones asked if she could contact Slay a few days after the meeting to be sure she gets all this information 100% correct for the minutes. Slay said definitely yes. Jones asked if the League was looking for volunteers to get this word out. Slay replied they were always looking for volunteers but were having a strange time during 'this season', that normally they have all kinds of voter registration and update activities going on, which, with the virus, has all been problematic. She said volunteers could help was by distributing copies of the absentee ballot applications and helping people understand it. She said many people don't have a computer or a printer to print it out. She said you also have to make a copy of your ID. She said the process can be complicated for someone who isn't technically savvy or doesn't have a home office. She the League is making hundreds of copies of the application and putting

them in locations throughout the city. She said one of their members was working specifically with the restoration of voting rights, that in some of these cases people could petition to have their voting rights restored. She said if you call the League office and hit 'option 4', or send an email to our trained representative who has access to AlaCourt, which is the legal database that will help us navigate whether that person is eligible to have voting rights restored. Slay said the group might recall the Alabama legislation that redefined 'moral turpitude', that legislators finally created a consistent list of what that constituted. She said before that, she thought 2017, each county could decide what crimes were designated as 'moral turpitude' so it was inconsistent across the state. She said the legislature did a good thing, that there are many crimes that are not crimes of moral turpitude and as a result there are now hundreds of people who think they can't vote and they can. Jones shared that Highland Park had someone speak on this a few months ago. Jones asked to what extent people can actually help, as in she knew 'ballot harvesting' was a controversial subject. She explained we have several places in our neighborhood that have shut-ins for whom someone might want to volunteer to get their ballots in or the applications to them. Slay said that could be problematic very fast as we saw with the problems in North Carolina a couple of years ago. She went on to say someone could definitely help with getting the right information, deliver the applications, give them the stamps, take them to the polls or registrar. Slay said she thought the safest way to vote was to go to the Registrar's office early, that your ballots will be printed and delivered to the registrar offices by September 9. She said you can actually ask for a ballot today, they will hold that request and mail you the ballot after Sept 9. She said if you want to vote in September or October, this year you have a way to do that and be done, that it's a good way to avoid crowds that might be at polling places. She said that barring some catastrophe the 'ballot' will not change between September and November.

Larry Contri said being an 18 year educator he had always been concerned about the 18 year olds that needed to register and receive encouragement go to the polls and vote. He said Birmingham city schools will be virtual for the first 9 weeks. He said we normally get sororities to do some of this work. He asked what the League of Women voters was doing to help get the young people registered and to the polls. Slay said they had worked with Alpha Kappa Alpha before to register voters, they have gone to Lawson State, Shelton State and other community colleges, places where perhaps all the young people might not be registered but those avenues were more or less blocked off to the League right now. She said many of their volunteers were of an age that didn't make it a good idea to get out in that manner today. Slay said she feels that a lot of this right now is going to be pushing your social circles and families to get your young people registered. She said used to be they would go into high schools and registered young people who were 18 or even 17 years old if they were going to be 18 by the election. She agreed this was going to be a challenge

because traditional methods of registering people and getting them to the polls were not going to work in 2020. Contri said as far as he knew they were still playing football and that he had started Friday encouraging some of the teachers to go and set up a table for registration at the field. Slay said they would be willing to help with that if Contri is able to receive permission from the school to do that.

Sanfelippo thanked Slay for all the helpful information and said again that she would send out the information/links that Slay had shared with us. Slay said if anyone experienced any difficulties to let the League know about it, that her email address was LWSlay@cs.com. Contri asked if someone could go vote now, Slay replied no, that you had to wait until the ballots were received by the registrars on September 9. Sanfelippo said if anyone had other questions that they could email them to the neighborhood at highlandparkneighborhoodal@gmail.com and she would pass them along to Slay.

City Council Update/Councilwoman Valerie Abbott

Sanfelippo introduced Highland Park's Councilwoman, Valerie Abbott. Abbott said today had been City Council day and that even though they didn't have a huge agenda, they did a couple of things that were useful. One, they passed an ordinance for 'shared space permits' allowing restaurants to expand out onto their sidewalks and parking lots so that they can socially space their tables of people, hopefully to get more people out eating and drinking safely. The ordinance expanded their liquor permits as well to allow for beverages to be taken outside into these expanded areas consistent with whatever rules had or would be passed by the ABC board.

Abbott said the Council had also passed a resolution supporting the Birmingham Region Community Investment Cooperative District which is basically an organization that will allow us to create New Market Cooperative Tax Credits and use them in city areas that are languishing without development, areas that might not be developers' first choice for development projects. She said they also appointed people to serve on that District Committee. Abbott said this potentially represents millions of dollars to help developers to develop in these parts of town.

Sanfelippo said she had this afternoon followed up with Abbott's assistant, Dr Lee, who had given her a couple of updates. She shared the lights in Rhodes Park had been damaged because of dogs urinating on them. She said she understood that bids had gone out to repair or replace the poles and she believes we are currently waiting to hear back from the power company. Abbott said they initially thought the lights only required lamp replacement but that when the electrician went out to look at them they found severe corrosion caused by dogs doing what dogs naturally do. She said the poles were ruined and have to be replaced which represents extra

expense. Abbott added that she knew that residents had both listened to her and read in the paper that the city was extremely concerned about revenues which are down significantly, that the city has reached the point of being concerned about paying employees to come to work. She said she didn't know if monies would be available right now or in the near future to replace the lights, that the neighborhood might have to pitch in some funds, that we may just have to wait until the city has additional funding. Abbott said that even though Parks and Recreation control the parks, they don't have any money unless the city gives it to them. She said they were not expecting 2021 to be a very good year, that the city may be just keeping its head above water instead of providing the usual service residents are accustomed to seeing.

Sanfelippo said Lee was going to check on the status of the steps in Rhodes Park, in when those were going to be repaired. She says it was the steps in the corner of the park where apparently a drunk driver hit them and damaged them. She said hopefully we'd have an update on that soon. She asked Abbott to keep us updated on the financial issues affecting the city and that we would explore options with Highland Park's spending committee to see how we might could help if needed, adding that we definitely didn't want our parks to be dark. Abbott agreed that this was a bad thing. Abbott said all of District 3's public improvement money had been used for paving on Hanover Circle, trying to make that happen, so all of that money was already committed. Abbott said Hanover Circle just had more issues than Carter has liver pills, they thought that paving it was addressing their biggest issue but that now they have the issue with the former nursing facility, the rehab facility that is a whole new can of worms. Sanfelippo asked if there was an update on the Hanover paving project. Abbott said she did not have her list of dates/times but they have circulated this information, that the design is done, bids are being taken this month, noting that we are in August now, and she believes construction is supposed to begin in October. She said the people on Hanover would finally get 'something' but that she was sure the project wouldn't meet everyone's expectations. She said ALDOT had screwed it up, that they were supposed to fund and do that project and then they backed out and left us high and dry. Abbott said we do have the funding to do it and it is definitely going to happen. She said she hopes that after it's all completed that people aren't then complaining about speeders because it's so nice and smooth.

Sanfelippo said a resident question had been shared - asking if Abbott had any idea when 30th Street would be paved. Abbott replied she would check but she didn't recall it being on the list for this year. She shared the list was on the city's website as the '5 Year Plan for Paving' that was instituted initially under Mayor Bell. (<https://www.birminghamal.gov/streets>) She said according to Mayor Bell they were proceeding with the plan but that there was now insufficient money for paving -

and that District 3 did not get it's fair share to start with in her opinion, adding the reality is there are 8 other council representatives who think that District 3 received adequate funding. Sanfelippo asked if someone wanted to submit a street to consider for future paving, could they simply submit that through 311? Abbott said yes, they could submit it through 311 or to her office. Abbott emphasized that if no one actually turns in the street, complains about it, that it will never get on this list - she said the city doesn't have people who ride around looking for streets that need paving. Abbott recommended that people report the street to both 311 and her office, that would increase the chances of something being done about it.

Community Resource Officer/Jasmine Fells

Sanfelippo shared that our Community Resource Officer was not on the call this evening, that there were several neighborhood meetings being held at the same time, creating a conflict for Fells.

Old Business

Sanfelippo reported finally getting resolution of the question about a \$50,000 city budget line item designated earmarked for "HP Garden". She said Dr Lee had determined these funds had been allocated for the Highland Park Tennis and Golf facility, that they needed some upgrades and repairs to their building and were the intended recipient of the funds.

New Business

Proposed Crisis Diversion Center on Hanover

Sanfelippo explained this was the issue that Abbott had alluded to earlier and that she wanted to provide what she knew as of communications received that day. She said that a gentleman named James Crego had reached out to her a few weeks ago representing Jefferson/Blount/St Clair County Mental Health Authority and expressing an interest in the property at 39 Hanover Circle which was formerly a memory care facility. Sanfelippo said she thought it had about 40 beds and served people who had dementia, Alzheimer's, etc. She said their idea was to create a 'crisis diversion center', that they planned to file for a grant to fund the project. She said she told Crego it sounded like an interesting idea, basically it would provide an additional option to someone who didn't particularly need to be incarcerated who might instead be in need of a drug program or medication, general mental health services, but that they sometimes get taken to an emergency room or jail instead - but that they were in need of some form of intervention. She said the facility would be operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Sanfelippo said she sent information to several individuals involved with homeowner associations on Hanover Circle to obtain their feedback. She said those individuals have since passed that on to other people, encouraging them to contact Sanfelippo and/or Mr. Crego directly with their

thoughts and concerns. She said Crego was not to the point in the project where an email blast to the entire neighborhood would be desired or helpful. Sanfelippo said that a solid majority of people on the circle, as well as people in other parts of our neighborhood, were definitely not favorable to the project in this location. She said they were concerned about traffic, the type of people it would bring to the neighborhood, police car sirens 24 hours a day delivering people, just generally lots of concerns and negative feedback, opposition, to this. Sanfelippo shared that she tries to be neutral and diplomatic on issues of this nature, especially now given the general societal upheaval between citizens and the police. She said this is a great program but that she would support this clear majority of neighbors who had contacted her in opposition to the project. Sanfelippo said she knew there were several people who had joined the call who had an interest in the project, that she wanted to be sure and get them added to the roll and give them an opportunity to express any thoughts they wanted to share. Sanfelippo said she would also encourage anyone who would like more information or would like to share their opinion on the concept, to please email her and she will forward the information to Mr Crego and put 'whoever' in touch with him directly. She reiterated he was open to speaking to people but they both agreed they didn't want to send him to the front of the firing range where he would just get pummeled with negative feedback. Sanfelippo confirmed that she had passed along to Crego that she had not received any positive feedback on the program being located in our neighborhood. Sanfelippo said John Tomlinson and Morris Hiatt were on the line, that she was adding them to our roster for the night. Jones asked to confirm that the project was in no sort of active phase, that this was just the group exploring locations and asking for feedback and that no trigger had been pulled. Sanfelippo said yes and also that she thought it a good positive that they had taken the initiative to contact her and ask for feedback. She added that her impression is that the group does not want to be in an area where they are not wanted, that it wouldn't be good for the program participants, the clients or the staff. She credited them for seeking the neighborhood's input first.

Marcy Morganbesser said as a social worker of many decades, she would be interested to read the proposal. She said she wondered if the project was a mixture of diversion from incarceration, diversion from hospitalization, that these two things were very different. She said in her experience (she came from Massachusetts) there was something called a 'crisis stabilization unit' or 'program'. She said she doesn't necessarily default to the position of 'not in my backyard' because who ever wants this sort of thing near by but that these programs are important. She asked if Sanfelippo knew if the purpose leaned more towards candidates for hospitalization or incarceration. Sanfelippo said what Crego sent her was diversion with the goal of diverting individuals from long wait times from hospital waiting rooms or being jailed by law enforcement. Morgan said she did also

know that many people who are incarcerated have a mental illness and there wasn't much in the way of other options for what to do with these individuals other than jailing them. Through not fault of their own a thought disorder. She said she wouldn't be surprised if she wasn't a lone voice but that she'd like to hear a little more about it, she'd be happy to read more about it if Crego or Sanfelippo could share materials on it. She suspects the target candidate is someone who is perhaps in an ER, in a deteriorating status and facing strict criteria on being admitted/hospitalized, that she wonders if upon evaluation the individual is classified as needing some kind of oversight, some kind of care - but no hospitalization, she just wondered if this is the kind of facility/activity this was intended to be, that she would love to know more. Sanfelippo said she would definitely defer to Mr. Crego and will put them in touch with each other.

Sanfelippo said she was afraid she had initially given the false impression that she was going to be supportive of the project, saying when she sent the email soliciting perspectives and concerns that she had said called the project a good idea in general. She went on to say that because residents had their lack of support clear it was not her intent to advocate for the project in any way. She said she didn't think there had been any positive feedback and that she had passed the resident responses to Crego anonymously.

Mary Helen Crowe asked if they were going to have on-site supervision. Sanfelippo said she believed so. Crowe said her concern was that they have an Aletheia House facility around the corner from their house that apparently did not have much supervision. Crowe said they do not look after their property, there are always semi-broken doors and such, that there have been drug arrests there in the last year and a half. For this reason she said she had a concern about how this facility being discussed would be run. Sanfelippo said this facility was offering 20 beds for individuals to be able to stay 5 to 7 days, and supplementing that with 6 recliners for 23 hour stays; that they would be staffed with psychiatric nurse practitioners, Registered Nurses (RNs), Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) and security for every shift. Crowe asked who was financing this. Sanfelippo said this would be financed by a grant they would be applying for. Crowe asked if this was some sort of adjunct to the courts directly, that she didn't understand who was going to be running it. Sanfelippo replied that as she understood it, the group moving ahead with the project would be subject to receiving this grant but that she would get some clarity on that. A resident asked who the group was, Sanfelippo replied that it was the Jefferson, Blount, St Clair Mental Health Authority.

Sanfelippo said a question was submitted that if the majority of the residents are opposed, why are we even talking about it. Sanfelippo replied because it had not officially come up at a neighborhood meeting and she wanted to give all residents

the opportunity to be informed and express their opinions/feedback but also to circulate accurate information from all stakeholders on what was actually happening. Marcy Morganbesser added that from where she sits, there's all sorts of levels of care, that the mixing up of psychiatric care and incarceration makes her feel there is more to ferret out here but that she realizes she is probably in the minority on considering approaches to this, especially if no one is supportive of the project in any way.

Brian Oakes asked to be recognized and shared that he was the Board President of Hanover Condominium Association. He said this was probably the largest property on Hanover Circle, that there are 76 units in which some 100+ reside. He stated that the residents there were squarely against this project and he wanted to be sure that other Highland Park residents heard from them tonight. He said John Tomlinson, also on their board, is also at this meeting tonight. He said he did not come to the meeting to make any sort of formal presentation but wanted to voice his concern as the board president of that size neighborhood property. Oakes said his understanding is that current zoning wouldn't allow this project to start with because current zoning didn't allow for mental facilities or penal projects - and it sounds like this facility would be a mix of both. He said regardless of that, their property directly abuts this facility. Oakes said he didn't want to come across as the 'not in my backyard' person but that those of us who live here in Hanover have spent the last 20 years really trying to make our property pop and be what everyone would want it to be in the neighborhood. Oakes said he didn't believe, nor do the people that he represents believe, that the purpose and collateral issues that come along with that fit within this neighborhood. He said the situation is unique in that we are a residential neighborhood but have historically had a rehabilitative facility placed in the center of us. But that he thinks that historic dynamic would change dramatically if it there were an influx of people with significant mental illness and being picked up by the police. Oakes said he'd be the first to say he was all for that type of project but that he would think, with the medical district next door that is 90+ city blocks in size, that they could find somewhere else for this particular situation. He said we all have a major concern about what happens when security measures fail, going on to say their swimming pool would be directly next door to this proposed facility, that if someone not in the right state of mind, wandered off the property - that he didn't want to sound like an alarmist but that he could imagine a number of security nightmares. He said Hanover had spent a lot of time over the years, literally going to circuit court to get rid of people at Hanover who were not good owners. He said bottom line, they are going to oppose this project. He said we are indeed in this all together but that his property literally touches the place. Oakes said they have done some research, looked at the group's web page - and they want nothing of it. He said he believes in the group's purpose, what they're doing, it just needs to be in an area appropriate for that kind of work/activity.

Someone asked for clarification if this project was for the facility on the north edge of the circle that was previously a nursing home and is currently vacant. Sanfelippo answered yes it was. The resident asked if St Vincent's had weighed in on the project, Sanfelippo said she did not know. Mary Helen Crowe said since this is associated with public mental health clinics, would it make more sense to it have it located closer to a hospital. Sanfelippo acknowledged a valid point. Crowe went on to say housing these people in a facility other than a full service medical facility didn't sound like a good idea to her. Marcy Morganbesser pointed out that given the proximity of this property to St Vincent's that she suspects the building matches the requirements of what group is looking for. Crowe pointed out that the gate to St Vincent's from this property is locked. Morgan said she suspects if the property meets their requirements in the way of real estate, that acquiring it might be preferable to building something from scratch. Crowe mused about other hospital facilities with 28 unused beds. Valerie Abbott mentioned Cooper Green. Crowe threw in whatever Medical Center East is right now.

Sanfelippo thanked everyone for their input, saying anyone who wanted to express additional thoughts on the project to email her at highlandparkneighborhoodal@gmail.com and she would forward those thoughts to Mr. Crego.

Announcements/Committee Updates

Sanfelippo shared with the group that Unity of Birmingham has been having their Saturday Markets from 4-7 pm every Saturday. She said she personally had been able to go a couple of times and thoroughly enjoyed it. She said it wasn't super crowded, that people typically were coming to get things and not taking time to linger/mingle for any long length of time, that there was plenty of social distancing. She said they had prepared meals, produce, tincture w medicinal/essential oils, etc. Sanfelippo said it was a great market and it'd be wonderful if the neighborhood supported it fully. She said Unity was offering a 'Lecture Series on the Lawn' 7 pm Saturday evenings after the market. She said you can also visit their website and Facebook site/events.

Someone said they had gone to the first market and that there were a lot of people not wearing masks. Sanfelippo expressed surprise saying that definitely had not been her experience. Another resident said they had been there 3 weeks ago and had not seen a single person without a mask then, even children were masked. Sanfelippo said a good reminder to all to wear your masks and that she would communicate this to Bob McKenna.

Sanfelippo told the group if anyone had not yet done their 2020 U.S. Census then (jokingly) shame on them! She said you could complete the census at 2020Census.gov and that it was super easy and would take less than 10 minutes. She said it was really important to the community that everyone complete the census.

Sanfelippo announced that Highland Park would have Large Trash and Brush pick up this coming Thursday, Aug 13. She said happily the city had been publishing more and more dates into the future and that it continues to be every three weeks. Sanfelippo said she would include any future pick up dates that have been announced in our next emailed newsletter. Valerie Abbott shared that the city had been running behind on some of these pickups. Her advice, if your pickup day has come and gone without your 'pile' being picked up, be sure to report it and your address to 311 so that you don't get forgotten for another 3 weeks. Abbott shared their Glen Iris pickup had been late, that they were still waiting on it - but that they had reported it. Sanfelippo told Abbott and the group that late pickups are infinitely better than early pickups and that Highland Park has communicated that multiple times to the city because early pickups confuse everyone.

Elizabeth shared that 2020 neighborhood elections would be held in October though she doesn't know yet how pandemic concerns might play out with respect to voting for these positions - but that for now, elections will be held in October. She said that any one who is interesting in running for any office to email her at highlandparkneighborhoodal@gmail.com and/or Jasmine Fells at Jasmine.Fells@birminghamal.gov - and get a 'Declaration of Candidacy' form that should be submitted by September 14 she thought, but said to watch for communications on this. Sanfelippo said she would be seeking reelection and she expected Judy Jones would be also. She said she would share more details as more is known and we approach that time.

Sanfelippo said before we wrap up we'd get a couple of Committee updates. She said Anne Sunkel and Judy Jones had been working on the 501c3 formation and asked for one of them to provide an update on their progress. Jones said they have been working really hard on the documents, the documentation to apply for the status. She said our Highland Park resident and her neighbor Marc Solomon has reviewed the documents several times and has been fine so far with the documents. Jones said there are little weird things you've got to plug into the application materials like the address of the corporation, we have to commit to the names of board members and officers, small but important things we just need to nail down over the next week or two. Jones said we should be able to submit this application after some fundraising, that she isn't sure what the application fee actually is - but that we will have to raise whatever it is, we might just get creative about how to throw some

money together to make this happen. Sunkel/Sanfelippo said they weren't sure whether the fee was \$250 or \$500 - but that it was somewhere in that range. Sunkel said her suggestion was to solicit donations for any amount by email since it will reach more people. She pointed out we weren't a non-profit yet, that these donations wouldn't receive a write-off - but once we received non-profit status, subsequent contributions would. Sunkel said she didn't know if the best way to receive these donations for the application fees might be VENMO, checks, cash or what but she was willing to receive them, hold and submit when the paperwork was completed, that she was happy to take charge of collecting these monies and getting them submitted. Jones said she feels like we will work all this out and let people know how they can contribute to assist this effort. Jones shared that 'this' organization, what they were really trying to do - that a good example came up tonight during this meeting - the light fixture in Rhodes Park, if the city doesn't have monies to fix that, we really could have residents around the park who were interested in donating to fix the light; that what this non-profit status would allow, is for these people to contribute into the non-profit, that those funds could then fix the light - and subsequently that the contributing individuals would get a tax deduction for their contribution. It would really be for the benefit of projects within the neighborhood - and that's why we couldn't necessarily say, at this moment, what projects we were talking about, but that there have been a lot of things that have come up - you know there's been creative people who have said - we can't get the city to take care of it so 'let's just raise some money to fix the sidewalks!' - which is great, with this non-profit status, people can contribute toward these projects and receive a tax deduction for doing so. Sanfelippo added that all this is a little tricky because the 'neighborhood' is not allowed to fundraise but that we can strategize about how to do this. She announced that just now, they had an anonymous donor offer a \$50 donation toward the application fee. Sanfelippo said we will keep everyone posted on this effort - and how to help. Jones said, who knows - we might just set up a 'go fund me', share it and let people contribute, that any funds left over would go toward neighborhood projects. Someone suggested park projects - and Sanfelippo reminded all the organization would be formally called 'Friends of Highland Park'. Sanfelippo thanked Sunkel, Jones and attorney Marc Solomon - for their work on this project.

Mary Helen Crowe asked Councilor Abbott what the city's stance was on people turning their property into an AirBNB. Abbott replied that if the area's zoning was for single family dwelling then they weren't supposed to be doing it. She added that enforcement was not easy, saying that usually a neighbor has to turn them in. Crowe said they were concerned with the Cliff house next to them, that it's a 5 bedroom house, and that at some point she thinks there was a kitchen upstairs and down. She said recently there has been a single young man that says he wants to buy this 5 bedroom house, with a carriage house that has two apartments - and that

he wants to build a swimming pool. She said - they went through the whole thing with their roof, that they went through the historical review and that Sanfelippo was at the Local Historic Advisory Committee meeting and such, they went through everything involved with that - and now in talking to this potential buyer - telling him, this is a historic district and you can't just be over there changing stuff around on the outside like that without permission, she just wasn't sure he understood. Crowe said she was very much against any AirBNBs on this street, there was already no parking, it's already jammed up. Abbott said she understood, adding that the city had a hard time catching people doing these AirBNBs, that people could turn them in by calling 311. Sanfelippo said that residents could also communicate these issues to her at highlandparkneighborhoodal@gmail.com sharing that she could help relay the message and ask the city to send out an inspector. Abbott added that it would be a zoning issue. Sanfelippo said they had an incident with a resident, building out, bringing in appliances to expand a 'single residence', that she had sat down with the resident and explained this wasn't allowed. Abbott said the realtors don't want to tell them because they just want to sell the house. Crowe said - she didn't care, she was fine standing out front and just saying they didn't want a neighbor with units that would be turning over every 3-4 days. Sanfelippo asked to be kept in the loop about what was happening on her street, that she will do her best to help.

Sanfelippo reported that the neighborhood was working on the neighborhood's next tree order, thanks to Ray Davis, that he has been awesome just keeping an eye on things, coordinating with the city on plantings, tree trimmings and pickups about the neighborhood.

Sanfelippo expressed appreciation to Jamie Whitehurst for use of his Zoom account for neighborhood meetings, that he makes this donation so that we can use it for our neighborhood meetings. Sanfelippo said she especially appreciate Whitehurst's help during this crazy time. She said we are all just making the best of all of things right now, that this is indeed a crazy period, that we all need to pull together, look out for each other.

Sanfelippo said the next meeting would be Tuesday September 8, likely by Zoom. She thanked everyone for being here tonight and told all to be safe.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:42 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Judy Jones
Secretary, Highland Park Neighborhood Association