

Highland Park Neighborhood Association

April 2023 Minutes

Meeting Date: April 11, 2023

[Click here to watch a recording of the meeting.](#)

WELCOME AND OPENING

President Elizabeth Sanfelippo called the meeting to order at 6:08 pm. (The parking lot was full so we waited for more people to arrive.)

FIRST RESPONDER / FIRE DEPARTMENT UPDATE

Lt. Wilson from Fire Department Station #22 let us know that there were 309 calls in March for fire and ambulance services. They are currently hiring if anyone is interested. [Click here](#) by May 5 to apply for any openings. Wilson reminded us to check smoke detectors once a month and if you need their help installing one in your home, give them a call.

ROLL CALL

Elizabeth Sanfelippo called roll with the Zoom attendees and asked everyone in the room to sign in.

MARCH MINUTES

Judy Jones made a motion to accept the March minutes. Kathleen Rose Byington seconded. All voted in favor, none in opposition.

PRESENTATION FROM THE JEFFERSON COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Ms. Linda Nelson with the Jefferson County Historical Commission spoke to the Neighborhood about the Historical Marker program from the Commission. The markers are specific to properties / buildings. The idea is to honor the families who lived in the homes before. The Commission was first developed to help the development of Morris Avenue.

The criteria for national registry designation: at least 50 years old (which is the national registry criteria) and the home must be intact. The markers have no statutory authority and cannot make anyone do anything. The Commission is here to encourage the preservation of the neighborhoods. Homewood has the most historical markers. Linda discussed how a marker on a house is good for property value and is a sign of a well maintained and cared for home. The markers are \$125, which mostly covers the making of the markers. A lot of care has been taken to name the homes after families who over time had been in the home the longest, even if that means using all twenty family names.

You can apply for a marker for your home [by clicking here](#). Linda also shared a current marker example, but there are other examples as well, like if your home is post-WW2 (1945). The website shows the criteria and research needed to get a historical marker. She encourages you to check out the website ([here](#)) or by calling 205-592-6610 or email her at futurepast44@gmail.com.

Elizabeth asked for Linda's favorite historical place in Birmingham and she said Highland Park! A close second is Waverly Place over near Glen Iris. She loves the Independent Presbyterian Church as well.

Suzanne Baker, who lives up from the Greenbriar Altamont Retirement Home, asked how one would interface with the historic design review because she is having issues right next door. The house was bought by investors and is a 100 year old house.

Linda reminded us that the Historical Commission has no statutory authority. But she has learned that 60% of houses are now corporate-owned. Some places have outlawed the influx of corporate-owned housing - turned Airbnbs or other short term rentals. Linda encourages members of the neighborhood to lobby against this to the City. She thinks the City should do more about Preservation of History. Linda says to work through whatever channels we can to help preserve our historical buildings. Like other issues, we need to organize to help with some sort of ordinance to limit corporate takeover of private homes. She recognizes this is happening all over but hopes neighborhoods can organize. It has to be a grassroots effort. SANfelippo added that the city is working on an ordinance to address limiting short term rentals.

Elizabeth announced we are getting a new Community Resource Rep, Andre Watson, who will join one of our future meetings.

COUNCILWOMAN VALERIE ABBOTT UPDATE

A quiet City Council meeting today. Nothing of overwhelming importance, but she wanted to talk about the state of historic preservation in Birmingham, which is very sad. No one is really standing up for historic preservation anymore, like with Quinlan Castle. We don't have any entity that defends historic structures.

Councilwoman Abbott told us about how she moved to Highland Park when she graduated college because she loved the historic buildings. She hopes a new generation will care about preserving historic buildings because it's too late once the bulldozers show up.

She expressed her frustration at no historic protection group in Birmingham. With the influx of government money, we should be spending it on things that will last! We are paving streets and hopefully, sidewalks will be fixed soon. She mentioned the pains with walking on our current sidewalks, so hopes to see those repaired soon.

Suzanne Baker asked Councilwoman Abbott how to fight the destruction of historic properties.

Abbott said you have to have a group of people and come to a public meeting and say something. You have to get media attention, even though media is so scarce in Birmingham now. The squeaky wheel gets the grease. You have to have people and get some attention. There seems to be very little interest in preservation at City Hall, and that's disturbing. The way to get stuff done is to ban together with other people, come to City Hall, and say something. Speak against it! Get off Nextdoor and say something at City Hall.

Suzanne says a lot of us don't find out about this stuff until it's already approved!

Councilwoman Abbott says it is hard to read the City Council agenda online and it is hard to keep track of all the committee meetings, she understands. But speaking out is the way to have an impact. You have to get to the people who can do something.

Elizabeth told Councilwoman Abbott there continues to be concern about the new trash program due to our neighborhood. Abbott says the City is looking into it. She sympathizes with that and has brought it to their attention. The administration is aware that Five Points, Glen Iris, Highland Park, Redmont and Forest Park may not be the best place for the new trash cans and may remain with the traditional system.

Elizabeth mentioned starting a petition against the new trash cans and send to the Mayor and Department of Public Works. (This has been revised and put on hold as an update was received that DPW is assessing each area for feasibility of the automated truck program.)

OLD BUSINESS

Residents of Hanover Court met with HPNA Zoning Committee and some City reps along with the proposed new restaurant on Highland (George's) Transportation Consultant. The developer is looking into other potential parking solutions, Colin Alexander is looking into restriping to make 27th have parallel parking on both sides to increase the number of parking spots and lighting in the immediate area that was reported as too dim. Kim Speorl with the City will be sending information about a potential purchase of the right of way for residents of Hanover Court to then own those parking spots where they would then self-enforce parking for just people in Hanover Court.

Elizabeth saw on Nextdoor that several vacant houses have sold on **28th Place South**. Hopefully soon they will be cleaned and better maintained.

The abandoned **Sister Houses** private lawsuit is going to trial in September and Elizabeth will share information about that when it is announced.

The Monterey Apartments (corner of 33rd and Highland) - the owner said they are doing renovations and will repair the burned unit and work to improve via overall maintenance.

Neighborhood historic sign by the Sirote building has been replaced. We continue to work to get the old stumps ground down and covered in soil. Mulch will be arriving in the two playgrounds in Rushton Park soon. We will need volunteers to help get the mulch into the playgrounds.

Ray Davis: 27 trees have been planted. 55-60 in the last four years. All natives! Thank you to Ray!

Judy Jones reads an update from Laney about a new Native Plant Group Homegrown Habitat (Birmingham Native Plant Group) is an offshoot of Homegrown National Park, and will have a Highland Park specific group called Highland Park Goldenrods. You can join the group on Facebook [here](#), or sign up for emails [here](#). Rojo is changing all planters to native plants and there will be info cards on the plants. There will also be a free plant stand where people can share plants and seedlings with neighbors - native or non-native. There will also be a new little library outside Rojo featuring all environmental books. We are also working with Michelle Reynolds from Ruffner Mountain to plant all natives outside the laundromat on Highland. If you want help with a native plant garden at your house, let us know! Learn more by signing up [here](#).

Elizabeth requested permission for FIDO (Friends in Dog Ownership) to do their annual flagging and bagging campaign of putting flags near dog poop left along our sidewalks for a few weeks prior to Do Dah Day.

MOTION TO ALLOW FIDO FLAGGING AND BAGGING CAMPAIGN

Pat Byington moves to allow FIDO to do that. Marcy Morgenbesser seconds. All approved. 13 for, 0 no. Thank you to Suzanne Baker for heading up this effort! This will start the first week of May.

NEW BUSINESS

Adam: Any update on the pipe leaking on the sidewalk next to the townhomes to the right of the Sheraton on 29th and Highland? Elizabeth will re-report that.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Bulk Trash has been unpredictable. You can see the schedule [by clicking here](#).

Do Dah Day is Saturday, May 20

Neighborhood Cleanup Day - May 20 (picking up litter, etc.)

Botanical Gardens Plant Sale is April 13-15

Virginia Samford Theatre - Steel Magnolias is about to start, then Peter Pan

Every Saturday in April - Native Plant Sale at Ruffner

Folk Festival in Avondale - May 6 www.birminghamfolkfest.org

Jewish Food Festival - April 30 at the JCC

Earthbound Earthfest at Avondale - April 29

COUNCILWOMAN ABBOTT CONTINUED

Councilwoman Abbott forgot to mention that the short-term rental ordinance was supposed to be finished and presented by October 30. It got out of the legal department and Councilwoman Abbott sent an email to try to find out what happened with the ordinance. She recognizes other towns and cities around us have passed an ordinance and she wants to see ours since Birmingham has so many houses turned into hotels/Airbnbs around us. She will report back to us when she sees the ordinance.

Elizabeth thanked Dr. Lee (Abbott's assistant) for attending,

ADJOURNMENT

Ray Davis moved to adjourn. Marcy Morgenbesser seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 7:09 pm. (To clarify, since we include the standard agenda with adjournment, Robert's Rules of Order do not need a vote to adjourn.)

Minutes submitted by Kelly Marshall, Secretary, Highland Park Neighborhood Association