Highlands Neighborhood Association Spring 2026 Meeting Minutes

May 20, 2026

Delaware Art Museum

Present: Denison Hatch, Pres; John Gavenonis (Excused), VP; Lindsey DiSabatino, Neighborhood Events; Jarred Phillips, Joseph E. Johnson School Representative; Allison Cassidy, Food & Clothing Drive Coordinator; Lindsay Abrahams, Secretary; John Nowaczyk, Treasurer; Jackie Filak, Communications; Adrienne Casale, Real Estate

1. Call to Order: Denison Hatch

The meeting was called to order by Denison Hatch at 7:03 pm and began with a memorial statement read in honor of former Mayor Michael Purzycki.

The Highlands Community and the City of Wilmington has lost a true public servant when former Mayor Michael Purzycki, a longtime Highlands resident, died at the age of 80 years old. Mike, as he was affectionally known to everyone, served as an attorney for the Delaware State Senate, a New Castle County Councilperson for a decade, executive director of the Riverfront Development Council, and most recently as Wilmington's mayor for eight years. Mike attended and voiced his opinions at several Highlands Community meetings. He will be missed and a commendation of his service is included in our minutes.

2. Financial Report: John Nowaczyk

- Current bank balance: $17,444 (down from $18,534 in October)
- Recent expenses: $1,090 total
    - $892 website maintenance, email, Constant Contact
    - $200 art museum rental fees (including fox presentation)
- Pending checks: $395 (tax and compliance, museum rental, new signs)
- Net available funds: $17,049 after pending expenses

3. Upcoming Food Drive: Allison Cassidy

- Food Drive: May 28-31, weekend after Memorial Day, demand is high right now
    - Drop-off: 1420 Hamilton Street or Venmo/check in mailbox
    - High-need items: diapers, individual/smaller size laundry detergent

    - No expired items accepted

4. Community Events: Lindsey DiSabatino

- Art of the Cocktail took place on April 17 at Delaware Art Museum
    - Raised $160,000 through mainly small donations ($500-$1,000 range) with 90% of committee Highlands neighbors
    - Funds support children's programming, including free monthly family events
- Wilmington Flower Market had 3 days of sunshine
    - All proceeds go to local Delaware charities
    - Ongoing need for day-of volunteers
- Halloween parade (fall) - Art Museum leading, need volunteers
- Spring egg hunt (2027) – also needs volunteers

5. Delaware Art Museum Updates: Heather Morrissey

- Current exhibition: Citizen Artist through July 19
- The People's Gallery: August 7 – September 6
- Fall: Transcendent Landscapes of the Hudson River School
- Community Programming: Happy hours start tomorrow, family Sundays expanding, Korean Festival, Hip Hop Festival, live music brunches

6. Friends of Wilmington Parks: Leslie Hubbard

- Sip and Smell fundraiser: June 3rd, 5:30-7:30pm at Jasper Crane Rose Garden
    - Tickets available now on Friends of Wilmington Parks website
- Summer Concert Series at Rockford Park start June 15th
    - Every Monday 6:30-8pm through August (9 dates plus rain date)
- Family fun night at Rockford Park in mid-August
- New playground coming to Happy Valley (south side Brandywine Park)

7. Johnson Elementary School: Jarred Phillips

- December Adopt a Family program results:
    - 118 volunteers (55% from Highlands)

    - Adopted 51 families (156 kids total), including 25 families currently unhoused

- Special thanks to Zip Code Wilmington for their donation of a laptop to student interested in coding

8. Proposed Rezoning in Neighboring Community: Mike Nowaczyk and Randall Attix

- Developer proposing new construction of 9 story building and rezoning from C1 (max height 47') to C2 (max height 180')
- Community response: 100+ people at recent meeting, multiple neighborhood associations formally objecting
- Process for Rezoning: Planning Department → City Planning Commission → City Council (needs 7-10 votes depending on recommendation)
- Website: protectbancroftparkway.org

9. Wilmington Police Department: Sgt Scott Banks and S/Cpl Jennifer Harmon

- Report for 19th District over Last 28 Days: Part 1 crimes: 8 total vs 6 last year
    - 0 murders, 0 rapes
    - 1 robbery (vs 0 last year), 4 aggravated assaults (vs 3), 3 burglaries (vs 2), 0 auto thefts (vs 1)
- Misdemeanor thefts decreased from 9 to 5, attributed in part to public awareness efforts encouraging residents to lock vehicles and remove valuables.
- Trolley Square area enforcement increased after Cinco de Mayo incident
    - Logan House agreed to eliminate weekend DJ parties
    - Summer deployment adds officers June-August
    - Working with ACME on parking lot issues

10. State Senator Daniel Cruce

- Current legislative focus areas include: Healthcare reform, School funding and education reform, and Utility costs and delivery charges
- Other areas of legislation include:
    - "Blue Envelope Program" legislation supporting individuals with non-visual challenges during traffic stops

        - Additional information regarding the Blue Envelope Program: https://www.delawareonline.com/story/opinion/2026/04/01/delaware-autistic-residents-safety-opinion/89337201007/
    - Education Support Professionals bipartisan legislation supporting education support professionals (ESPs), including custodians, cafeteria workers, bus drivers, and paraprofessionals
    - Election Protection Legislation intended to strengthen Delaware election protections and reduce vulnerabilities in election administration systems has also received bipartisan support

11. State Representative Krista Griffith

- Budget Update: Lawmakers are currently in detailed budget review sessions
- Early Childhood Education: proposals to expand early education funding and create a dedicated long-term education investment fund
    - Exploring options to support universal pre-K initiatives
- Artificial Intelligence and Data Privacy legislation proposed to strengthening Delaware's data privacy protections
    - Proposed guardrails would regulate algorithmic decision-making affecting Delaware residents
    - The legislation aims to prevent AI systems from making legally significant decisions without oversight and Representative Griffith emphasized concerns about discrimination against individuals with disabilities.
- Foster Care and Childcare Support: Representative Griffith introduced legislation to help foster families obtain immediate childcare and early education support when children are placed in their homes.

12. Wilmington City Council Member 8th District Nathan Field

- Trolley Square concerns regarding shoplifting, open container violations, marijuana use, and public disorder
    - Residents are encouraged to: Contact the Attorney General's office and advocate for stronger enforcement of quality-of-life offenses
- Dining on Delaware – First Friday of the Month now through October
- Council Member Field answered questions regarding the previously discussed Bancroft Parkway rezoning (does not support rezoning), potholes (call 311), and

Gibraltar (on-going plans including one possibility of marketing as single family home)

13. Wilmington City Council Member At-Large James Spadola

- 311 System: Budget has been allocated to modernize the city's 311 system and improvements are expected within six months.
- Park Clean-up: The city will again fund overtime staffing for park trash cleanup during summer months.
- A new mural project is planned near Concord Avenue and Broom Street, with community input helping shape the design.
- Reminder for the annual Memorial Day Parade: May 30th at 6:00 pm

14. Wilmington City Council Member At-Large Latisha Bracy

- Youth Advisory Council: composed of students from across Wilmington and focuses on recreation, mental health, community programming, education support
    - Students will present recommendations to City Council and the Mayor.
- "Buy Back the Block" initiative introduced: A community investment redevelopment initiative modeled after projects in Baltimore
    - Goals include: Revitalizing commercial corridors, allowing residents to become investment partners, and giving communities greater influence over commercial development
    - The Adams Four Shopping Center was identified as a possible pilot location.
- Community Block Parties are returning this summer in each district throughout the city featuring games, food, and family activities
    - The 8th District event is scheduled for August 18 at Stapler Park and a citywide community block party on August 25 at Rodney Square

15. Closing Remarks: Denison Hatch

- Meeting adjourned at 8:47 pm