

**MINUTES
HIGHLANDS COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION (HCA)**

**Fall 2022 Meeting
Delaware Art Museum
October 19, 2022 @ 700PM**

Denison Hatch, President; John Gavenonis, VP; Mike Drake (outgoing), John Novaczyk (incoming), Treasurer; Margaret Sears Lindley, Secretary; Lindsey DiSabatino, Youth Activities VP; Allison Cassidy, Food Drive Chair (excused), Adrienne Casale, VP Real Estate & Zoning; (open) 8th District Neighborhood Planning Council.

AGENDA

Denison Hatch, HCA President welcomed everyone to the meeting. **Senator Chris Coons** was present, so Denison announced changes to the order of the published agenda so that the Senator, a fellow Highlands resident, could address the group first.

Senator Chris Coons

Senator Coons told the HCA that a Senator's primary responsibility is to help Delawareans with specific concerns that involve the federal government. Senator Coons invited residents to note the telephone number of his constituent services office in Wilmington: (302) 573-6345. The four-person office is available to help with a wide range of constituent issues., which include passport and visa assistance, VA benefits, federal grant funding and service academy nominations, among others. Krista Brady is the Senior Director of Constituent Services.

Mayor Mike Purzycki

Mayor Purzycki had intended to brief the HCA on Gibraltar, but he said he didn't have enough of new information to warrant a discussion. He hopes to return soon to the HCA with a substantive update

The Mayor addressed following:

- **City Finances:** the city has averaged \$353M in building permits in three years, putting the city on track to issue more than a \$1 billion in new permits in four years. One thousand new apartment units are opening in

the city, and we are seeing new hotels and restaurants, such as The Quoin Hotel with its rooftop lounge and 155-seat restaurant.

- Crime: Violent crime rate is lower this year. The Wilmington police are doing a great job. Crime spiked during covid when our courts were closed and offender were released.
- HBCU WEEK 2022 took place recently. HBCU encourages high-school age youth to enroll in college and offers scholarships and follow-up contact to sustain a pipeline for employment. This year, 7,000 kids gathered at the field house to apply to about thirty schools. Many were granted college admittance on the spot with the backing of \$30M in scholarships.
- South Wilmington Wetlands Park – Southbridge. On October 18, the Mayor and Senator Coons attended the official dedication of the wetlands park, a project that took 16 years to complete at a cost of \$26M. It is both a recreational resource and a 20-acre stormwater management facility that will keep the Southbridge area from flooding.

Upcoming Highlands events - Lindsey Disabatino

The fourth annual Highlands Halloween parade will take place on October 30 from 2 pm – 4 pm at the Delaware Art Museum. A maximum capacity, three hundred and fifty (350) children, have registered to participate this year. Volunteers are welcome to come and support the parade, by cheering on the kids and helping with candy distribution.

On Sunday, November 27, 2022, at 10 am, the Highlands High 5K run/walk will take place at Rockford Park. The Highlands 5K is partnering with the Friends of the Wilmington Parks. All race proceeds will go towards a new concert stage for the Rockford Park Concert series and renovated bathrooms. To register, go to <https://www.runsighup.com>. Early registration is \$29 for adults/\$19 for Ages 5-21. Price increases after November 26, 2022.

Police & Safety Report- Lieutenant Bozeman

Lieutenant Bozeman of the Wilmington Police Department presented an update on safety in the Highlands (19th Police District). Overall, crime statistic looks good. YTD: 83 crimes this year/down 25% (109). Crimes included a single felony, a burglary. Minor crime (shoplifting, stealing plants) was down 4% this year. Auto theft occasionally occurs because an owner left keys in a car, or left an unattended car running.

Theft of catalytic converters, a problem that spiked last Spring, is down. Most area scrap yards have been warned not to buy converters; the absence of resale opportunities has contributed to the decline in thefts

The police deploy a 4-person unit to covers traffic enforcement in the Highlands.

Report by Wilmington Parks Superintendent Alana Delaney

A project to redirect traffic flow in Rockford Park has been underway since 2020. The two-year study looked at the best way to address a public safety issue along Park Drive/Tower Drive created by vehicular traffic and an increasing number of pedestrians who are using and enjoying the park for recreation. Presently, there are no marked paths for pedestrians, no defined trails and little signage. Vehicles enter and exit the park at Red Oak Road and Riverview Avenue. Many dog owners who bring their pets to the dog park undertake U-turns by the dog park and exit into heavy vehicular and pedestrian traffic on Red Oak. The proposed new plan hopes to balance public safety and preservation of the public nature of the park.

Alana introduced Kelly Williams, Commissioner of Public Works, who explained the City's role in Rockford Park. The City owns the park and contracts with DNREC to run the park. She stated that it's the best park in the city---the most well-run, and the cleanest. Park Drive and Tower Drive are City roads. The City is the final decision maker regarding the park.

To gather traffic data, the city did a traffic study in June 2022. Over five days (June 9-16), 10,850K cars passed through the intersection of Park Drive/Red Oak and Riverview June 9-16. Of the 10,850 cars that passed through, 30% committed enforceable violations, i.e., they could have received a ticket. (57 MPH was highest speed through the intersection where the posted speed limit is 25 MPH). That is considered a high enforcement rating. Add to the mix, it is an intersection where dogs and owners, bicyclists, children, and walkers are crossing into the park

Based on the study along, Commissioner Williams said that the stop sign at the Red Oak/Riverview is warranted. So, the stop sign will be coming.

Lieutenant Kurt Wagner, Wilmington Park Police Patrol Supervisor provided additional information regarding police patrols in Rockford Park. Between Oct 2017 and Oct 2020, fifty-five (55) incidents were reported in Rockford Park. (10 incidents per year), including vehicle accidents involving personal injury, property

damage and hit and run. Incidents have increased in the past two years because of increased usage. Police have observed park visitors making U-turns, spinning wheels, turfing and there have been several DUIs. These reports don't account for the countless public contacts that the officers have had i.e., verbal warnings and counseling session, reminding park users to be careful with their vehicle operation and speed. The Park police believe that it will be beneficial to public safety of all park visitors to have clearly defined traffic patterns in the park, and are supportive of the new Rockford traffic flow plan.

For a map of the Rockford Traffic Flow Proposal see the following link:
<https://destateparks.com/wilmington>

Some highlights from the Q&A:

- With the new flow, park users must enter the park at Riverview Avenue and exit at Tower Road.
- With the exit near Tower Hill, there will be more traffic along 19th street, but the traffic study determined that approximately 236 additional cars would exit on 19th street during lunch and dinner time, as well as after school hours.
- 19th Street will still be an entrance and exit.
- New signs and an education effort will be launched to help people understand the new flow.
- The City has discussed the plan with Tower Hill School. Officials there don't have a problem with the proposed changes
- Question about speed on one-way street: will speed increase? Answer: one area will have parking so speed will be slowed. Park will repost speed signs at 15 MPH.
- The park is dual patrolled by Wilmington City police and park police. There will be an education effort to help people understand the new flow. It's a safety concern, not a monetary motive to issue tickets.
- Speed bumps? Wouldn't a speed bump reduce the speed. Commissioner Williams answered: we don't do speed bumps in the City of Wilmington. It's either bumps or snow removal. Though, the Commissioner later said that if speed proves to be a concern, an additional speed bump in the park might be something the City would consider as snow removal is a less pressing concern in the park.

Treasurer's report - Mike Drake (In Absentia)

Please see the Treasurer's report which is posted with the minutes. The HCA current balance on hand is \$33,451.23. John Novaczyk was formally nominated and approved as the new HCA Treasurer.

HCA Food Drive - Alison Cassidy (In Absentia)

The 16th bi-annual HCA Food Drive will take place November 17-20, 2022. The need for food donations is as pressing as ever. Over 94,000 Delawareans are food insecure, of which 31000 are children. Food donations and monetary donations (checks) are welcome. Donations can be placed on the porch at 1420 Hamilton Street. If anyone would like/or needs their donations to be picked up, please email Allison at acassidy21@gmail.com. Checks can be made out to The Food Bank of Delaware and placed in the mailbox at 1420 Hamilton Street or call Allison (302) 545-7865 and let her know you are dropping off a check.

Report from City Councilperson Nathan Field

Councilperson Field told the group that his primary goal is to keep everyone informed about what is going on in the 8th District. To that end, he publishes a bimonthly newsletter (to sign up go to [https:// https:// https://www.nathanfield2020.com/](https://https://www.nathanfield2020.com/)).

Field highlighted the following:

- 1) Streetlights. The quickest way to get them fixed is to click on DELMARVA's homepage to report a street light outage. <https://www.delmarva.com/Pages/default.aspx>
- 2) 311 System call center Public Works. 95% of municipal issues can be reported online. Call either #311 or 302-576-3878 Report the issue and usually the issue is solved within 48 hours. Remember to get a case number so that you can keep track of action on your request.

Work is progressing on a new trail from the Brandywine: Swinging Bridge to the Greenway trail. For more details see the September 19 post on the Friends of Wilmington Parks Facebook page.

Report from At Large Councilperson James Spadola

Councilperson Spadola urged anyone who is interested in running for the open At Large Councilperson position to send in a resumé to <https://www.wilmingtoncitycouncil.com>. By city charter there are supposed to be four At-Large Councilpersons. With Loretta Walsh's resignation, one position is open.

The No 1 issue Councilperson Spadola deals with is parking ticket issues. The mayor has announced much needed parking reforms, which include parking reforms which include reduced street cleaning, and restricting permit zones with consent of the neighborhood. For a full analysis of the parking reforms, see Spadola's website where you also can participate in a guest permit parking survey is interested in feedback on guest permit parking: to participate, go to his website <https://www.jamesspadola.com>.

Report from Delaware Senator Sarah McBride (5 Min)

Senator McBride thanked the HCA Board for its service, noting that it is a volunteer group. She also thanked State Representative Bud Freel for stepping in to fulfill a special election term. He has been fantastic to work with.

State funds have gone into the community: the new trail connecting the Swinging Bridge to the Greenway, funds for the Delaware Art Museum to create a canopy on the back terrace, as well as better art storage; improved lighting infrastructure on Foster and Field Road, and the rebuilding of the Bancroft Mills walking bridge. An update about the bridge will take place 27th Oct 6 pm. Further, efforts are underway to bring a sense of place to Trolley Square. The Delaware General Assembly was productive: successful bills included improvements in education e.g., higher-need schools' investment/early literacy/reading instruction, mental health: especially post -covid, K-12; bill creating new pathways for mental health physicians, and paid family leave legislation.

Introduction to Future State Representative

The two candidates for State Representative from District 12 briefly introduced themselves to the HCA. Following this year's redistricting, most of the 4th district was incorporated into the 12th District. Democrat Krista Griffith is the 12th District incumbent representative. Republican Ben Gregg is her opponent.

Report on stop sign at Brinckle & 18th Street – HCA Resident, Jerred Phillips

Jarred Phillips, who lives near 18th Street and Brinckle explained why he has asked the City to place two stop signs at the 2600 block of Delaware Avenue and Brinckle. It is a dangerous, unpredictable intersection and many homeowners on the block are concerned for the safety of their children and pets.

Commissioner Williams announced that she has approved the request and the stop signs will go up once the City Council formally approves her action. (This allows the community to submit comment and give support). Meanwhile, the Commissioner has asked the Division of Public Works to put up safety barrels to help control traffic at Halloween.

With no further business, the HCA meeting was adjourned.

