

# Highland Park Neighborhood Association

## January 2022 Minutes

Meeting Date: January 11, 2022

Vice President Mark Ritter called the January 2022 meeting of the Highland Park Neighborhood Association (being held via Zoom) to order at 6 pm, adding that he would be leading the meeting tonight. He introduced himself, President Elizabeth Sanfelippo and Secretary Judy Jones. He thanked Stephen Foster, past president of the Five Points South Neighborhood for continuing to set up the neighborhood meetings on Zoom.

Ritter asked if residents had received the November 2021 meeting minutes and whether there were any changes or corrections needed. No changes or corrections were noted. Mary Helen Crowe moved to approve the November 2021 minutes. Horace Hulsey seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Sanfelippo performed a roll call as required by the city for virtual meetings

**Birmingham Fire Department Update.** Ritter noted that no one from the Fire Department was on the call tonight.

**Southside Precinct Update.** Ritter noted that no one from the Police Fire Department was on the call tonight.

**Public Works/Environmental Code Update.** Ritter noted that no one from Public Works was on the call tonight.

**Speaker - Jessica Moody/Create Birmingham.** Ritter introduced Jessica Moody as the Director of Programs and Operations of Create Birmingham. Moody shared that Create Birmingham was a non-profit economic development agency, that their main goal as an organization is job growth and job creation in the 'creative industries'. She said they define 'creative industries' as six subsectors: performing arts, visual arts and crafts, culture and heritage, media and film, design and culinary arts. She said their main goal was creating jobs, helping artists and creatives succeed and helping non-profit organizations succeed. She shared they have a number of programs, for example CO.STARTERS, a 10-11 week program offering entrepreneurial support on business model development. Moody said the program started in 2014 and they typically run 3 programs annually and have almost 300 graduates who have gone through the program. She said they also have post-graduate resources to support people after they complete the program. Moody said they also have programs to help people before business model development - 'Get Started' program (a deep dive to get an idea out of your head and on paper), 'Goal Setting' workshop and Create Foundations (helping businesses that have to pivot quickly). She said their Create Consults program pairs small businesses with consultants, their 'Build a Boat' program to help small businesses sustain during challenging times. Moody said they also serve as a Film Office for the region, supporting film companies looking to come to the Birmingham region by serving as a liaison between the company and municipality, local resources and businesses that might be impacted where they want to film. She said Create also does public art advocacy and public

art policy development. She said they have partnered with the City of Birmingham working on the 'Asphalt Art Initiative' (launching in a couple of weeks) in the Smithfield region which will involve public art programs.

Ritter asked how their creative customers find Create. Moody explained that entrepreneurs know each other, that the entrepreneurial network helps get clients to them. She gave examples of assistance they have given entrepreneurs especially during the challenging times during the pandemic.

Sanfelippo asked if Create coordinates with Innovation Depot. Moody said yes, they call each other Birmingham Eco-System partners, that someone might enter the creative eco-system through, for example, Innovation Depot, Bronze Valley or Urban Impact - but might be a better fit for Create, so those partners would refer them to Create.

Ritter asked how many movies might be in the city at any one time. Moody replied the city can probably support two \$8-10 million films at one time, saying that after two films, local crew can get pretty thin. She said we had five feature films in 2021, they assisted 52 productions, and supported about \$17 million in combined budgets. She said on average small budget films spend about 60% of their budget on location (hotels, car rentals, catering) which means that money stays in the city and county.

Mary Helen Crowe asked if Create was doing anything with the World Games. Moody said they were working with entrepreneurs to be ready to engage with that opportunity.

Ritter thanked Moody for speaking to the neighborhood tonight. Moody provided her email address in case anyone had questions later ([jessica@createbirmingham.org](mailto:jessica@createbirmingham.org))

**City Council Update/Councilwoman Valerie Abbott.** Ritter introduced Councilwoman Valerie Abbott. Abbott shared that today was a quiet day at City Council. She reported they approved \$500,000 to support USFL Football as they are going to play eight professional football games in Birmingham in April and the City will be providing police, fire and public works support. Abbott said they amended the ordinance that allows entertainment districts to hang banners and decorative lights to include commercial revitalization districts. She said they did some work with assessments where the city has demolished dilapidated buildings. Abbott said she knew there had been problems with trash pickups, that the city is having a lot of staffing problems right now due to people with Covid. Abbott said she drove to take a look at progress paving Hanover Circle, and while there was indeed progress it was not as much as she would have liked.

Helen Rivas asked if there was currently a city policy related to Covid and masking. Abbott said if you come into a city facility you have to wear a mask but beyond that no city-wide policy. Lillian Myrick asked where addendum items that were addressed in the council meeting can be found, that she noticed they were not on the agenda. Abbott said addendum items are not on the agenda, that the council president approves them being added to the meeting agenda for whatever reason. She said they were supposed to be posted by the city clerk and that she would send him an email tomorrow and ask him when they will be posted. She said awards being made by the BOLD funding program (Building Opportunities for

Lasting Development) were added today, that they were supposed to have added those several weeks ago but the incorrect date had been published initially and they had to republish the information. She said there were two appointments today to the Land Bank Authority that were added as a addendum.

A resident asked about the 'Welcome to Highland Park' sign that was hit by a car. Sanfelippo said a report was filed and the City has been contacted and we are hopeful funds can be collected from the responsible party's insurance for the repair.

Mary Helen Crowe asked about the work being done on 20<sup>th</sup>. Abbott said Rev Birmingham has a project funded by businesses on 20<sup>th</sup> Street to revamp Birmingham Green to look and function better given the pandemic and increased demand to eat and spend time outdoors.

Dr. Lee shared that City Hall will be closed next Monday for MLK day. He also reported they were continuing to look at options for lighting in Rhodes Park and hope to have proposals to share soon.

Mary Helen Crowe asked about the drainage project in Caldwell Park affecting Virginia Samford and Episcopal Place. Dr Lee reported planning was in process, they have some preliminary quotes and are moving forward to get more detailed information.

**Community Resource Officer Update/Jasmine Fells.** Ritter introduced Jasmine Fells, the neighborhood's Community Resource Officer. Fells shared the CROs serve as a liason between the neighborhoods and our municipal government. She said they also assist neighborhoods with the expenditure of their neighborhood funds. She said if residents have any cause for concern, they can contact her office but to always report the concern to 311 first. Fells said her contact number was 205.297.8336. Fells said Highland Park's neighborhood fund balance was currently \$50,143.44. She said regarding the trees and shrubbery for the right-of-way project that she was in the process of obtaining an updated quote for this year so that she could get a purchase order. She gave a reminder about the World Games July 7-17, that if people wanted to volunteer (they need 4000+) they could contact her office. Fells introduced a new person to their staff, Sheena Ratcliff who said she was excited to be a part of the group. Fells encouraged residents to follow them on Facebook at Community Resource Services Division and to periodically consult their web page in the City's site.

**Beautification Committee Update.** Ritter said Ray Davis was not on the call but that the tree planting project was proceeding, he expected planting to start this spring. Ritter said he also thought that Phase 2 of the Sidewalk Project would be starting within the next couple of months. Sanfelippo said Phase 2 would start at Niazuma and Highland and follow Highland to Clairmont at the Piggly Wiggly.

**Friends of Highland Park Update.** Ritter asked Anne Sunkel for an update on the formation of 'Friends of Highland Park'. Sunkel reported progress on document formation related to this new group. She reported having a first board meeting, that she had been voted President, Marian Wilson Vice President, Judy Jones Secretary and Sue Alexander. She said the 3 other board members were Highland Park residents Marcy Morgenbesser, Ray Davis and Tom Wofford. She said we expected to be able to pass Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws for the

next meeting. She said the group has filed a Name Reservation form with the state and gotten an EIN. Sanfelippo expressed appreciation to the group for moving this effort forward.

**Request for Bluebird Houses.** Ritter said residents Mary Helen Crowe and Janet Wallace had made a request to the neighborhood regarding placement of blue bird houses in Highland Park parks, that this was on the agenda last month but there was no one on the call to speak to it. Mary Helen Crowe said Wallace had been in touch with the Audubon people and that they do not recommend putting up bluebird houses in the parks so they were going to drop this project.

### **Announcements and Reminders.**

**MLK Holiday/Civil Rights Institute.** Ritter announced that even though City of Birmingham offices would be closed Monday for MLK Day, the Civil Rights Museum would be open and free admission for the day, masks were required and there would be speakers and various special programs. Councilwoman Abbott said individuals would have to make a reservation, that it is free but because of Covid concerns they were trying to limit the number of people in the museum at any one time. Helen Rivas added that you can also attend virtually.

**Community Garden Lottery.** Ritter shared the Community Garden Lottery was underway and that if anyone has an interest in doing that, there are 19 spaces up for grabs.

**Recycling & Trash/Brush Pickups.** Ritter told the group that recycling is now the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month. He reminded the group that if you live in an apartment or condo building with a dumpster that the city will not pick up large trash and brush from your location. Ritter said the next large trash and brush pick up is Wednesday January 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Neighborhood Communications.** Ritter encouraged residents to keep up with community happenings by reading neighborhood newsletters and visiting the neighborhood's website at [www.highland-park.org](http://www.highland-park.org).

**Meeting Speakers.** Ritter told the group we were always looking for meeting speakers and if anyone had ideas for speakers to forward them to any of the neighborhood officers - or email [HighlandParkNeighborhoodAL@gmail.com](mailto:HighlandParkNeighborhoodAL@gmail.com).

**Neighborhood Elections.** Sanfelippo announced the beginning of the neighborhood election cycle, that these elections would likely be held in this coming October. She added that in her latest email she had included details on a couple of election related information sessions. She encouraged anyone who is interested in running for a leadership position to get involved and look into this opportunity.

**Next Meeting.** Ritter said the next meeting, which will also be held by Zoom, will be the second Tuesday of February, February 8 at 6 pm.

Ritter asked if there was a motion to adjourn. Mack Cornwell offered a motion to adjourn. Mary Helen Crowe seconded. There was no opposition.

The January 2022 Highland Park Neighborhood Association meeting was adjourned at 7:05 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Judy Jones  
Secretary, Highland Park Neighborhood Association