Highlands Neighborhood Association Fall 2025 Meeting Minutes
October 1, 2025
Delaware Art Museum

Present: Denison Hatch, Pres; John Gavenonis, VP; Lindsey DiSabatino, Neighborhood Events; Jarred Phillips, Joseph E. Johnson School Representative; Allison Cassidy, Food & Clothing Drive Coordinator; Jackie Filak, Communications; Lindsay Abrahams, Secretary

1. Call to Order
The meeting was called to order by Denison Hatch at 7:03 pm. Minor adjustments to the order of topics were noted.

2. Treasurer's Report
John Nowaczyk, HCA Treasurer, was unable to attend and Denison provided a summary. Account balance: ~$18,500, down $335 since May. Projected balance after pending checks: $17,872. Expenses included website maintenance and Constant Contact services. Income included a $500 contribution from City Council Member Spadola to support future community events. A full written report will be attached to the minutes.

3. Fall Events Update – Lindsey DiSabatino
The 7th Annual Highlands Halloween Parade is scheduled on Sunday, October 26, at 2:00 p.m. at the Delaware Art Museum. Participation continues to grow, with approximately 300 attendees and 150+ children. Activities include music, dancing, candy distribution, and costume judging. Volunteers are needed for candy donations, parade help, and setup support. Registration is required in advance with a voluntary $10 donation. Event is 100% locally funded.

Wilmington Flower Market Volunteer Drive – Lindsey, also Secretary of the Flower Market Committee, encouraged participation to sustain this century-old, all-volunteer fundraiser benefiting children's charities. Time commitment: about 1 hour per month plus participation during the event. Details will be shared via neighborhood email.

4. Food Drive Update – Allison Cassidy
The Semiannual Food Bank of Delaware Drive begins October 2, 2025. Donations accepted via drop-off at Allison's home, Venmo (@Allison-Cassidy-6), or arrange for home pick-up. Residents are encouraged to donate canned goods, boxed items, or monetary contributions. Thank you to the community members who have already donated.

5. Infrastructure & Park Updates – Sean Hancock
Rockford Bridge Project: The bridge is open and usable, with only minor punch-list work remaining. Remaining items include installation of a pre-cast ramp and steps, expected within two weeks. Structural and safety inspections confirm the pavilion and bridge girders are secure. Approximately 20 public parking spaces will be available in the future and

parking map to be distributed when available. Additional signage will clarify public vs. private parking areas. Park access remains sunrise to sunset.

New Castle County Sewer Lining Project: Ongoing through the Alapocas area; estimated duration 6–10 months. Temporary bridge structure is needed for heavy equipment. Residents may contact the County for project details.

Acknowledgements & Future Plans: Sean was thanked for managing the project and keeping the community informed. Adel Construction and its site team were commended for professionalism and responsiveness. A time-lapse video of the bridge construction will be released online. A grand opening ceremony will be scheduled once final work is complete.

6. Neighborhood Foxes – John Gavenonis

John Gavenonis discussed increased fox activity in the neighborhood, noting mixed concerns among residents. John introduced Patrick Thompson, DNREC representative.

Patrick provided insights from Delaware Fish and Wildlife, though noting he does not have specific expertise in this subject. He advised residents to secure trash, avoid feeding foxes, and humanely attempt to shoo them away. He also suggested a follow-up session with a wildlife biologist.

Comments included noting foxes help control rodent populations and presence of deer, too. Consensus was to monitor activity and invite expert(s) to a future meeting on the topic.

3. Johnson Elementary School Update – Jarred Phillips

Jarred noted that Dr. Booker, new principal of Johnson Elementary, brings extensive experience to the school. The school faces challenges: one in five students is experiencing homelessness, and four in five live below the poverty line. Community involvement opportunities include mentorship, the Adopt-a-Family program, and playground fundraising ($250,000 goal; $60,000 raised).

Chantel Vanderhost, Family Intervention Specialist at Johnson Elementary School, was in attendance and expressed enthusiasm for building stronger ties between the school and community.

4. Police and Public Safety Update – Captain Arthur Gliem

Captain Gliem, Wilmington Police Department, reported that Part I crimes are down 13% year-to-date. He emphasized community policing and the role of community engagement officers, including Jennifer Harmon in attendance.

He also discussed efforts to address homelessness through partnerships with local organizations, noting residents are encouraged to contact Partners in Care or non-emergency line if support is needed. Captain Gliem outlined actions taken to curb disturbances in Trolley Square with additional police presence, too.

5. Friends of Wilmington Parks – Jamieson Thomas

Jamieson presented details for the upcoming 'Art in the Park' event featuring local artists and live music at Blue Ball Barn on October 10, 2025, 5-8pm. Proceeds from art sales will benefit park improvement projects.

6. State Senator Daniel Cruce

Senator Cruce provided updates on property tax reassessments, relief measures, and the creation of a legislative committee to address reassessment process concerns. He cited issues with Tyler Technologies' data handling and transparency. Additional meetings are expected before the general assembly resumes in January. [Link included below for additional information regarding property reassessment meetings.]

7. City Council Member At-Large James Spadola

Council Member James Spadola provided updates from City Council. He noted excitement for the bridge that is now open and the sidewalk across from the zoo will reopen by late October. He advised residents to contact the Council if they have concerns about pending resolutions.

He also provided an update on a medical marijuana retailer who attempted to convert a medical permit into a full retail operation. The City issued a cease and desist order for misrepresentation, and the appeal was withdrawn, though legal action may be forthcoming.

Councilmember Spadola shared his ongoing efforts to combat litter in city parks.

Additional discussion included updates on land adjacent to Gibraltar, the abandoned building at 2nd and Union, safety concerns about a deteriorating stairwell.

8. Adjournment

The meeting concluded at 8:13 pm.

Attachments & Additional Information Provided:
- Treasurer's report

- State Committee for Property Reassessment meeting notices and information to view livestream of meetings or submit public comment may be located here [additional navigation on the Delaware General Assembly pages for new meetings may be required]

Prepared by Lindsay Kegelman Abrahams