



General Virginia-Highland Civic Association Board Meeting Meeting Minutes

February 10, 2024 - 7:00 - 9:00 PM

Grace Lutheran Church
1155 N Highland Avenue NE
Atlanta, GA 30306

Zoom Meeting
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89794061574>

VHCA Directors: Alex B. Jones (President), Melissa Clark (Vice President), Karri Hobson-Pape (Secretary), Miguel Barrios (Treasurer), Johnson Bazzel, Kevin Cronin, Amy Harward (Absent with Notice), Kenneth Herring - virtual, Karen Isenberg Jones (Absent with Notice), Mary Frances Jones, Tim Langan

Community Members In Attendance:
Approximately 14 (6 in person, 8 online)

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm by Alex B. Jones. A Quorum was established. All board members in attendance, except for Amy Harward and Karen Isenberg Jones, who provided prior notice.

Jones read the following prologue to begin the meeting:

Welcome, everyone, to the Virginia-Highland Civic Association meeting. As we gather here, we'd like to first express our gratitude to each of you for joining. This association has proudly served our neighborhood for over 50 years, powered entirely by dedicated volunteers who give their time and energy to help shape a stronger, more vibrant community. Together, we work on initiatives that support our parks, guide thoughtful planning, and bring neighbors together in meaningful ways.

We know that Virginia-Highland is home to a diverse group of voices, and with that comes a wide range of perspectives. While we may not always agree, we hope that everyone feels comfortable to share their thoughts in a way that is both respectful and neighborly. Disagreement is ok. Disrespect will not be tolerated. Let's continue to build on our legacy by focusing on what connects us and working together for the future of our community. Thank you for being here and for being part of this ongoing work.

Approval of Agenda

Motion #1:
(Jones/Clark) Motion to approve the agenda.
Motion Passed 9 in favor/ 0 opposed.



Miguel Barrios	<i>Approved</i>	Karri Hobson-Pape	<i>Approved</i>
Johnson Bazzel	<i>Approved</i>	Alex Jones	<i>Approved</i>
Melissa Clark	<i>Approved</i>	Karen Isenberg Jones	
Kevin Cronin	<i>Approved</i>	Mary Frances Jones	<i>Approved</i>
Amy Harward		Tim Langan	<i>Approved</i>
Kenneth Herring	<i>Approved</i>		

Approval of Consent Agenda

Motion #2:

(A B Jones / Cronin) Motion to approve the consent agenda, including

- Approval of Minutes
 - Minutes - January 13, 2025 Board Meeting 2025
 - Minutes - January 13, 2025 - February 10, 2025 Electronic Minutes
- Planning - Residential Variances (see Appendix)
 - V-25-006 750 Drewery
 - Applicant seeks a variance from the zoning ordinance to 1) reduce the front yard from the required 35-feet to 25-feet, 2) reduce the East side yard from the required 7-feet to 2-feet 6-inches, and 3) reduce the required front porch from the required minimum of 8-feet deep to 5-feet deep.
 - Conditioned on a site plan received by dated 1-21-25
 - V-25-014 936 N Highland Ave
 - (1) To reduce the half-depth yard from 17.5ft to 6.8ft.
 - (2) To reduce the rear yard setback from 15ft to 8ft
 - (3) To reduce south side yard setback from 7ft to 3ft.
 - Conditioned on a site plan received by dated 1-23-25

Motion Passed 9 in favor/ 0 opposed.

Miguel Barrios	<i>Approved</i>	Karri Hobson-Pape	<i>Approved</i>
Johnson Bazzel	<i>Approved</i>	Alex Jones	<i>Approved</i>
Melissa Clark	<i>Approved</i>	Karen Isenberg Jones	
Kevin Cronin	<i>Approved</i>	Mary Frances Jones	<i>Approved</i>
Amy Harward		Tim Langan	<i>Approved</i>
Kenneth Herring	<i>Approved</i>		



Guest and Elected Officials

Atlanta Police Department - Lieutenant Carroll (Zone 6) shared that in last 30 days period the following:

- Crime Dec 10 - Jan 10: 14 thefts from autos, 2 burglaries, 2 auto thefts
- Crime Jan 10 - Feb 10: 14 thefts from autos, 3 burglaries, 1 auto thefts - coming down
- Homeless male in Poncey Highland area and unable to locate him
- APD removed encampment on Paris on Ponce; Parks & Rec came out and cleaned the area.
- Officer Stafford has been recently transferred to Zone 6 and he is helping to handle Quality of Life issues.
- Thank you from Jones to Zone 6 team.

Governance Discussion regarding Fundraising Initiative for John Howell Park

- Hobson-Pape shared that in January 2025 VHCA meeting, Jeff Woodward, nonprofit attorney and VH neighbor presented to the VHCA board to recommend a legal structure/governance for the renovation of John Howell Park.
- Hobson-Pape provided background on structure of current neighborhood VHCA/VHCL entities
 - Virginia-Highland Civic Association (VHCA) is a 501c4
 - Established in 1972
 - Permitted to engage in lobbying to achieve its social welfare purpose
 - Cannot directly or indirectly participate in any political campaigns on behalf or in opposition to a candidate
 - Cannot receive tax-exempt charitable \$
 - Virginia-Highland Conservation League is a 501c3
 - Established in 2009 to support fundraising for North Highland Park purchase.
 - Most common for nonprofits
 - Must fit into a tax exempt purpose as defined by the IRS
 - Lobbying, propaganda or other legislative activity must be kept insubstantial
- Mary France Jones recapped the discussion with Jeff Woodward why creating a "Friends of John Howell Park LLC" as a wholly owned subsidiary of VHCL is a strong option to move forward to raise approximately \$1.7M for John Howell Park.
 - Tax-Exempt Fundraising – FoJHP can raise funds in its own name as a subsidiary of VHCL, as a 501(c)3, allowing donors to take charitable deductions
 - Grant Eligibility – Nonprofit grants and private foundations require funds go to a 501(c)(3)
 - Public Funding Alignment – "Friends of" groups are standard for Park Pride & City funding
 - Urgency for Pending Funding – Park Pride: \$100 and Move Atlanta Forward: \$300K
 - Ensures Donor Confidence – Simplifies donor messaging and acknowledgments, financial tracking. Funds go directly to FoJHP.
 - Administrative Efficiency & Lower Costs – Lowers overhead, shared resources with VHCL, no separate IRS filing, etc
 - Liability Protection – Shields VHCL while ensuring funds support permissible uses
- Mary Frances Jones shared the way the structure work work
 - FoJHP LLC is a VHCL Subsidiary, with VHCL as the sole member
 - The LLC would pick up the tax-exempt status of its parent, VHCL



- The LLC would be able to raise money in its own name
- FoJHP would create a board of managers, and VHCL would have rights
- Execute a "Fiscal Sponsor Agreement" between VHCL and FoJHP
- VHCL maintains 501(c)(3) compliance (audits, filings, etc.)
- FoJHP can share expenses with VHCL (insurance, business license, etc.)
- FoJHP to cover associated costs to create LLC (separate from bylaws)
- Mary Frances Jones shared that the VHCL voted in the fall to approve FoJHP LLC as a single member LLC subsidiary and authorize up to \$1500 in expenditures to set up the organization and bylaws. This scope does not include alignment of VHCA/CL bylaws, which may have add'l cost.
- Mark Nevitt asked if this could be utilized as a model for other parks, including North Highland Park. Hobson-Pape indicated that this model could be used for all parks or capital projects, starting with JHP.

Motion #3:

(Hobson-Pape / Alex Jones) Motion to support the creation of the Friends of John Howell Park LLC as a wholly owned subsidiary of Virginia-Highland Conservation League.

Motion Passed 9 in favor/ 0 opposed.

Miguel Barrios	<i>Approved</i>	Karri Hobson-Pape	<i>Approved</i>
Johnson Bazzel	<i>Approved</i>	Alex Jones	<i>Approved</i>
Melissa Clark	<i>Approved</i>	Karen Isenberg Jones	
Kevin Cronin	<i>Approved</i>	Mary Frances Jones	<i>Approved</i>
Amy Harward		Tim Langan	<i>Approved</i>
Kenneth Herring	<i>Approved</i>		

Bylaw Improvements for Virginia-Highland Conservation League (VHCL) and VHCA

- Hobson-Pape shared that in January 2025 VHCA meeting, Jeff Woodward, nonprofit attorney and VH neighbor shared opportunities to improve bylaws between the VHCA and VHCL.

Motion #4:

(Hobson-Pape / Alex Jones) Motion to move forward to work with Jeff Woodward to improve VHCA and VHCL bylaws and spend a maximum of \$5K and share costs with VHCL.

Motion Passed 9 in favor/ 0 opposed.



Miguel Barrios	<i>Approved</i>	Karri Hobson-Pape	<i>Approved</i>
Johnson Bazzel	<i>Approved</i>	Alex Jones	<i>Approved</i>
Melissa Clark	<i>Approved</i>	Karen Isenberg Jones	
Kevin Cronin	<i>Approved</i>	Mary Frances Jones	<i>Approved</i>
Amy Harward		Tim Langan	<i>Approved</i>
Kenneth Herring	<i>Approved</i>		

Officer and Committee Updates

Budget Committee

- Miguel Barrios invited Mark Nevitt and Peter McCloud, Broker for Haven Insurance, to provide a solution for challenges in North Highland Park.
- VHCA current broker is Jay Spearman at Cameron and Roberts; current insurance company is Great American.
 - Current VHCA policies renews March 16th and May 1st.
 - Current broker urges VHCA to seek competitive bids
- Mark Nevitt, neighbor in Atkins Park, shared the bureaucratic process to have an event in North Highland Park. (eg, a birthday party with 10 people to Hanukkah Lighting with 100+ people). Process includes:
 - Request Event
 - Individual Insurer has to have own insurance (self or business insurance) and add VHCA to policy
 - Local agent sends to insurance company in Michigan
 - Cumbersome for Miguel Barrios and Mark Nevitt to use the park.
- Peter McCloud, Broker for Haven Insurance.
 - Used to live in VH and currently lives in Cabbagetown; currently insures the Virginia-Highland District Association.
 - Explained that events have become more litigious, very reactive nature and insurance market has gotten harder and anticipates that this will be the case for the next 2-3 years.
 - United States Liability Insurance. Endorsement that we can add to the policy that will cover all events.
 - Two policies in place: (1) For Park and (2) For Organization
 - Suggested that there may be overlapping coverage and need to review VHCL coverage.
 - Recommended adding an endorsement to our current policy. Hobson-Pape asked for a quote. McCloud could not provide a quote because he is not the current broker.
 - Endorsement is “Specific Activities Events or Conditions” and will list out the exclusions (e.g. camping).
- Miguel Barrios shared that Ed Westreicher has joined the Budget Committee and brings great experience
- Barrios shared that we need to still review the 2025 Budget.

Planning Committee

- Kevin Cronin shared that the NPU is reviewing the new Tree Protection Ordinance(TPO). Focus will be on recompense. Encouraged board members and neighbors to stay informed.



- Zoning 2.0. Module 3 complete; Follow up for Q&A on March 17th at City.
- Working on NPU revised policy statements. One pertains to St. Charles/Greenwood.
 - Tim Langon discussed the efforts for neighbors on St. Charles/Greenwood. Indicated that city legislation was not changing those streets specifically but it is city-wide RG regulation.
 - Cronin indicated that there may be an opportunity to have variation by neighborhood or by NPU.
 - Miguel Barrios emphasized that the City leaders indicated that our regulation would not change but we need to keep pushing to ensure this.
 - Cronin encouraged all to attend NPU on February 19th to review the NPU policy statements.

Parks Committee

- Paul Burks, Atkins Parks neighbor and VHCL board member, with Vanessa Burks and Mark Nevitt.
 - Request from Atkins Park Neighborhood Association to rename North Highland Park to be called “Dr. Eliza Atkins Gleason Library Park.”
 - 1928-1988 a city library was located on North Highland Park
 - Discovered an interesting connection with Dr. Eliza Atkins Gleason. Became first AA to get PhD in Library Science.
 - 1940s came to Atlanta - Dean of Library Service at Atlanta University.
 - Fall 2024: Atkins Park Neighborhood is rededicating name to Dr. Eliza Atkins Gleason.
 - December 2024: Then approached the National Park Service to change the name of the neighborhood into a historic district.
 - Dr. Gleason had one daughter (lives in Germany now) and Atkins Park Neighborhood Association made her aware of the rededication of the neighborhood name and she supported it..
 - Burks shared that for a short period of time it was called New Highland Park before being called North Highland Park.
 - Hobson-Pape brought up the benefit of the name North Highland and the connection for the park for the entire VH community versus just Atkins Park section of VH.
 - Kenneth Herring brought up the fact that it is a great honor any time a park is named after a person and, as a member of AA community, it is an honor to celebrate black success. Herring shared some concerns that she has no direct connection to that library or Virginia-Highland. Burks shared that she was at Atlanta University / in Atlanta for just a few years.
 - Johnson Bazzel shared he understood why the neighborhood rededicated themselves yet wanted clarity why we need to rename the park.
 - Alex B. Jones emphasized that, if we are renaming the park, we would need to get broad neighborhood input because there are so many people / names to honor.
 - Tim Langon shared that Atlanta Public Schools has decided to move forward with naming based on location, not after individuals.
 - Herring asked about negative history associated with Atkins name (Confederate Colonel) and asked if renaming our park with the name Atkins name would draw connection to the old/negative name. He emphasized he could see people feeling like it is a reach if it is named after someone that was not active in our community and had no connection to VH and never impacted VH.
 - Cronin recommends that we talk to the communications team.
 - Langon emphasized that at minimum we would need a full process to engage the whole neighborhood.
- Update on John Howell Park / Orme Park / North Highland Park



- Miguel Barrios shared that VHD is interested in extending the VHD-specific safety patrol to commercial node near Atkins Park (not Virginia-Highland Safety Patrol). Need commercial neighbors to contribute. We would want NHP to be included because whatever is moved off NH may move to NHP.
 - Mark Nevitt encouraged VHCA to think seriously about being included for NHP.
 - Barrios will discuss further with VHD / Katie to discuss the partnership/funding.
 - Virginia-Highland Safety Patrol does not patrol NHP.
 - Neighbors do not want to serve as the security patrol.
 - VHD/Katie shared that it is actively happening now - between 2 vendors. Leaning toward nights and weekends. Estimate \$150-200/month for JHP.
 - APNA (Atkins Park Neighborhood Association) has a \$100 voluntary dues currently. Nevitt shared that there could be some synergies to partner with VHCA.
- Safety & Transportation:
 - Tactical Urbanism Proposal Update. Update regarding cycle-track. City sent 20-25 comments related to the design with questions related to intersections/stripping (e.g. Will there be an educational program at VHE?). Getting close to approval.
- Communications Committee
 - REquest for VHCA website refresh and need each Committee to audit pages to look for outdated information, missing information, or broken links.
 - Request to Share email with committee members for The Voice. (See the Appendix)
 - Link to submission form:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1c0h2XTmb3ebSPuw_VqzIRaVEmwqwQR76OSmuFVt44mY/viwwform?edit_requested=true
 - Focus on volunteer of the month. Request for VHCA directors to submit a volunteer of the month.
- Elections Committee - no updates
- Fundraising Committee:
 - Summerfest Update (Kenneth)
 - Kick off meeting for chairs, co-chairs, volunteers (11+ attended) and got very positive feedback.
 - Friday Night Plans - Alex B Jones shared conversations with Tom Murphy. Murphys will find the sponsor, and have ticketed wine tasting event. Will have an outside component where you don't need to get tickets. Will get a band. Main stage will go right in front of Murphys. We may be able to transition to other restaurants in the future.
 - Strategy is to "activate the village." Main stage will go right in front of Murphys. Curb to curb and back up to North Highland, facing down Virginia. Taco Mac area will be "back stage." Will not block off North Highland. Barnett will be "food truck alley."
 - Planning to announce very soon (Thursday, February 13, 2025)
 - File with City early March for permit
 - Kevin Cronin encouraged full board to share recommendations for sponsorship, esp \$10K+
 - Tour of Homes Update (Melissa)
 - Hobson-Pape recommended a cash flow analysis. Barrios would reach out to Ed to gain his assistance.



- Friends of VAHI (Karen, Karri)
 - Hobson-Pape and Karen Jones will discuss transition. Encouraged neighbors to all donate \$100-\$500.
- Films in VAHI (Karri, Mary Frances)
 - The film contributions have stalled. Hobson-Pape shared that today received first film email since October 2024.
- Merchandise (Miguel, Karri)
 - We made \$150 from the last month.
- Concepts:
 - Tomato Fest / Long Table Concept (Alex)
 - Tour of Gardens Concept (Miguel)
 - VAHI Yard Sale - April 26th (Alex, Miguel, Karri, Amy)
 - Neighborhood-wide activity. In order to have your yard highlights on the map, join VHCA at \$50 level or more.
 - FS #19 Electric Truck Unveiling - Parade (Karri) - no update yet.
- Old Business - none
- New Business
 - Upcoming Town Hall Schedule & Agenda - Tentative: April 22, 2025 7pm
 - Annual Meeting - Tentative: Sept 8th, 7pm

Adjournment

Meeting ended at 9:14 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:
Karri Hobson-Pape