Highlands Community Association Spring 2025 Meeting Minutes

Date: May 7, 2025
Location: Delaware Art Museum
Time: 7 pm
Present: Denison Hatch, President; John Nowaczyk, Treasurer; Adrienne Casale, Real Estate Representative; Lindsay Abrahams, Secretary

1. Opening Remarks

Denison opened the Spring 2025 HCA meeting at 7:08 pm and welcomed attendees.

2. Treasurer's Report

Presented by: John Nowaczyk
- October balance: $85,357
- Restricted funds: $64,487 for Brandywine River pipe removal project (now expended)
- Current balance: $18,869
- Expenditures since October:
  - Halloween event: $136 (Lindsey DiSabatino organized; received $1,500 cash and $500 in-kind donations; event cost ~$2,200, HCA subsidized the difference of $136)
  - Donation to art museum event, Art of the Cocktail: $500
  - Administrative costs: ~$1,366
- Future consideration: voluntary dues collection due to gradual fund depletion

3. Friends of Wilmington Parks

Presented by: Joe Scharf, President
- Supports 5 state parks: Rockford, Brandywine, Alapocas Run, Kentmere Parkway, H. Fletcher Brown
- Upcoming Events:
  - Rockford Rising, concert & fundraiser in Rockford Park: June 5
  - Live in the Parks, Free Summer Concert series on Monday nights in Rockford Park: June 16 – mid-August
  - Brandywine Park Farmers Market in partnership with the Spread Good Karma Foundation: Saturdays & some Sundays through October
  - Disco Inferno, Disc Golf Tournament: July 19
  - Opera Delaware Pop-up at the Sugar Bowl: August 1
- Volunteering Opportunities: Rose Garden on Wednesdays & Saturdays in season, Native Habitat Restoration in Brandywine Park on Thursdays & Saturdays in season, special events as needed, and other skills (social media, marketing, finance, grant writing, etc)

- Additional needs: Board member recruitment, donations, sponsorship and partnering opportunities

4. HCA Spring Food Drive

Denison provided handouts Allison Cassidy prepared.
- Bi-Annual Food Drive: May 29 - June 1
-Place all items on Front Porch at 14 20 Hamilton Street
-Checks may be made out to Food Bank of Delaware
-Please contact Allison at acassidy21@gmail.com or 302-545-7865 with any questions or if pick up is needed

5. Wilmington Police Department Report

Presented by: Captain Arthur Gliem
- 11% city-wide crime reduction YoY
- Highlands, part of District 19: Down 58% over 28 days
- Issues: Auto theft, retail theft (especially CVS)
- Initiatives include plainclothes details and partnering with establishments for off-duty officers
- Additional traffic enforcement upon request, in particular for speeding and stop signs
- Partners in Care program highlighted for mental health and substance support

Note: Captain Gliem provided an email follow-up after the meeting with the information below. This information was also shared via email with the HCA distribution list on May 9, 2025:

-WPD's Traffic Unit will conduct a traffic study in the Highlands after the Flower Market
- Homeless encampment (located at the former Wawa): Partners in Care team is working with individuals and clean-up is being planned

5. Delaware Art Museum Update

Presented by: Executive Director Molly Giordano
-Focus: Re-engaging schools, family programs
- Events: Happy Hours returning on May 22 - September, Classic films on Saturdays in the auditorium, Family Second Sundays (with extras able to be provided after recent Art of the Cocktail fundraiser event)
- Mother's Day Tea
- Community feedback number introduced 302-551-3155

6. State Legislative Updates

Speakers: Rep. Krista Griffith & Sen. Dan Cruce
- Rep Griffith spoke about budget review process, noted concerns regarding federal cuts and supporting nonprofits
- Sen. Cruce noted advocacy for ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed), specifically in reference to housing & childcare support efforts as well as funding cliffs

7. City Council Updates

Speaker: Nathan Field, 8Th District Council Member
- Recently resolved retail marijuana zoning, limited to specific areas of city
- Existing zoning regulations for short-term rentals will be more strictly enforced
- Stapler Park Playground renovation coming

*Bancroft Bridge Update was presented by Shawn Heacock prior to the remaining City Council Updates

Speaker: James Spadola, Council Member At-Large
-Red Clay School District School Board Election: May 13
-Tax reassessment tools shared: unofficial is NCC Tax Estimator or official is New Castle County Parcel Search – please note if your assessment is high, you are encouraged to appeal next year (deadline to appeal this year has passed)
-Contact city via 311 or email City Council members regarding concerns, including street paving

Speaker: Latisha Bracy, Council Member At-Large
- Homeless Task Force is working to identify solutions for homeless individuals and communities, as well as affordable housing options
-Office of Education Advocacy is investigating ways to provide services such as after school programs with Parks and Recreation and wraparound services
-Family Fun Nights: "Play Streets" program coming back, one in every district on Tuesday evenings this summer, 8th District will be on August 19th at Stapler Park

Speaker: Maria Cabrera, Council Member At-Large
- Focused on neighborhood stabilization as Chair of Community Development and Urban Planning Committee, also noting land bank success and upcoming contentious debate regarding rent stabilization proposal
- Downtown Farmers Market and Urban Artist Exchange Summer Concert Series – both on Wednesdays in summer (both have started for the season)
- Legacy Home Project is launching to recognize and give emotional closure for legacy families in hopes to release vacant properties
- Redding Consortium Town Hall: inviting input from community, in person 5/12/25 and virtual on 5/19/25

8. Bancroft Bridge Update

Presented by: Shawn Heacock, Chief of Construction, Delaware State Parks

*Presented after Council Member Nathan Field
- Bancroft Bridge will be assembled and lifted into place soon, expected to be completed by end of May

- Public Opening of the bridge is anticipated in July
- Delayed due to drilling anchor points and additional equipment required
- Pipe removal is mostly completed with only a few remaining pieces that will be removed when river access is allowed

9. Adjournment

Meeting concluded with thanks to all participants at 8:31 pm.

Submitted by Lindsay Kegelman Abrahams