

Highland Park Neighborhood Association

December 2020 Minutes

Meeting Date: December 8, 2020

At 6 pm President Elizabeth Sanfelippo welcomed everyone arriving into the virtually held Highland Park Neighborhood Association December meeting, introducing herself and explaining that Secretary Judy Jones wasn't able to be on the call this evening.

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

Sanfelippo asked if everyone had received the November Meeting Minutes and whether anyone had any corrections or addition to those minutes. No one had any changes or corrections. Sanfelippo took a vote; there were 9 yea votes and no nays so the November minutes were approved.

While people continued to arrive, Sanfelippo reminded everyone of 'porch pirates' being more prevalent this time of the year. She suggested asking neighbors to keep an eye out and trying to get packages off porches as quickly as possible.

Sanfelippo shared that we have heard from the development team for the Arlington Project and a small group of us are going to hear a presentation from that group this coming Friday. Sanfelippo explained the Friday meeting would be an 'initial feedback' session, that they were not ready to put it 'out there' for a larger group yet and that we would respect that.

Sanfelippo said resident Adam Ward with the Beautification Committee had been working hard coordinating with the city to get more accurate bids for some of the sidewalk repairs that we want to do. She said we have decided to start along Highland Avenue and not get into side streets just yet. She said we have received another proposal, that this one was significantly less than the proposal we received earlier. Sanfelippo said Mike Eddington from the City Planning Department was helping us to coordinate that with the contractor. Sanfelippo said they presented it to the neighborhood spending committee and they recommended that we proceed so we will want to take a vote on it. She reported the neighborhood has approximately \$47,000 in our city account. She said this proposal was for sidewalk repairs from Freddy's to Niazuma (not including anything that was messed up in the recent construction) and that the total for the work was \$11,900, adding that would include fixing cracked concrete, putting bricks in where they are missing, etc. She

said the city suggested putting a buffer of 10% in case there were additional and unexpected repairs needed that weren't included in the initial estimate. The adjusted total would be \$13,090. Morris Newman made a motion to approve the project. Diann Weatherly seconded the motion. The vote was 10 yays and no nays so the motion carried.

Southtown Development Project Update

Sanfelippo shared that we were going to receive an update from the Southtown Development Project tonight. She introduced Carol Clarke, General Manager of Southside Development Company. Clarke explained Southside was the private development partner working with HABD on the redevelopment of Southtown Court. She said she attended another Highland Park meeting a few months before with Corey Stallworth to provide an overview of generally what's going on. Clarke said since that time Stallworth has left HABD saying that he now was working with the City of Birmingham as their Housing Director. She said in his stead today they have Christie Hilliard who is with the Real Estate Department in HABD and that Hilliard will provide a high-level update of the project status. She said then we would have former Highland Park resident Becky Carpenter walk us through the rezoning case, that they would like to get input and support from Highland Park on that effort.

Hilliard introduced herself as the project analyst for the Real Estate Development Department at the Housing Authority. She said they were in the process of relocating a lot of the current Southtown residents. She said a challenge was locating proper housing for the residents who had young ones in their family, that schooling and the current virtual environment for learning was an area of concern for parents. Hilliard said they had boots on the ground to help the residents with this transition. She said they were readying a demo design for the site. Hilliard said she hoped to be able to deliver the site over to Southside Development soon after the first of the year, that they hoped to have all the residents relocated by the start of 2021. Hilliard said they would soon begin the process of selecting a demolition company for the site. Sanfelippo asked if some of the challenges relocating residents were from a reluctance to change schools mid-year. Hilliard replied the challenges were more that residents had been comfortable with the resources available to them in Southtown and Southside and needed to see they could be connected to similar resources in the new areas. Hilliard gave the example that residents were used to have a Walgreens within walking distance and they might not have a pharmacy that close in their new neighborhood. She said they just truly had to work one on one with each family to address their concerns and issues. Morris Newman asked 1) if Hilliard knew yet what would be going back into the property (mixed owners/renters for example), 2) if they had an idea yet when the entire project would be completed and 3) information on the zoning changes that will be needed.

Hilliard said she thought the next speakers would be best suited to answer those questions. Clarke concurred saying if Becky Carpenter's presentation next would include information on 'land use' and if it didn't answer all his questions that they would address them after.

Carpenter said she would explain first how her company would interact with Southside Development, explaining that Southside was a composite of a number of firms that are all working together toward the redevelopment of Southtown. She said she works for Corporate Realty Development and that they were just one of those partner firms. She said Corporate Realty was a mixed-use developer in Birmingham, that they've done a lot of work in Parkside and Downtown and that they have been spearheading the master planning and the community engagement for this project. She said they will be doing the commercial development as the whole project unfolds. She said since they've been leading the master planning effort so they will be bringing the rezoning case to Highland Park residents tonight. Carpenter shared the 'Southtown Zoning Application Narrative Statement' with the group. She said that in addition to Southtown Court, they had been able to get two additional properties in the lower southwestern corner, under option agreement. She said there would be a number of different rezoning cases associated with the property/project. She said the site was zoned a combination of R-7 and B-1 and that they would be requesting a rezoning to 'mixed-use downtown' - and that designation would allow all the uses they were currently looking at. Carpenter then walked the group through a rough site plan for the project that had four sections labeled A, B, C, D. She said the A block (northwest corner) would be the last one developed because for a time it is going to continue to house residents, explaining there weren't enough housing in HABD's portfolio to move all the residents away at the same time, so that the housing that exists currently on Block A will stay while the residents on the remainder of the site will move off-site and then all of that would be demolished. She said replacement housing would be the first thing developed and it would be located on Block D (southwest corner), explaining it would be a combination of senior housing and family housing - and that would be the first phase. She went on to say that after that is built, the residents in Block A would then move to Block D and then Block A would be demolished. She pointed out the color code key for office space, hotel, multi-family housing, etc - saying since it was a mixed-use site they would have some ground floor retail with either office or residential space above it. She pointed out a spot in Block B where they anticipated a medical office, saying that given the proximity to St Vincent's, they thought this would be a good possibility. She said there were also parking garages throughout the site adding these weren't single-purpose parking garages, that for example, some parking might be retail during the day and shift to hotel parking at night. She said these sorts of shared parking arrangements helped eliminate 'over-building' for parking. Carpenter said there would be a number of 'pocket parks'

throughout the site and that they planned a large park on the boundary of the site that was closer to Hwy 31, that this would provide residents with a buffer from the highway. Carpenter said there were some new streets to create good flow through the site but for the most part they were keeping the large connector that is 24th Street, that they realize it is one of the major connectors into downtown from 'over the mountain'. She said they are putting in some bike lanes, make some pedestrian improvements (for ex., wider sidewalks), have it more multi-modal but still recognizing that is a major vehicle thoroughfare through there. She asked for questions. Sanfelippo said she knew there was initial concern about new roads or entrances going into University. Carpenter said there would be no traffic attempting to cross University from the site/new road(s), that the entrance/exit would be 'right in - right out'. Morris Newman asked about the timeline for the project. Carpenter said the project would be over several years, that it would be market driven and also affected by the COVID pandemic - so that the phases might stretch out a bit. She said Block D would be the first, then they have been talking to a junior anchor retailer and depending on those talks, she expected Block B might be next. She said Block C (south east corner) has a second phase of housing so that will depend on demand. She said Block A will be last and truly could take 5-6 years. She pointed out that the site plan for Block A had a place for a second hotel if demand justified it. A resident asked what the structure would look like for the multi-family housing - and what the income requirements would be. Carol Clarke said Public Housing was usually up to 30% of area income, saying that they were working with the Housing Board to have project-based vouchers to keep these units affordable for low and moderate income - so that the project does introduce a moderate income band that would be eligible to live there. The senior housing would have some market rate units included. She said the family building would be up to 60% of area incomes, that it is designed to accommodate current residents who would like to return to the site. Clarke said these will be loft-style buildings, that they will be densified compared to what is there currently, they would be no more than 5 stories. Clarke said the part facing 24th is u-shaped turning in toward the site. Carpenter said that one of their partner companies specializes in affordable housing and they will be better equipped to bring this to the group at a later date as the architecture (design, materials) is starting to be developed. Carpenter said the parking for the Block D residential would be in the interior of the block. Clarke added that the design was really ongoing. Morris Newman asked for the number of units in Southtown now versus the number of units they anticipate when the project is complete. Clarke said the senior population at Southtown today is relatively small, likely fewer than 40 units and a lot depends on how many want to return and they anticipate there will be opportunity for seniors from the broader community to consider these as a home. She said with respect to the family units, they planned 120 in total, 60 in the first phase, 60 in the second. Clarke said there were currently 455 physical units but not all of these are occupied, that the current population was somewhere around 429.

Clarke said not all the current residents want to come back to Southtown. A question was asked about the condition of the property after demolition considering the project will proceed over a number of years. Carpenter said development will require quite a lot of sewer work, that the demolition will allow all of that to occur early on for the whole property. She said there would be a lot of grading work going on as well, leveling the property from one side to the other. She said at this point, the property would be secured and managed. Sanfelippo asked if they anticipated closing 24th Street during construction, Carpenter replied 'as little as possible', saying that when the sewer design is complete they will have a better sense of that - but she concurred that the duration of any disruption on 24th Street will have to be as short as possible. A resident asked about the little corner market and the house at the corner of 10th and 24th Street, what effect will this project have on those properties? Clarke replied that those properties will remain intact, that they are not part of the project.

Carpenter said they had applied for a Mixed Use Downtown zoning classification, that they were discussing Q-conditions with the City Planning, Engineering and Permitting Office - because this classification is one of the most broad, for example, it doesn't have any height limitations. Carpenter said they had approached the city about putting a height limitation on the property because anytime you have something that is essentially 'limitless' it's a good idea to put some guardrails in place. She said they looked at the height of buildings in the surrounding area, St Vincent's, just across Hwy 31 and the Hilton down the street - and proposed a Q-condition for a height limitation of 225 feet, so that there's nothing higher than the Hilton or anything on the St Vincent's property. Carpenter said this zoning application has been submitted to the city and will be moving through the regular steps toward the Zoning Advisory Commission. Carpenter said they would appreciate Highland Park's vote/support as a courtesy. She said Corporate Realty will also be working on the Carraway Hospital development and they like to approach the surrounding neighborhoods and engage them in the zoning process, not only the neighborhood that includes the footprint of the project but surrounding neighborhoods because they recognize the project affects them as well. Clarke said they would appreciate a vote because it shows the Advisory Commission and the City Council that they have engaged the neighboring areas. Sanfelippo said it was meaningful to us that they had the forethought and took the initiative to approach us and that we really appreciate it. Councilwoman Valerie Abbott asked what was the maximum proposed height of these buildings? Carpenter replied the higher buildings would be along University which was the more commercial corridor; that the southern side would be a lower height; that Block D, which will be the first to be developed and include replacement housing for the initially demolished housing and will be between 3 and 5 stories for family and senior housing - which was likely around 60 feet. Carpenter went on to say that Block C was another phase of

residential housing that would be about the same height. Abbott asked to confirm that the perimeter of Block C was right behind 'The Nick'. Clarke chuckled and asked - 'you mean that historic institution?' They shared there would be a buffer between that property and the development. Morris Newman asked if the Q condition would be for the whole site or plot specific. Carpenter said she thought they were just requesting the one classification for the whole site - but that she thought they'd be receptive to being more specific regarding different parts of the site, that they had done that with the Carraway property. She said with Carraway some blocks were transitional back into the neighborhood so the Q-conditions related to those blocks had a lower height limit. She said they anticipated needing the additional height along University which is where the office buildings would be. She said she thought this tallest building would be on Block A, which would be one of the last pieces of development to be completed. Carpenter said when they are working with the city and economic development on a project like this, they like to have some sites that are prepared and thought through with respect to arming the economic development community with something they can pick out if they're trying to recruit someone to town, if they're looking for new white collar jobs or a new location for a headquarters - that they see this office building to suit a company coming into Birmingham for the first time, not just playing musical chairs with the downtown towers - but being used as a recruitment tool. She said they are looking at this part of the development as potentially having some additional height based on the density needed to accommodate that user. Newman said he thought the neighborhood might want something a little more site-specific, not just carte blanche, it could be 200+ feet on the north side but that height would be problematic on the southern and more residential end - where that kind of height wasn't needed. Carpenter said they could further refine the Q-conditions and go on a block by block basis like they did with the Carraway project. Sanfelippo asked if Carpenter would want to go back and discuss revising zoning change request before we voted. Carpenter replied that she thought we could vote on the supporting the project and add the more specific Q-conditions as a comment. She said they could write in some suggestions for Q-conditions and they would return to PEP with that as part of the classification request. Sanfelippo asked for Newman's thoughts. He suggested the neighborhood might vote for 'tentative recommended approval' with the understanding that the developers were going to come back with more specifics with regard to Q-conditions related to height. And that final approval would be contingent upon that. Abbott asked that before a vote to first hear about parking, saying that often projects apply for 'mixed use downtown' when they don't want to deal with sufficient parking. Carpenter replied that each of the blocks with the 'gray blobs' (in Blocks A, B and C)- are parking garages that would serve the surrounding uses. She said that since we didn't know yet the scale of the buildings, the parking garages would be scaled to accommodate 'that', as in, if the office building was a seven or ten story building, the parking deck would have flex in order to

accommodate that. Newman said then perhaps planning needs to proceed a little further before a vote takes place because as Valerie points out, if you get a zoning classification that doesn't require parking, that there has been a big issue with this in the area over by the baseball stadium - that the argument there had been all the people who live over here will just 'walk up' and patronize the retail establishments there. He said he didn't know if that'd be the case here - but a pledge that parking would accommodate these 'uses', we don't really know that. Newman said he'd be inclined to want it fleshed out a little more first. Carpenter said she didn't have it available at the moment but that they did provide some parking calculations that they worked through with PEP, that they looked at the parking calculation/requirement for 'mixed use high' - they actually take each of the uses, what their anticipated demand is, cut it in half (in anticipation of shared parking) - and they more than met that. She went on to say that she understands that this might not be reassuring but as a developer we can't put something in where no tenant would ever want to come because the parking is such a bear. Carpenter emphasized they are incentivized to provide adequate parking because otherwise they will never be able to lease the space, adding they would never be able to attract retailers if there wasn't adequate parking for their customers. She said she would be willing to pull the information they provided to PEP and provide that to everyone. A resident asked about traffic flow in and out of those retail areas. Carpenter pointed out an existing light on 24th and said another would be added for controlled turns into the side streets. Carpenter pointed out that if you were accessing locations on the B Block you would park in the parking deck there - and then walk over to whatever the 'business' was on the corner of 24th and University. She said it was laid out a little like the Brookwood Target where Target is actually above the parking for it. She said they looked at that because they would love to get them there, to have that anchor on the corner with parking underneath and the Target above - in addition to the deck serving the other office space and hotel within that block. Carpenter said these streets also have 'angled parking', a 'traffic calming' measure - that they want the new side streets to be a little more pedestrian in nature. Someone mentioned Block D, Carpenter said parking was in surface lots behind the buildings.

Newman said his recommendation would be that this plan, in more detail, be vetted by the neighborhood 'zoning investigatory' committee before there was any kind of vote. He said we might have some thoughts that might help the effort out. Sanfelippo asked if he could state that in the form of a motion. Newman said his motion would be - that the neighborhood association table consideration of this recommendation until the next meeting of the neighborhood association pending review of the plan by the neighborhood zoning committee (if that's what it's still called). Phillip Foster seconded the motion. Sanfelippo called for the vote. The vote was 10 yays and no nays, so the motion passed and the discussion will be tabled

until the next meeting or whenever they can return and present updated information. Sanfelippo thanked Carpenter and Clarke for their presentation and said that we looked forward to their return. Clarke and Carpenter thanked the residents for their attention and the helpful discussion. Darryl Lee from Councilwoman Abbott's asked Sanfelippo if the development team could forward information on the project to Abbott's office, that they had received preliminaries some time ago, but not received any updates, that he thought it would be good if they had that information. Clarke said they would do that.

Fire Department Update

Sanfelippo introduced Captain Kenya Franklin from the Birmingham Fire and Rescue. Captain Franklin said that he was Captain of Station 3 on Highland Avenue. He shared that much of their focus remained on the Covid pandemic, for everyone to be sure they were continuing to wear masks, hand sanitize, social distance - all the things that we do to keep ourselves safe. Franklin said they were doing everything they could in house, when they make calls they have protocols in place to assist with anything they might face in the community. He encouraged everyone to be aware of CDC guidelines and follow them. Franklin said they were still installing smoke detectors for the community, following safety protocols when they do. He shared this was 'fire season', for everyone to be sure their smoke detectors were working, have a fire plan and that all in the household are aware of it. He also encouraged people to check in on their neighbors, that our communities were going through a lot right now and that we needed to stay connected, pointing out that we were going through a pandemic right now but that other health care issues continue to occur. Captain Franklin asked if there were any questions. Sanfelippo said she would add a reminder that folks not use their stove as a heater. Franklin said that is correct! He added that people who have fireplaces should clean them before using them this year. Sanfelippo asked where smoke and carbon monoxide detectors (or combined detectors) should be placed if people have fire places since the CO2 from the fireplace would set it off. Franklin said it depends on the home, that the answers would be different. He said Sanfelippo and any other residents could call or come by the station, that they would send someone out to look at the home and give a recommendation on placement of the detector(s). Franklin said they would visit but that he would also confirm with his inspector that the recommended placement was correct. A resident asked if they were doing both types of detectors, Franklin replied that right now they were just doing the smoke detectors, that they have not been installing the CO2 detectors. He said he would check with his Safety Division and get the neighborhood an update on that. Captain Franklin said Merry Christmas and told the group to remember we are working together to go through a pandemic and to please stay safe. He said if residents need them, they will be there.

City Council Update/Councilor Valerie Abbott

Councilor Abbott said that today they had a Council meeting, as they always do on Highland Park's meeting day. She said today they approved the Smithfield Framework Plan as well as the final zoning changes for mini-storage facilities which had over time generated a good bit of controversy. She said they also approved \$10,000 so the Council could have a meeting with the State Legislature which Abbott said she thought bizarre because she didn't want to meet in person with anyone right now - but the Council President wanted to have funding in place 'just in case'. Darryl Lee added that furloughed employees returned to work this past Monday. He said this wonderful development was made possible using reimbursement funds (\$9.2 million) from Jefferson County. He said initially they thought the city would receive more funds from other entities but that had not happened. He said the good news was the employees were back and that all 18 libraries would be open for staggered hours. Abbott added this only affected the full-time employees for the libraries and Parks and Recreation, that it did not bring back the part time employees. Sanfelippo asked if the Council discussed the neighborhood elections. Abbott said they did not discuss the elections, that she didn't think a final decision had been made. Abbott said the CAB (Community Advisory Board of 23 community leaders) meeting got a little confusing to her, what exactly was being proposed. She added that rarely do they have city residents racing to take on these responsibilities, that the positions required a lot of work and that personal satisfaction was the only thing officers really received for the great amount of effort they put into these positions. Sanfelippo said she was on the CAB call and found it all equally confusing. She thought they had decided to reschedule elections for January 26 but that was contingent on the issue getting on the Council meeting agenda today - but that it was a little 'murky' at the end of the call. Abbott said the issue was not discussed at today's meeting, there was nothing on the agenda about neighborhood officers or elections at all. Sanfelippo said she was just ready to get it done in whatever format it takes. Abbott said she understood that people wanted to know where they stand and to have it just hanging out there is messy - but that there were so many 'messy' things out there right now during this pandemic time, that she couldn't think of many things that weren't messy right now. Sanfelippo thanked Abbott for the update and for joining the call.

Community Resource Office Update/Jasmine Fells

Sanfelippo introduced Highland Park's Community Resource Representative Jasmine Fells. Fells said she had a few things, one being a toy drive that Birmingham Police Department was hosting and that the deadline to donate was December 16th. She said anyone interested in donating toys could deliver them to any BPD headquarter, precinct or city jail. She said she needed to check on the status of the dog waste bags, see if they had arrived. She said the Highland Park 'memory bench' that we had voted on was in progress now. Fells said the funding

process for the next tree planting had been completed, that Parks and Recreation would be working to take care of that. She concurred that a lot was still up in the air about neighborhood elections. She said anyone with any questions to call her office at 205-297-8336 - and her email was jasmine.fells@birminghamal.gov. Sanfelippo thanked her for the update.

New Business

Sanfelippo said she was contacted by a resident who was ok with her including his name - Barry Norris on 28th Street - is looking for some missing packages. He was apparently home and checking the porch for deliveries but didn't find them. Sanfelippo told the group to be on the lookout for any packages that might be misdelivered.

Announcements/Reminders

Sanfelippo reminded the group that recycling was now once a month on the first Wednesday, telling the group that any recycling left out on other Wednesdays would be picked up as trash. She said residents could take their recycles to the Center on 41st Street in Avondale, that that facility was open weekdays from 7 am to 4 pm. Sanfelippo told Jasmine Fells that the city circulated lots of information on the activities of Public Works, number of lots cleaned/mowed, amount of litter removed - in various neighborhoods and that she had asked for statistics on recycling but hadn't heard anything yet. She said she would love to hear some stats on that if possible.

Sanfelippo said the Farmer's Market at Unity Church has gone virtual due to rising Covid numbers. She said it was pretty cool, that they had put together a website that allowed you to order from their various vendors by midnight every Thursday, then go by Unity on Saturday and pick it up. She said this was a great way to continue the market during this time. (Link to Market: <https://unitymarketbham.myshopify.com>)

Sanfelippo shared next Large Trash and Brush pickup was Thursday December 17. She went on to share that she and Secretary Jones had started a little tradition the night before Large Trash and Brush pickups, that they go around in her pickup truck and grab piles that might be in an inconvenient place for pickup or piles that might get overlooked and we put them by her house. She said she has dubbed the duo as the 'Guerrilla Garbage Women'. She said it is fun and that if residents see them in action on those nights they will understand now.

Sanfelippo said that given the unknown situation with the neighborhood elections that had been scheduled for January 12, that we would plan to meet as usual on that day.

Sanfelippo thanked the group for their attendance. She wished everyone Merry Christmas, a 'Happier' New Year and shared a reminder to keep wearing their masks.

The December 2020 meeting of the Highland Park Neighborhood Association was adjourned at 7:20 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Judy Jones
Secretary, Highland Park Neighborhood Association