

Highland Park Neighborhood Association

February 2022 Minutes

Meeting Date: February 8, 2022

President Elizabeth Sanfelippo called the February 2022 meeting of the Highland Park Neighborhood Association (being held via Zoom) to order at 6 pm. She introduced herself, Vice-President Elizabeth Mark Ritter and Secretary Judy Jones. She thanked Stephen Foster of the Five Points South neighborhood for continuing to set up our neighborhood meetings on Zoom.

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

Sanfelippo asked if residents had received the January 2022 meeting minutes and whether there were any changes or corrections needed. No changes or corrections were requested. Jon Somerset moved to approve the January 2022 meeting minutes. Phillip Foster seconded the motion. There were 11 votes for the motion and none against so the motion carried.

Birmingham Police Department Update/Captain Roberts.

Sanfelippo introduced South Precinct Captain Roberts. Roberts thanked the neighborhood for inviting him. He reported there had been very little crime in Highland Park during January and that several of the incidents had resulted in arrests. Sanfelippo asked about a shooting incident (no one injured), Roberts shared the individual had been arrested and charged with criminal mischief and DUI.

Roberts shared the names and shifts for Highland Park's Beat Officers (Beat 323): Charlie King (0600-1600), Joshua Wood, (1500 – 0100), Tim Foster (2100-0700) who is a utility officer but the beat will likely be assigned to him at some point. Roberts said anyone with questions of these officers they can call 205-254-2793 and request to speak to them. Roberts said they have two lieutenants – Lt Benson (0600-1400) and Lt Palmer (1600 – midnight). He shared that currently officers were on 10-hour shifts and have 3 days off.

Roberts shared about Birmingham's Real Time Crime Center, saying it was a network in the Administration Building that has cameras hooked up to it throughout the city. He said the advantage to this network is that they can see crimes occurring real-time. Roberts said they had recently made a homicide arrest where they were able to see the entire crime on camera. Roberts said they were also utilizing LPRs (license plate readers), explaining they can call the Real Time Crime Center and request a search, for example, on vehicle make, color and time range. He said at some point in the near future they would be contacting neighborhoods with information on how residents can add cameras to the network and related specifications. Roberts said their goals was to have cameras all over the city – home cameras, business cameras, etc.

Roberts said he understood the neighborhood was having an issue with a commercial vehicle being parked on Lakeview Crescent and that they were continuing to work on this. Roberts referenced the retaining wall that was damaged in an accident saying they were working with the city attorney to get it repaired. Sanfelippo said she believed that was the neighborhood sign damaged, that there had been two situations lately with this kind of damage and that Highland Park had taken the initiative to point out to BPD and the city that the dollars might could be recovered or partially recovered from the driver's insurance.

Ritter asked Capt. Roberts about the parking enforcement officers, what they did, etc. Roberts clarified that the seven parking enforcement officers covered the entire city and just worked out of South Precinct, that they had their own 'beats' and areas in which they worked parking violations. He said they had a machine to print the tickets and that's what they do all day.

Diann Weatherly asked about the local ongoing problem with street racing. Roberts replied it was definitely a national problem and not just in Birmingham. Roberts said Birmingham has a limited number of police officers. He said when these people get in their 'groups', their 'car clubs', there could be as many as 70-90 cars involved. He said they gather and 'show off', that BPD will send a few officers who indeed stop a few of them. He said the city increased the 'bite' of the ticket saying it is written up as 'exhibition driving' – and in addition to the expensive ticket, the city tows the car. But the driver gets the car out the next day and they're still in the 'car club'. Roberts said they were trying to put 'rumble strips' down in a number of places to slow the drivers down. Roberts said BPD had established two task forces to get ahead of the issue. Roberts said with the cameras they now have downtown they make take another step and try to get tag numbers. But, he said, the problem with this is that you have to be able to identify the driver in the vehicle. Roberts said recently they did a roadblock, checked licenses and sobriety, issuing citations where possible and then let them leave. The bottom line, Roberts said, it is still an issue but they are working on it, taking definite steps to combat it. In response to a question by Philip Foster, Roberts confirmed that if someone received a second citation for this, their driver's license would be revoked. Roberts shared that another problem was that these drivers will often 'run' – and if they do, the officers can't chase them because they don't chase people for minor traffic violations, too much risk in doing this with innocent bystanders. Ritter observed there were some places in which it was the car fined and not the driver, that the owner of the vehicle would receive a moving traffic violation in the mail – not necessarily the driver fined but the car. Roberts said he had not heard of that but that he would run it by the city attorney's office. Ray Davis asked if these were municipal or state violations. Roberts replied it depends on what they're doing, that street racing is a State of Alabama code; loud mufflers, that sort of thing, is going to be a city violation.

Valerie Abbott asked who has the right/responsibility to stop people who are racing on the interstate at night. Roberts replied it was both state troopers and city police, that Birmingham police officers had the right to work accidents and write tickets on any interstate highway within the city limits, that state troopers were also assigned to the

same area. Roberts said Jefferson and Shelby County Sheriffs also had the right to stop vehicles and write tickets within their boundaries. Abbott also asked about parking enforcement, if their areas could be expanded into neighborhoods to assist with parking issues. Roberts said if the issue is reported, he will send a parking enforcement officer or a police officer to deal with it – but in truth, right now, there are only seven enforcement officers for the whole city – so they have to focus on bus routes, hospital entrances, main thoroughfares, etc, the areas having the largest problems. He said he hoped the unit would be expanded in the future and had made that suggestion.

Horace Hulsey asked if there was anything that could be done about the vagrants soliciting at the expressway on/off ramp near St Vincent's. Roberts said they do take these individuals to jail but because it is a low level crime, they pretty much can sign themselves out and leave. Roberts said there was only so much the city could do when they set up tents and such, that if the tents were on the sidewalk, they can clear it out. But if they set up on private property they can't do anything unless the property owner asked the police to 'trespass all'.

Captain Roberts thanked the neighborhood for having him. He said if anyone had other issues or questions to feel free to email him at joe.roberts@birminghamal.gov.

City Council Update/Councilor Valerie Abbott

Councilwoman Abbott said they had only 15 items on their agenda instead of the usual 50-70. She said there was nothing overly important on the agenda and offered to take questions.

Philip Foster said he wanted to thank Councilwoman Abbott for helping to appoint 3 new members to the Zoning Board of Adjustments. Abbott said the Council recognized the Board had a problem in that they didn't have a quorum and couldn't do their work. She said they were also looking to bring some more people into the Birmingham Planning Commission. She said anytime people want to participate in the boards and agencies that the city council appoints, to let her know. She thanked Phillip for his service on the Zoning Board.

Robert George said he had called 311 several times this year on a bad flooding problem related to the storm drain at the end of Highland Drive and Clairmont, that when it rains the water will cover the whole road there. Abbott asked him to send her office the information, including the 311 confirmation number (if he couldn't find it to call it in again and share that number), and her office would follow up. She told him if he has photos or videos, that would help. She said the good news was that the mayor has committed to the city council that by the end of the first quarter the new 311 software is supposed to be completely installed and functional. She said the new system is called SeeClickFix and will allow residents to report and track incidents to the call center using an app on their telephone. She said what the city has been using was a 'demo' so that explains some of the issues they've had. Sanfelippo asked if the existing outstanding calls would transfer to the new system. Abbott said she didn't know that answer.

Abbott cautioned people to watch for contractors digging up the street, likely without permits – and likely leaving the street in a mess. Jones told residents that many of the bad spots were there because of utility companies digging. She said she understood there was a certain amount of time that could pass before they can come back and fix it – but if they don't return, after a few months residents forget who dug the street up – or how long it's been – and they never follow up on it. Abbott said she thinks they are supposed to come back after six weeks. She said she thinks the water company bids that work out – but the bidding process is often lengthy and that locations can be forgotten.

A resident asked Abbott for an update on the Hanover Circle paving project. Abbott said the project had experienced 'glitches'. She said the whole idea was to go in, remove all the concrete and replace all with asphalt, repairing curbs and such as needed. She said there has been delays waiting for utility companies to do what they needed to do. Abbott also said they did not have funding to replace everything (sidewalks, curbs and gutters) – the plan was to replace what they damaged during the project. Sanfelippo said she had learned the heavy trucks and construction equipment had injured the old water pipes. She said the water works has the design prepared to make the repairs, they are assembling a team to do the work and are hopeful it can start mid to late February. Sanfelippo said the paving equipment had been moved out to allow the water company to come in and make the needed repairs which was expected to take 4-6 weeks. She said hopefully the paving could resume late April, early May.

Sanfelippo asked Abbott for an update on the lighting issues in Rhodes and Rushton Parks. Abbott said Darryl Lee had been speaking with Shonae Bennett, Director of the Park Board, and she says they plan to do it.

Abbott told the group her office was putting information received from various city sources on a website for District 3 – www.bhamdistrict3.com.

Community Resource Officer Update/Jasmine Fells

Sanfelippo said Highland Park's Community Resource Representative, Jasmine Fells, was not on the call tonight.

Beautification Committee Update

Ray Davis reported the neighborhood would be ordering 15 new trees over the next week or so. He said this included 9 Shumard Oaks and 6 Serviceberry Trees. He said depending on pricing they might be able to get another 1 to 2 trees, adding he thought they were approved for \$3000 which will be used for the trees, mulch and delivery. Davis said they would be scheduling a clean-up day for later on this spring. Sanfelippo said they were awaiting some tree consultations with the city which will impact the start of Phase II of the sidewalk repair project. She said the project will potentially include the steps that were hit in Rhodes Park as well as two places on the retaining wall near the golf course and St. Symeon Church that were damaged by car accidents.

Friends of Highland Park (FOHP) Update.

Jones told residents that Friends of Highland Park are continuing to have monthly meetings and in their last meeting they passed the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws for the organization. She said they were currently working on the application to file for incorporation with the State of Alabama.

Announcements and Reminders.

Sanfelippo shared the Mercedes Marathon is scheduled for the upcoming weekend, that Highland Avenue would be largely blocked off for parts of Saturday and Sunday.

Sanfelippo reminded the group that recycling is the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month.

Sanfelippo 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. She said the next large trash and brush pick-ups were February 17, March 10, March 31 and April 21. She said she thought the city had worked the kinks out from the holidays and asked residents to continue letting us know if residents experience problems.

Next Meeting. Sanfelippo said the next meeting would be Tuesday, March 8 at 6 pm. She said we definitely want to get back to in-person meetings but for the time being the priority was keeping people safe, that neighborhood leadership would continue to monitor the situation. Sanfelippo said ideally we will have a hybrid meeting with in-person combined with an online option - soon.

Ray Davis made a motion to adjourn. Jones seconded. There was no opposition.

The February 2022 Highland Park Neighborhood Association meeting was adjourned at 7:20 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Judy Jones
Secretary, Highland Park Neighborhood Association