

Highland Park Neighborhood Association

June 2022 Minutes

Meeting Date: June 14, 2022

President Elizabeth Sanfelippo called the June 2022 meeting of the Highland Park Neighborhood Association (hybrid meeting being held in person and via Zoom) to order at 6:05 pm. She welcomed everyone and introduced herself as President, Mark Ritter as Vice President and Judy Jones as Secretary. She thanked Stephen Foster, past president of the Five Points South Neighborhood for continuing to set up the neighborhood meetings on Zoom and Evan Godfrey and the Highland Park Golf staff for setting up our meeting tonight.

Sanfelippo noted there was no one from Public Works or the Birmingham Police Department attending the meeting.

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

Sanfelippo asked if residents had received the May 2022 meeting minutes and whether there were any changes or corrections needed. No changes or corrections were noted. Anne Sunkel moved to approve the May 2022 minutes. John Somerset seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Southtown Redevelopment Project Update. Sanfelippo said the neighborhood would receive an update on the Southtown Redevelopment Project and introduced speakers Carol Clarke (Southside Development), Marianne McGehee (Corporate Realty), and Seth Embry (Housing Authority of the Birmingham District). James Hopkins, a HAPD project analyst for the Southtown demolition, reported they were now approximately 65% complete with the demolition phase. He walked the group through the development footprint and explained where they were working and what had been completed. He explained the one section that would remain 'in place' until the housing part of the new development is completed and would then be open to those residents. He said at that point this last section would be demolished. Hopkins said they were working on infrastructure - drainage pipes, sewer work, etc.

Carol Clarke said she represents Southside Development Company which is a consortium of developers that includes Corporate Realty, the Benoit Group and BREC SPM. Clarke shared the 22-acre site has been public housing since the 1940s and had pretty much outlived its usefulness. Clarke said they were very happy to be assisting the Housing Authority achieve their goals with the redevelopment of this site. Clarke said the Housing Authority is leading the demolition, some rough grading of the site and some limited utility work related to drainage. Clarke said the first phase, the replacement housing (HABD's core mission), is leading the redevelopment and will start in the fall. Clarke said the next phase ('mixed use') would include retail, office, hotel and additional residential. She said once the remaining residents were relocated into replacement housing they would continue with mixed-use development. She shared renderings of the family housing and senior building. Clarke said regarding the rest of the site, there have been a lot of uncertainties. They did their master planning pre-COVID in 2018 and are now still trying to figure out the current market and pricing and availability of materials. She said retail had also been greatly affected by COVID. Clarke said the site has always been in the middle of a lot of different things - small businesses, the medical district, hospitals, the VA, etc - and they are working with, for example, UAB and Southern Research, to figure out how this is going to connect with and serve the greater community.

Clarke introduced Marianne McGehee to talk about the re-branding the site. She said they were still working with HABD and residents to rename the residential buildings. McGehee shared they had hired the company 'Clarity' to create a 'brand' for the overall property. She said the first phase of this process was stakeholder interviews. McGehee said interviews had been completed, subsequent reviews completed and plans were being made for a 'public reveal' in a couple of weeks. She reviewed the 'name rationale', the basis for logo design, the color scheme - and shared a newly developed promotion video for the development. (We got a sneak preview but were asked not to share the details with the public yet.)

McGehee and Clarke then spent time answering various resident questions about the project.

Sanfelippo thanked the group for their project update.

City Council Update. Sanfelippo introduced Dr. Darryl Lee from Councilwoman Valerie Abbott's office. Dr. Lee told the group the World Games were coming soon, adding there were still plenty of volunteer opportunities. He shared the City Council was having another hearing for the 2023 budget on Thursday, June 16 at 5:30 pm. Lee said the hearing would also be online. He asked that anyone with questions to contact his office. Lee reminded residents to use the 'SeeClickFix' app to report issues.

OLD BUSINESS

Sanfelippo shared that a vendor problem had derailed the spring tree planting and that the neighborhood was working to restart the process for a fall planting.

Sanfelippo offered an update on dilapidated properties (specifically the 'Sisters Houses'). She reported going to a City Council meeting to ask directly what can be done about dilapidated properties in the neighborhood, that the neighborhood has 'gone through the motions' in any number of ways and feels it is at a dead end. She said she did hear from someone in Planning, Engineering and Permits who was very helpful. She said the update indicated the city was taking a particularly problematic property owner to a higher court to see if they could get some 'action'. Sanfelippo reported talking to a recently deceased resident's family member about several properties the resident owned. She said the family member said the properties were now tied up in probate but that they hoped to get everything settled soon and start working on those properties. Multiple residents expressed thanks to Sanfelippo for her persistence in trying to make something happen with these properties.

Sanfelippo reported having attended a meeting about the horrendous flooding at Virginia Samford Theatre (VST) and Episcopal Place that took place at VST with city officials in attendance. Sanfelippo said she wanted to clarify something, that Episcopal Place had previously hired Shoel Engineering to study the flooding problem - and that the city has engaged them to do a more comprehensive study, to analyze the water flow into storm drains

and what needs to happen to address the issues. Sanfelippo said she would continue to keep the neighborhood updated.

Announcements

Sanfelippo reminded the group that recycling is now the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month. She said the next large trash and brush pick-up will be on the 23rd of this month.

Sanfelippo said the World Games would be in Birmingham July 7 through the 17th. She said a recent email had included the list of road closures.

Sanfelippo shared that Rojo was turning 20! She said they were having a birthday celebration 6 pm tomorrow, June 15th, with birthday cake, champagne and a band. Sanfelippo said Saturday June 25th they will have a Field Day and River Awareness Day in Rushton Park from 11 am until 8 pm. She thanked them for being such a wonderful part of the neighborhood.

Sanfelippo thanked Anne Sunkel for her continued 'Graffiti busters' efforts eliminating graffiti from the neighborhood. She said people could report graffiti locations to Anne via Nextdoor or emailing highlandparkneighborhoodal@gmail.com.

Sanfelippo thanked Anne Sunkel and Judy Jones for their leadership and successful persistence in obtaining the 501c3 designation for the 'Friends of Highland Park' organization.

A resident asked if there were any updates on the Hanover Circle paving project. Sanfelippo said she didn't have a recent update but would follow up on that.

Next Meeting. Sanfelippo said the next meeting will be held 6 pm Tuesday July 12, in person and via Zoom, at the Highland Golf Club.

Sharon Nelson moved to adjourn the meeting. John Somerset seconded. The June 2022 Highland Park Neighborhood Association meeting was adjourned at 6:55 pm.

Candidates

After the meeting was adjourned Sanfelippo told the group there was a candidate representative who wished to make remarks to residents. Carter Hutchison introduced himself as a representative of the Coach Fred Plump campaign. He explained there is a runoff for State House District 55 representative and he wanted to encourage residents to vote for Coach Plump. He said Plump would have been here this evening but had gotten stuck in traffic. He encouraged residents to look up the incumbent's voting record during his time in Montgomery, that he felt his positions were not aligned with the average voter in District 55. Hutchison said Plump has been in public service his whole life, he has 40 years of military service, 30 years of Fire and Rescue experience, almost two decades in Birmingham and Jefferson County libraries and over 50 years as a volunteer and youth baseball coach. Hutchison said some of Plumps key issues were equal access to pre-k, affordable housing, and public transportation.

Respectfully Submitted,

Judy Jones

Secretary, Highland Park Neighborhood Association