

Highland Park Neighborhood Association

May 2024 Minutes

Meeting Date: May 14, 2024

Meeting Location: Highland Park Golf Course, on the second floor

[Link to meeting recording](#)

President Elizabeth Sanfelippo called the May 2024 meeting of the Highland Park Neighborhood Association to order at 6 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.

APRIL MINUTES

Sanfelippo asked if there were any corrections or additions to the April meeting minutes. Stephen Smith moved to approve the minutes from the April 2024 meeting. Judy Jones seconded the motion. A vote was taken, no one was opposed, and the minutes were approved.

SPEAKER: Toni Dennis with CityWalk Birmingham

CityWalk Birmingham is a 10-city-block outdoor public space under the I-20/59 interstate, owned by ALDOT. The BJCC is the exclusive manager of the space. This hybrid space is rentable for birthday parties and festivals, but is also open to the community 7 days a week. You can see a map [here](#) and a calendar of events [here](#).

It starts at 15th Street North and goes to 25th Street North. The parallel avenue is 9th Avenue North, running the entire length of CityWalk. They are a part of the Red Rock Trails System. When designing the space, the creators wanted to have things that other parks in Birmingham don't already have such as: pickleball courts, an all-turf field with a sand bottom for exercise classes or soccer games, performance circles, Civil Rights Plaza art installation with interactive learning opportunities, food truck plaza, outdoor roller rink, turf mound, climbing wall, the 5th largest skate park in the country, labyrinth, outdoor classrooms and more!

Right in front of Legacy Arena is the open plaza event space that can be anything you want. So far, they have hosted: Holi Fest, Birmingham Restaurant Week, Fan fests, etc. The welcome center is also here and is staffed 9-5 every day. There's also an amphitheater in this area. There is also an area with picnic tables, bistro tables, ping pong tables, cornhole, chess boards/tables and a bar called CityWalk Social! There are also two dog parks: one for large dogs and one for small dogs. The dog park has a \$95 annual membership, and all dogs must be spayed and neutered. Finally, there is a state-of-the-art, ultra-accessible playground area, with soft landings. There is also a retention pond that collects all the rain runoff from the interstate!

CityWalk is funded by ALDOT for five years. After that, they will need to fund themselves. They

get no support from the City of Birmingham or the County. Learn more at <https://citywalkbham.com/>

ZONING CASE FOR 2801 10TH AVENUE SOUTH from Morris Newman

This conversation concerns the variance request for 2801 10th Avenue South. Mr. Newman is the Highland Park Zoning Committee Chair, and is speaking on behalf of the Zoning Committee. The Committee recommends a motion to approve the Zoning Variance to allow a 6 ft front yard setback instead of the required 28.9 ft established setback in an R3 zoning for this property. To hear Mr. Newman's full committee report, [please click here](#) and start at the 14-minute mark or [read it here](#).

A motion was made to approve the Zoning Variance request with the recommended definition in the Committee's recommendation to allow a six-foot front yard setback instead of the required 28.9 foot established setback.

15 voted in favor (10 in person and 5 online) and 1 abstained.

Judy Jones gave a special shout-out to the committee and Morris Newman for their hard work in getting to this outcome.

NATIVE PLANTS UPDATE

Laney DeJong, co-owner of Rojo, provided an update from Homegrown Habitat - Highland Park. With the great help of the City and more than 50 volunteers from the neighborhood and beyond, they planted native plants in three of the medians along Highland Avenue! There are many benefits to planting native plants you can read about [here](#). Some of the plants they planted in the median area: eastern columbine, blue wild indigo, coreopsis, bee balm/wild bergamot, yellow coneflower, black-eyed susans. Seeds include butterfly weed, switchgrass and sea oats.

The City will water the plants as needed, but one of the benefits to using these plants is they don't require as much water as non-natives. They are also drought-resistant and flood-resistant!

Special thanks to all the volunteers who came out to help! There are plans to continue in the next three medians in front of IPC this fall and Laney will be meeting with the City to continue planting native plants in Highland Park and other neighborhoods in the City.

UPDATES

- The parking ordinance that wanted to do away with parking minimums passed. New developments under a certain square footage don't require parking anymore.
- No updates on the Sister Houses but we are continuing to press the City and waiting on a court date for the private lawsuit
- Shout out to Joe Watts! We had issues with the Highland Park Neighborhood website, but he was able to fix it quickly! [Click here to see the website](#)

Kecia Lightener's recycling bin was taken, along with her recycling and she wondered if anyone else

had that happen to them and/or if the City is bringing new bins. Sanfelippo has not heard of any updates to the recycling bins.

UPDATES FROM DARRYL LEE

Dr. Darryl Lee, who works for Councilor Abbott, reported that the city's network disruption has caused a delay in reconciling the FY24 budget, but they are working on it. There will be a town hall meeting about a budget hearing and he will send the information to us to share. The budget for FY24 ends June 30. Another update from the City Council meeting is that Coca-Cola is staying in Birmingham and constructing a new building on the Tallapoosa exit.

The police department is trying a new initiative to train people in the neighborhoods to be eyes and ears for the police. Lee will send us information about that when it is ready. The City is short police officers and monetary incentives like a \$200 bonus have not worked, so they are trying this strategy.

Sanfelippo asked for an update on the flooding plan for Caldwell Park and Episcopal Place and Virginia Theatre. We were told construction would start in April, but it has not yet. Lee reported that there were changes to the plan and now there is a piece of land the City has to get permission from to dig on, and they are waiting for that approval before they can get bids for repair work. Lee will let us know when the work goes out for bid and then construction can begin.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Do Dah Day is this Saturday.
- FIDO will be picking up flags this weekend. This campaign is targeted to raise awareness of those who leave their dog's poop and don't scoop it. Someone stole some of the flags. If you accidentally picked them up, or know who did, please return them to Elizabeth.
- People's Budget Birmingham hearing at Five Points West library this Saturday from 11 am - 2:30 pm
- The City is closed for Memorial Day on May 27

NEW BUSINESS

- Morris Newman has an idea! We all know one of the worst things that happened to our neighborhood was when Do Dah Day left us and he wonders if we can think about a new weird event for Highland Park, like maybe a fall event or a Halloween event or something fun and maybe it can help raise money for the neighborhood!

Kelly Marshall reminded everyone of the great Halloween event that happened a few years ago. Laney DeJong wondered if we could bring back the dog parade part of Do Dah Day on Halloween and the dogs could be dressed up! Sanfelippo said she would connect Newman and Jasmine A (great event planner) to talk about ideas.

Helen Rivas with [Alabama ACT](#) is working to get funding for public transportation,

depending on a neighborhood's needs (buses or ride shares).

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 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.

Next meeting is June 11 at 6 pm at the Highland Park Golf Course - BACK UPSTAIRS on the second floor! Our speaker will be Toni Dennis with City Walk. The meeting was adjourned at 7:14 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kelly Marshall
Secretary, Highland Park Neighborhood Association