

Highland Park Neighborhood Association

November 2022 Minutes

Meeting Date: November 8, 2022

President Elizabeth Sanfelippo called the November 2022 meeting of the Highland Park Neighborhood Association to order at 6:00 pm. She welcomed everyone and introduced herself as President and Judy Jones as Secretary, adding that Mark Ritter is Vice President but was not present tonight. She explained this was a Zoom-only meeting because the neighborhood's meeting site, the Highland Golf Course, was a voting site today for the November General Election. She said she hoped everyone had voted - and if they hadn't, to get leave this meeting and go vote!

Sanfelippo told the group the last two meetings had been long and in the interest of respecting everyone's time, we want to do our best to hold tonight's meeting to an hour. Sanfelippo said if residents had a question or comment to hold it to one minute so that other residents would have opportunity to speak. She told the group the zoom meeting may cut out after 40 minutes, that if it did, that people could reconnect using the same link.

Sanfelippo performed a roll call as required by the city for virtual meetings noting guests Thomas Yuill (Senior Planner, City of Birmingham) and Captain Joe Roberts (Birmingham Police Department, South Precinct).

Sanfelippo shared that the wrong link been distributed for the September Minutes (meeting date Sept 13). She said she corrected that, redistributed and realized the minutes had an incorrect date. She said all has been corrected and distributed and asked if everyone had had the opportunity to see the minutes from September and the October meetings. She asked if there were any corrections to the minutes. Sanfelippo noted Vice President Mark Ritter had joined the meeting. Hearing no requests for corrections she said they would vote on the two sets of minutes separately. John Somerset moved to approve the September meeting minutes. Connie Urist seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Kelly Marshall moved to approve the October John Somerset seconded the motions. The motion passed unanimously.

'Exhibition Driving' Issue Update/Captain Joe Roberts

Sanfelippo introduced Captain Joe Roberts. Roberts said street racing, also known as exhibition driving, is a nationwide problem, that law enforcement officers all over the country are being challenged to deal with it. Roberts said Birmingham is taking a new approach. He said, as a stop-gap measure, the city has put out speed bumps. Roberts said if residents go to 2nd Avenue about 19th Street, they will see about 20 new speed bumps in that area. He said they are evaluating this approach but it seems to be going well, they have noted a slowdown of exhibition driving in that area. Roberts said Mayor Woodfin likes this approach so they have ordered about 60 more of the bumps. He said they will expand the program if the approach continues to be successful in reducing the dangerous activity. Roberts said their current challenge is supply chain issues, that they're having trouble getting the products they want, that will stand up for the long term. Roberts said they were also initiating more active enforcement in those areas. He said it's difficult because when they arrive, the street racers and spectators leave - and it is against policy to chase cars for traffic offenses in Birmingham, too much danger and liability. Roberts said they were using roadblocks and checkpoints to check for intoxication, warrants, etc. Roberts said they were also using plain clothes to mix with spectators and photograph cars and drivers. Roberts said the most thing going on was State Representative Allen Treadaway along with Mayor Woodfin have proposed legislation to legally define 'street racing' and get into fines for first, second and third offenses. He explained the fine for the first offense involves suspending a driver's license, towing/impounding the vehicle with subsequent offenses escalating punishments. He said the bill allows the 3rd offense to be classed a felony. He said he didn't expect the bill to be voted on for another several months. A resident asked for the number to call to report exhibition driving. Captain Roberts said 205-254-2793 is to their front desk. He said if no one answers that it is completely appropriate to call 911. Mark Ritter said a disconnect for him was that they have to have the driver to cite him for what he is doing as opposed to the car and that other locations use the license plate numbers to find the drivers. He asked whether that was possible in Alabama. Captain Roberts replied that no it wasn't possible at

this time, that right now you have to prove who was driving the car. Roberts said additionally as many as 40% of the cars being used are stolen.

Sanfelippo thanked Roberts for attending. Roberts thanked residents for their ongoing support, saying there was no other precinct that received the kind of support that Southside enjoys, that it was very important.

City of Birmingham Framework Planning Update/Thomas Yuill

Sanfelippo introduced Thomas Yuill, a Senior Planner with the City of Birmingham. Yuill said he wanted to give the group an update to the Southern Area Framework Plan, a little background and where we are and where we're going to go. He said he spoke to the neighborhood in late 2020 and he expressed appreciation for being asked back to give an update now. Yuill said back in 2013 the City of Birmingham adopted its first 'comprehensive plan' in over fifty years. He said essentially this a plan that guides long range planning and long range efforts for the city. Yuill said in that plan was a recognition that different parts of the city are very unique and have very unique assets and challenges. He said the plan recommended splitting the city into different study areas and doing framework plans, which were basically community-level plans. He said the city has completed 8 of the 9 plans and Highland Park has the honor of being included in the last group of neighborhoods that will have framework plan written for it. He shared this area also includes the Crestline community, the Crestwood community and the Red Mountain community, which Highland Park is a part of. Yuill said they spoke to Highland Park in 2020, had a couple of public meetings and got a lot of great information from residents across the study area - and afterwards wrote a draft framework plan with chapters on Housing, Economic Development, Green Systems (Parks, Trails, Storm Water), Transportation and Future Land Use. He said the plan could be accessed at <https://www.imaginebham.com/southernarea.html>. Yuill strongly encouraged residents to visit the site and review the document because there is still opportunity to submit comments. He said residents would likely be interested in the 'Future Land Use' chapter, that this subject was related to 'Zoning', that it actually 'informed' zoning. Yuill said that when the City Council is approached to rezone property, they consult the framework plans and community preferences regarding 'future land usage'. He said that is

why he especially wanted residents of Highland Park to give this section a closer look, that we have so many single-family dwellings right next to multi-family and 10-story apartment buildings. He said in their review was if the location was single-family they made it 'residential-low' (single family only); if it was multi-family they made it 'residential-medium' (single family or smaller scale multi-family). A question was asked about 'residential high' (high rise residences). Yuill said they did not include any 'residential high' classifications in this area. He explained if anyone wanted to build a high-rise in the future they would need to request a rezoning change to one that allows a building of this nature. He said when the city council considers a rezoning request they will look at this future land use and if it is set at 'residential medium' or 'residential low' then theoretically they should say 'the neighborhood has spoken and does not think a high-rise is appropriate'. He said it is important to remember that the plan does not pre-empt current 'zoning'.

Sanfelippo thanked Yuill for attending. He replied that he would be happy to come to another meeting to discuss the plan further. Sanfelippo said she would love to get him to present a mini-training session on zoning. Yuill said he'd be more than happy to do that.

City Council Update/Councilwoman Valerie Abbott

Councilwoman Abbott reported today's Council Meeting as having the shortest agenda in memory, there were only 17 items. She said the biggest agenda item was probably approving money for the Birmingham Bowl, that they listened to presentations for what felt like an hour - and then had a fire drill in the middle of the meeting. She asked if anyone in Highland Park had received one of the new 97 gallon garbage cans yet. No one replied in the affirmative. Abbott shared they were delivering 20% of the cans now and another 20% will be distributed in January and so on. She said everyone who lives in a single family home will receive one of the cans and garbage pickup will only be one day a week. Abbott said if you are handicapped or elderly you can fill out a form and Public Works will walk up or down your driveway and get your garbage can. Abbott said residents are supposed to receive a letter from the city telling them the can is coming. She said the entity selling the city the cans is also responsible for delivering them to residents. Abbott shared the cans have a GPS chip in

them that is specific to the resident's home/address. She said Public Works continues to have staffing issues.

Abbott said residents might have seen in the media that the Mayor is proposing a 'Family Fun Center' at the Crossplex. She said there is no funding source as of yet but she was confident it would be found soon. Abbott said there were other proposals out there to do creative things, spending taxpayer's money. Abbott said her personal feeling was that as soon as the city does all of the things it's responsible for doing, like paving the streets, fixing the sidewalks, fixing the lights, fixing the storm sewers, maintaining the parks, the city's buildings - after they do all that if they have any left over, we should spend that entertaining ourselves. Abbott said she was not inspired over the amphitheater, when the developer of the Carraway property proposed it, he was going to build it - and now suddenly, the public is supposed to pay for it. She said these are all nice amenities, that if we were flush with money and we had done our jobs already, then maybe. But she doesn't see it until city government does what they are responsible for doing. Abbott said, this group knows, because it is 'their neighborhood', that she had committed funding for 'whatever' the solution is for the flooding at Episcopal Place and Virginia Samford Theatre; that she is waiting for the cost estimate for what it is going to take to deal with that issue. Abbott said she is collecting requests for other things the American Rescue Act Funds can be used for but she would like to focus on storm sewers because we have so many issues with flooding in District 3 neighborhoods. Abbott said she is a proponent of addressing brick and mortar issues before other more *ephemeral* things. Sanfelippo voiced support for Abbott's position. Abbott said she went to the jail today. She said it was one of the most horrifying places she has ever been, that she thinks it is an absolute travesty that we have people living in that situation. She said we have lots and lots of things we don't attend to, they call it 'deferred maintenance' but after we 'de-fer' it, we never seem to 'fer' it, so we haven't fixed so many things that are wrong - and she feels like if we have extra money that's where we should use it. Sanfelippo said one of her follow-up items with Abbott's office was the retaining wall at the property at Clairmont and 30th, that it is a complicated issue and she would love to have an offline conversation later and get an update on it. Abbott said she didn't know that there was any update on the issue as the property owner built the retaining wall and even though it is 'on' city property, it isn't the city's

responsibility to fix what someone else built on city property. Abbott said there were similar issues all over the city. She said people have built on public land and while the city is responsible for removal if there is an issue but that's not really enforced either.

A resident asked Councilwoman Abbott 1) what residents do with their old trash cans and 2) right now Highland Park has Monday/Thursday trash pickup - and if Monday is a holiday, there is no pickup and it goes to Thursday. So in that situation, if Highland Park's 'day' is Monday, is there no trash pickup for two weeks? Abbott said she would share that with the Mayor's team, adding we may have to ask the Mayor to eliminate Monday as a day for pickup.

Sanfelippo thanked Councilwoman Abbott, saying she'd follow-up later on a few of these items.

OLD BUSINESS

Sanfelippo said unfortunately she had been unable to get an update on the Highland Park Neighborhood replacement sign near the Sirote Building and Freddy's. She said she had been able to confirm the insurance check had been received by the city and was in the right place to make it all happen.

Regarding the neighborhood's tree order that the neighborhood approved a few months ago - it is in the works, we are getting updated quotes from the vendor and hope to have that so we can plant in the January to February timeline. Sanfelippo said they were coordinating with the neighborhoods Beautification Committee regarding the right times to make all this happen.

Sanfelippo said we were still waiting on updates on park lights, mulch for the playground at Rushton Park - as well as replacement trash can liners.

Sanfelippo reported we were still waiting on unofficial neighborhood election results, that some neighborhood results had been contested. She said we, the neighborhood leadership,

really appreciated support from those who voted. Sanfelippo said unofficially she has been re-elected as President, Judy Jones has been unofficially elected as Vice President - and Kelly Marshall was unofficially elected by write-in as our Secretary. Sanfelippo said that according to city processes, we will need to wait until January when Judy and I are sworn in - and then at our February meeting someone can make a motion to nominate Kelly from the floor, we will take a vote and she will officially fill the one open leadership position. Sanfelippo thanked Mark Ritter for being Highland Park's Vice President. She thanked Judy Jones for doing an amazing job as secretary.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sanfelippo thanked Christine Wilson for putting the meeting announcement signs out. Sanfelippo asked residents as they come across other residents and neighbors, to encourage them to visit the neighborhood's website, highland-park.org, where they can find a lot of helpful information and sign up for neighborhood newsletter. Sanfelippo gave a thank you to Joe Watts for maintaining the neighborhood website.

Sanfelippo announced the Birmingham Historical Society has moved into the location to the other side of 'Snap Fitness' at Greenbriar at 29th and Highland - and they are having an Open House this Sunday, November 14, from 2-4 pm. BHS Director Marjorie White said BHS would love everyone to stop by, that they will have a 'History Hunt' which will take participants around the office to see various interesting artifacts. She said Barbara Shores and Jeff Drew, residents who grew up on Dynamite Hill, will be there signing BHS' latest book, 'Dynamite Hill'. She said other books will be available and on sale.

Sanfelippo said we have a couple of outstanding things we've allocated funds for - so with those taken out we have about \$42,900. She said we are still waiting for a quote to continue the sidewalk repairs.

Sanfelippo shared the next Large Trash and Brush pickup was on December 21.

Next Meeting

Sanfelippo said we would not meet in December. She said the next meeting will be 6 pm Tuesday January 10, 2023- and likely be in person at the Golf Course and online via Zoom.

Kelly Marshall moved to adjourn the meeting. John Somerset seconded. The November 2022 Highland Park Neighborhood Association meeting was adjourned at 7:10 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Judy Jones

Secretary, Highland Park Neighborhood Association