

Highland Park Neighborhood Association

February Minutes

Meeting Date: February 11, 2025

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

[Link to meeting recording](#)

President Elizabeth Sanfelippo called the February 2025 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. Online attendees were: Connie Urist, Matt Joiner, Jim Carnes, Annette Rodgers, Erin Kellen.

BIRMINGHAM FIRE AND RESCUE REPRESENTATIVE

We received a report from the Birmingham Fire and Rescue Service. Community Emergency Response Team is about to have its Spring Course April 1 - May 7 from 6-8 pm pm Tuesdays at Station 2. The course helps train citizen volunteers how to respond in a disaster, like a tornado.

[Click here](#) to read more about the program.

JANUARY 2025 MINUTES

Sanfelippo asked if there were any corrections or additions to the January 2025 meeting minutes. Philip Foster moved to approve the minutes from the January 2025 meeting. Judy Jones seconded the motion. A vote was taken, no one was opposed, and the minutes were approved.

FUNDING FOR AVONDALE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Liz Wilson, mother of two students at Avondale Elementary School, and Highland Park resident, thanked the Highland Park neighbors for voting to approve \$2,000 for the afterschool program at Avondale Elementary in 2024. The funds helped 110 students in the aftercare program. The students made a flier to thank the HPNA.

Sanfelippo said the Spending Committee had some questions concerning the funding when it was first presented to them. The January meeting featured David Seale, principal of Avondale Elementary, to address those concerns.

Theresa Johanson moved to approve donating \$2,000 to Avondale Elementary. Judy Jones seconded. The motion was approved with 18 voting in favor, none opposed, none abstained.

SPEAKER: JUDY JONES, LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF GREATER BIRMINGHAM

Judy Jones shared the latest from the League of Women Voters of Greater Birmingham. She will be President of the LWVGB next year. The League is a nonpartisan organization, focusing on issue

instead of party. One example of their bipartisan work is their support of [HB 89, the Presumptive Medicaid Eligibility Act](#).

[The Alabama Channel](#) is an incredible project of the LWV that encourages transparency in government. Volunteers film and/or record live streams of all Alabama legislative meetings, including committee meetings. The free website is easily searchable. For instance, if you want to see every meeting that mentions “agriculture”, or “rivers” or “water”, you can search by the keyword to see every time it was mentioned in any meeting at the State House. You can view / read transcriptions of all meetings as well, and you can jump directly to a mention in a recording. This is an incredible resource for all to use! You can also watch the meetings on The Alabama Channel on [YouTube here](#).

The League also works on voter’s right restoration and education. They also help get people to the polls! Judy reminded everyone that our votes do count. In the last general election, there were 30,000,000 people who did not vote. The League is helping to get people to the polls. [Read more about the LWVGB here](#). Consider joining!

UPDATE FROM COUNCILOR VALERIE ABBOTT

Abbott strongly encouraged everyone to attend the upcoming Southern Rezoning meeting in person, if at all possible. The City is not allowing anyone on the WebEx to talk or vote. Abbott encourages everyone to vote how they truly feel because this will be the ONLY chance to vote on this important rezoning. She reminds us that once you get to the meeting, there will be no changes allowed.

Short-term rentals: Once again, Planning, Engineering and Permits (PEP) and the City’s legal department did not have the changes they have been supposed to make to the ordinance. So the Council has still not been able to vote on it, or discuss it.

A resident asked if anyone will be monitoring the short term rental’s descriptions for accuracy, such as: one near her says it can hold 15 people, but can it? Councilor Abbott reminded us that if the Council passes legislation, it’s then up to the City Administration to enforce the legislation.

Councilor Abbott maintains that she wants to keep the short-term rentals out of residential neighborhoods.

Judy Jones asked why there has been an increase in mailers and postage. Councilor Abbott said the municipal election is coming up on August 26, so you will probably receive more and more mailers from candidates.

Morris Newman asked about the upcoming zoning meeting. He asked if everyone votes yes, does it then go to Zoning Advisory Committee (ZAC) and then Council? And then, if the majority votes no, are they required to go back and work more on it?

Councilor Abbott says the Planning and Zoning Committee is a subcommittee of the Council. First,

the proposal will come to that committee, and then will go to ZAC for their advice, before coming before the full Council. At that point, it will be a public hearing and the Council will decide whether to take the ZAC advice, or their own decision.

If the majority votes NO, the PEP should go back and try to make the changes we asked for. Newman asked if they have to do that or can they move it forward with a no vote? Councilor Abbott said that hasn't happened before, so we don't know for sure what will happen. Councilor Abbott reminded us that the end game for this planned rezoning is increased density and less parking.

Sanfelippo asked if Councilor Abbott received any information about the \$1.8 million bid for the HVAC unit at the Highland Golf Course. Councilor Abbott said that she did learn that everything had to be replaced so it is a very big job.

UPDATE FROM POLICE DEPARTMENT

Officer Wood asked if anyone had concerns to pass on the police department? There were none!

Sanfelippo did receive some updated statistics for crimes in Highland Park in 2024, and up until today (February 11, 2025)

Crime	2024	So far 2025 (February 11)
Assault	4	0
Auto Theft	31	0
Burglary	15	3
Robbery	3	0
Theft	43	2
Unauthorized Breaking and Entering of a Vehicle - no theft	10	0
Unauthorized Breaking and Entering of a Vehicle - with theft	31	5

Burglary = illegally entering a building with intent to commit a crime, such as theft
Theft = taking something that doesn't belong to you without force or illegal entry
Robbery = taking something with force or the threat of force

UPCOMING REZONING MEETING on MARCH 3

Sanfelippo shared the current rezoning map (it has since changed again) and has asked for any additional questions, comments, etc. Sanfelippo reminded everyone they can email her at any

time with questions as well, after you have a chance to look at the new map.

The Zoning Committee has moved to submit this resolution to send to the PEP:

Be it resolved, the Highland Park Neighborhood Association supports the viewpoints below set out by the Zoning Committee:

1. Designating large sections of Highland Avenue - and its environs - as MUM is inappropriate.
2. "Mixed use" does not comport with the history of Highland Avenue. "Mixed use" is described in the code as "...often with a "Main Street" spine that historically served as a town center...". This is not what Highland Avenue east of the Expressway is - or ever was.
3. The solution is historically accurate and absolutely vital to preserve the character of this locally, and nationally, recognized neighborhood.
4. Any structure that was ever residential must have D zoning. If it was ever a single family residence, it must be designated as D3, regardless of its current use.
5. Non-compliant, but otherwise lawful, current uses of any structure may continue in accordance with the code.
6. This is critical to preserve the homes that created the historic nature of the neighborhood.

Discussion ensued about the proposed resolution. Newman reminded everyone of the comments the Zoning Committee has sent to the PEP several times before over the past six or so months, such as: keeping the zoning of the Sister Houses as single-family. Newman is suggesting we adopt this resolution in case none of the Zoning Committee's suggestions are met before the March 3 meeting.

A resident asked how we stop people from tearing down historic homes. Newman reminded us that is why we are fighting this proposed zoning. Newman said our Zoning Committee wants to preserve the historic quality of the homes. Currently, Highland Park is already the densest neighborhood in the City, and maybe the state. We are already fully built out, and there is no way to build more without tearing down and destroying the character of the neighborhood, which Newman believes is facilitating all the heavy construction and density boom all around us. We are economically anchoring the rest of the development of the density of the city, and we don't want to lose the uniqueness and character of the neighborhood to add even more density.

Newman reminded everyone how we were able to come together as a neighborhood to save the Little Villa too.

A resident asked if Redmont, Crestwood, and other Southern Area Framework neighborhoods are opposed to the changes. Sanfelippo said that she has been in communication with the other neighborhoods, but that Highland Park has the most proposed changes, and the most to lose.

More discussion about the resolution and why the Committee is recommending it. See highland-park.org/preservehp for more information.

A resident asked if proxy votes are allowed on March 3. They are not allowed, which is why we are considering this resolution so that our neighborhood has that voice if no one from the neighborhood can attend the night of the vote.

A resident who is an economic developer asked about the cost / benefit of the zoning. Newman says there has not been an official economic cost analysis, but anecdotally, real estate prices in our neighborhood keep rising. Newman described the history of the neighborhood and the zoning processes from the late 70s to today as a refresher on zoning mistakes from the past, and how we can correct them now. Judy Jones described the lengthy and in-depth process the neighborhood had to go through to save the Little Villa, and to not assume that can happen to save any or every historic property. The fact that our neighborhood has a national historic district and several local ones does not grant much protection currently.

Newman says to stay tuned to all communication from the neighborhood for meeting information, most current maps and comments about the proposed zoning, etc.

Sanfelippo held the vote: 16 voted in favor (13 in person, 3 online); 0 voted no, 1 abstained.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- February 22 - Homegrown Habitat weeding in the medians from 9 am - 11 am. Meet at Rojo. We will also do some neighborhood cleanup and nandina removal. Bring your muscles and a pick axe, and help us remove the invasive nandina!
- Saturday at Rojo at 11 am - talk on ephemeral Alabama wildflowers
- February 22 - Gumbo Gala at Cahaba Brewing benefitting Episcopal Place
- Due to the March 3 Zoning meeting, we will not have a March Highland Park Neighborhood Association meeting.
- New upgrades coming for the playground in Rushton Park! Stay tuned. If you see anything that needs addressing, as always, let Elizabeth know!
- Councilor Abbott reminds us that she has a fund at Parks and Rec for our neighborhood and to consider reaching out to them for some park upgrades.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:24 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kelly Marshall
Secretary, Highland Park Neighborhood Association