

# Highland Park Neighborhood Association

## January 2024 Minutes

Meeting Date: January 9, 2023

[Link to meeting recording](#)

**Online attendees:** Mary Helen and Ralph Crowe, Marjorie White, Philip Foster, Dian Weatherly, Martha Weber, Connie Urist, Kecia Lightner, Stephanie Byrne, Councilor Valerie Abbott, Darryl Lee

President Elizabeth Sanfelippo called the January 2024 meeting of the Highland Park Neighborhood Association to order at 6:00 pm. She welcomed everyone and introduced herself as President, Judy Jones as Vice President and Kelly Marshall as Secretary.

### **Roll Call**

Sanfelippo performed a roll call of online attendees as required by the City.

### **November Minutes**

Sanfelippo asked if there were any corrections or additions to the November meeting minutes (there was no December meeting). Stephen Smith moved to approve the minutes from the November 2023 meeting. Anne Sunkel seconded the motion. A vote was taken, no one was opposed, and the minutes were approved.

### **SPEAKER: Destiny Askew, Director of Volunteer Engagement with the STAIR program in Birmingham (Start the Adventure in Reading)**

Destiny Askew presented to us about STAIR in Birmingham. They are a program that is in 12 schools. They help students who are behind in their reading grade, and help provide volunteers to help children who are behind in their reading grades so they can achieve the reading level for the grade they are in by the time they are in third grade. By third grade is when you start to see how a child will be for the rest of their life in literacy levels. They are looking for volunteers who can commit to an hour a week to read with students. Volunteers are currently needed at Hayes, I3, Oliver, and Avondale Elementary School.

The programs are mostly after school, which is typically between 3 - 4:30 pm. Volunteers commit to one hour a week during those times. They are about to launch a during the day program at Avondale, if you have time between 9 - 10 am to volunteer. You don't have to have a background in education. STAIR has its own curriculum and games they will provide to all volunteers.

Judy Jones asked how Birmingham was doing literacy-wise? Destiny says the numbers on the "report card" for the state are better than last year, but we still could use some help. There aren't enough volunteers to help target all the kids who need help, but STAIR knows their program works.

Destiny says STAIR has trainings for any interested volunteers, and the training is only one hour, and can be done on Zoom. A community member asked if STAIR is a local or national organization. Destiny says there is another program in New Orleans and Chicago.

Visit [www.stairbirmingham.org/](http://www.stairbirmingham.org/) for more info or email Destiny at [destiny@stairbirmingham.org](mailto:destiny@stairbirmingham.org) or call 205-730-7799 ext. 0

### Update from Councilor Valerie Abbott

Abbott reported that it was a quiet day at City Hall. She said the Mayor said that they are getting to the point where those who are not following the new garbage cart system and rules will be “engaged” in other ways such as citations. There are some apartment dwelling owners where garbage is being stacked outside and piling up.

Anne Sunkel said there are some apartments or condo units on the corner of 28th Street and 11th Avenue that are not complying with the new program and they do not have a dumpster. They have been piling up garbage. Anne said she submitted a request on 311 and the garbage was picked up, but now it is piling up again. What should she, or any other neighborhood members do, if they see this? Does the City have access to the apartment management companies or the HOA? The apartment residents may not know about the new system.

Abbott says the City is dealing with the property owner of apartment and condo buildings. Abbott says to email photos and addresses to Abbott’s office to help get these “odd” situations figured out.

Kecia Lightner is having a similar issue. She’s in a four unit building and does not communicate with the other owners of the other units. A note was on her door about the new garbage cart system, but she knows that the other residents of her building did not get that same notice as the unit owners are not in town, not engaged, airbnb, etc. Trash has been piling up for a month. How will the City address that? She has been given conflicting information from different City departments, and feels frustrated.

Abbott asked for Kecia, and anyone else, to please document these instances, compose an email, with photos if possible, and submit them to Abbott’s office ([Valerie.abbtt@birminghamal.gov](mailto:Valerie.abbtt@birminghamal.gov) and [Darryl.lee@birminghamal.gov](mailto:Darryl.lee@birminghamal.gov)) , who will send them to the person in the Mayor’s office tasked with dealing with these unusual situations. She reminds us that all correspondence is going to the property owners of each property, no matter where they live. Those property owners may ignore these notices, so a note is also going on the door. Attempts are being made to communicate, but an email describing the issue with photos will help to address these unusual situations.

Kecia said she never received a letter about this program, as the property owner, so she knows other owners of other units haven’t either. She had to call the City multiple times just to get the garbage can, still never got a letter about it, the can appeared after a while, but the other three property owners do not have a can and have received no letter. There is trash everywhere.

Another community member is having similar issues and has noticed those experiencing homelessness have been digging through the trash as it sits out for weeks, too. Judy Jones says that she and Elizabeth have asked many times for how condo and apartment building owners have been communicated with, and the City has not provided any answers for that. Abbott says she was told that the City is using tax records from the county to find out the owners so they assume they are accurate.

Andrea Watson, our Community Resource Representative, and is the liaison between Highland Park and the Mayor’s office. He is hearing all of these issues and is asking everyone to email **HIM** all of these issues and he is personally going to compile all of them and he will get with Public Works to find a plan to resolve these issues. Since the program was launched, people are having issues and he is going to find out what he can do to solve these issues.

**SPECIAL NOTE: Please email descriptions, with photos, of all issues to Andrea Watson at [Willie.Watson@birminghamal.gov](mailto:Willie.Watson@birminghamal.gov). Photos help! Copy Elizabeth Sanfelippo at [esanelippo@gmail.com](mailto:esanelippo@gmail.com).**

A discussion happened about trash and debris under the 280 overpass, as well as graffiti. Anne Sunkel will send that information to Andrea too.

**A reminder of ways to report issues:**

- Dial 311 or 205-254-2489
- Use the new My Bham 311 app ([Scan this QR code with your phone to download](#))
- Visit [www.birminghamal.gov/311](http://www.birminghamal.gov/311) and click on the box that says, "311 Request." When submitting a complaint online or via the app, be sure that you have a registered account. If you do not know how to create an account, there are details below on how to do that.

The City is closed on Martin Luther King Day, no trash pick up. We will have trash pick up on Tuesday instead. Recycling pick up will now be on January 24. Elizabeth hopes that in the future we will be given more notice of when garbage pick ups and recycling pick ups are postponed / rescheduled.

Kelly Marshall asked if there are any updates on potential Airbnb regulations in Birmingham? Abbott says the attorney who has been working on it did not think they would be disallowed, but they are working on regulations. Other cities have been sued for disallowing them after allowing them, so the City attorneys are doing their due diligence.

Mary Helen Crowe asked about the drainage project in Caldwell Park. Abbott says they are currently in the design phase. Sanfelippo asked Abbott if we could get periodic updates about this project. Abbott said she will continue trying to get answers.

Mary Helen asked about the community parking stickers project for permitted parking. Abbott said for everyone concerned about it, please write to the Mayor. Abbott has asked about it a lot, but has not been given answers. She encourages everyone to write to the Mayor about this. It is on the Council's Committee Agenda for tomorrow and she is going to ask again, and is going to ask for support from the Council. Even if this issue doesn't impact a neighborhood now, it can hit their neighborhood next.

Stephanie Byrne brought up the towing of cars in the City. Abbott says that when someone parks on private parking, illegally, they have the right to have you towed. Abbott recognizes that predatory towing is a huge problem in Birmingham. Abbott reminded everyone that the City is not making any money whatsoever from the towing. The private towing companies are the ones making the money.

**UPDATES**

Andrea updated us that our allocation of \$2,000 to the Avondale After School program was approved and will be distributed soon and he is working on the request for the pedestrian crossing signs.

Anne Sunkel asked for an update on George's Restaurant. Sanfelippo said the local historic advisory committee met with George's to see their final design, and George's was granted approval. They will now be requesting permits and will begin construction.

The Native Plants are about to go in the designated medians! There will be a volunteer day in March or April (depending on weather) for us to help plant these new native plants and Rojo will offer a nacho bar for all

volunteers. It will be on a Saturday from 7 am - 11:30ish am. We will send a form to sign up to volunteer soon, so stay tuned to emails.

Judy Jones provided an exciting update: the neighborhood 501c3 (non-profit organization Friends of Highland Park) raised \$10,000 in 2023 to complete some great projects! If you have any ideas for projects, let the Friends of Highland Park know. Sanfelippo said she thinks a lot of the neighborhood would love to see new sidewalks. If anyone knows a good company that we could contact about quotes for fixing some of our sidewalks, please let her know.

Update on the Little Villa (2931 Highland Avenue): the owners want to tear it down and build a 6 unit 3 story apartment building. The zoning is strange and allows that as it is R7. We are trying hard to get them to not demolish that historic home for many reasons. There will be a city Design Review Committee (DRC) meeting on January 24 at 7:30 am in Room 215 at City Hall where the committee will hear the case and vote. (UPDATE: this meeting was postponed). Sanfelippo encourages you to [sign the petition](#) and keep sharing it. More than 1700 people have signed the petition so far.

Large trash and Brush pick up is on January 16.

A community member asked for an update on the "Sister Houses" and Sanfelippo reported that she has run out of ideas and will reach out to Darryl Lee and Valerie Abbott about what she can possibly do next.

Mary Helen asked what can be done about people allowing their dogs in the children's playground area. Judy says when that issue has come up before, she has called the police, because it is posted to not allow dogs.

Next meeting is February 13 at 6 pm. The meeting was adjourned at 7:02 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Kelly Marshall  
Secretary, Highland Park Neighborhood Association