General Virginia-Highland Civic Association Board Meeting
Meeting Minutes
October 19, 2026 - 7:00 - 9:00 PM
Grace Lutheran Church **Zoom Meeting**
1155 N Highland Avenue NE **https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89794061574**
Atlanta, GA 30306
VHCA Directors: Miguel Barrios, Kady DeWees (President), David Glustrom, Hannah (Secretary), Amy Harward, Tim Langan (Vice President), Ben McKenzie (Treasurer), Kyle Mehl, Jaron Ness, Heena Patel, Adam Struletz

Community Members In Attendance: [Approximately 45 in person and online]

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:08 pm by Kady DeWees, VHCA President 2026-2027. A Quorum was established. All board members in attendance except Miguel Barrios (on vacation). This was the first meeting of the 2026-2027 board; members introduced themselves (four returning members and seven new members).

Tim Langan read the following prologue to begin the meeting:

Welcome, everyone, to the Virginia-Highland Civic Association Monthly Board Meeting. My name is Tim Langan, Vice President. This association has proudly served our neighborhood for over 50 years, powered entirely by dedicated volunteers who strengthen our neighborhood through community engagement, thoughtful planning, and support for our parks, schools, and public spaces. Virginia-Highland benefits from a diversity of voices and perspectives. We encourage open, respectful dialogue, and a shared commitment to what makes Virginia-Highland special. Thank you for being here and helping shape our community's future.

Approval of Agenda

The board proceeded with the 10/19 agenda as posted; no changes were made.

Brief Neighbor Updates

- No updates given that weren't already slated within the agenda.

Consent Agenda

Motion #1:

(DeWees) Motion to approve the minutes of the September 2026 board meeting.

Motion Passed by voice vote (no count recorded).

Approval of prior month financial reports was postponed to the November meeting to allow the new board time to review them. Treasurer Ben McKenzie noted the reports are well organized (prepared by Mary Frances Jones and Rob Glancy), with

net operating income just shy of $60,000 against $65,000 budgeted, the gap primarily sponsorship-related (Tour of Homes), and an excellent cash position.

Guests and Elected Officials

- Atlanta Police Department - Lt. Genson, Zone 6 APD (online): Crime update for NPU-F, September 19 - October 19 vs. the prior month. Total reported offenses decreased from 174 to 156 (-10%). Part 1 offenses decreased from 75 to 53 (-29%). Theft from vehicles decreased from 27 to 21 (-22%); motor vehicle theft from 13 to 7 (-46%); burglaries from 11 to 2. The prior spike in car break-ins is attributed in part to arrests of four defendants (approximately 32 entering-auto warrants) following incidents around the Virginia Avenue / North Highland corridor. Halloween plan: administrative unit focused on Grant Park, crime suppression unit on the Edgewood corridor, and the quality of life team in Virginia-Highland, with additional officers in-training requested from the Academy. Reminder ahead of the holidays: leave nothing visible in vehicles and park in lit, camera-covered areas; porch piracy prevention will be covered next month.
- City Councilperson District 2 - Kelsea Bond - not present (Morningside meeting held at the same time).
- City Councilperson District 6 - Alex Wan - not present.

Officer & Committee Updates

- Executive Committee - Master Plan Update (Kady DeWees, Tim Langan)
  - The Master Plan FAQ was posted on vahi.org today, under Planning: https://vahi.org/committees/planning/masterplan/virginia-highland-master-plan-faqs/
  - The board is launching a new master plan effort. The 2014 plan and its 2018 update are more than a decade old, and the neighborhood has changed significantly since. A steering committee of 8-10 people will be formed. The committee will intentionally not hold a majority of board members (three to four board members at most), drawing on residents involved with parks, schools, and other neighborhood perspectives. The steering committee will be finalized at the November board meeting.
  - Concurrently, the Virginia Highland District is preparing a master plan for the North Highland commercial corridor as part of its effort to become a

Community Improvement District (CID). VHCA will have one board member on the CID master plan steering committee. Aaron Fortner of Canvas Planning is consulting to both organizations (he also worked on the 2014 plan), allowing shared resources. Community input will be gathered heavily through numerous town hall meetings, surveys, volunteering and the website.

- Committee chairs were deferred to the November meeting. Anyone interested in serving on or chairing a committee, or who wants to nominate a neighbor, should email Kady DeWees at kady@vahi.org.
- Budget cycle: each committee will propose a budget for the coming year, starting from the 2026 budget as a baseline. The Treasurer will circulate the 2026 committee budget documents and follow up with chairs over the next few weeks, with the goal of finalizing budgets before December 31. A budget line item to pay Canvas Planning for master plan support will come to the board for approval at the November meeting.

- Finance Committee / Treasurer Update (Ben McKenzie)
  - Cash position is strong, at approximately $347,000 with some outstanding payables. Net operating income is just shy of $60,000 against $65,000 budgeted, primarily due to sponsorship timing. Some funds are expected to support the master plan effort. Thanks to Mary Frances Jones and Rob Glancy for leaving the finances in good order. Approval of the September 2026 financial reports was postponed to the November meeting (see Consent Agenda).
- Planning Committee (Tim Langan)
  - 811 Ponce de Leon Place - V-26-135. Applicant Brian Jones of Jones Pierce Architects, for owners Paul and Penny Gutierrez, presented a new single-family home on a teardown corner lot at Greenwood Avenue. The Planning Committee heard the case twice and held a site visit with neighbors the prior week; changes made in response include the retaining wall and gate articulation along Greenwood for sight lines exiting the garage. Neighbor comments were generally supportive; questions addressed tree removal and replanting (an arborist has evaluated the trees; removals follow the city process, and replanting will be determined at permitting).

- Motion #2: (Langan) Motion to conditionally support V-26-135 at 811 Ponce de Leon Place, for construction as shown on the plans dated 10-15-2026, to accommodate: (1) a variance to reduce the required half-depth front yard setback on Greenwood Avenue from 17.5 feet to 7 feet; (2) a variance to reduce the required rear yard setback from 15 feet to 7 feet; (3) a special exception to allow active recreation (pool) in a yard adjacent to the street; (4) a special exception to increase the maximum height of a retaining wall within a half-depth front yard from 3 feet to 11 feet, incorporating the retaining wall change along Greenwood Avenue; and (5) a special exception to increase the maximum height of a privacy fence more than 50% open in the half-depth front yard from 4 feet to 8 feet; with pool sound screening for the property at 740 Greenwood Avenue.
- Motion seconded. Motion Passed 10 in favor / 0 opposed (Miguel Barrios absent).

Miguel Barrios	*Absent*	Kady DeWees	*Approved*
David Glustrom	*Approved*	Hannah	*Approved*
Amy Harward	*Approved*	Tim Langan	*Approved*
Ben McKenzie	*Approved*	Kyle Mehl	*Approved*
Jaron Ness	*Approved*	Heena Patel	*Approved*
Adam Struletz	*Approved*		

- 992 North Highland Avenue - Rezoning Z-26-056 and Parking Special Exception V-26-139. Applicant Randy Pimsler of Pimsler Haas Architects presented for owner Linda Witt (988, 992, and 1000 North Highland Avenue). The property at 992, currently the Press & Grind coffee shop, would be rezoned from RLC-C to NC-11-C; the tenant will be Highland Bakery (a relocation by the same owners as Press & Grind). Twelve conditions, dated 10-7-2026, were reviewed with the Planning Committee, including: basement use limited to kitchen and storage; the existing 10-foot rear landscape strip and buffer to be retained and enhanced (minimum six evergreen trees, 15 feet in height); rear lighting controlled and off during non-business hours; hours of operation 6:30 am - 10:00 pm Sunday-Thursday and 6:30 am - 11:00 pm Friday-Saturday (a reduction from current

hours); no outside deck to the rear; no dumpster in the rear, with dumpster pickup prohibited 10:00 pm - 8:00 am on weekdays and 10:00 am - 10:00 pm on weekends; service vehicles in the rear only 9:00 am - 5:00 pm Monday-Friday; the front of the adjoining duplex not to be paved for parking; parking spaces may be leased for off-site (shared) use; full-service restaurant use permitted; and the property may not be leased as an event space. On parking: the site has 7 spaces today. Under the current zoning, 31 spaces are required; under NC-11, 10 would be required. The Board of Zoning Adjustment hears the parking special exception on November 5 at noon (on the 31-to-7 reduction), and the Zoning Review Board hears the rezoning the same evening; City Council decides the rezoning. The two motions below were drafted and submitted in writing by Kevin Cronin.

- Motion #3: (Langan) Motion to support the special exception V-26-139 for 992 North Highland Avenue, to reduce the required parking from 31 spaces to 7 spaces, matching current conditions at the property.
- Motion seconded. Motion Passed 10 in favor / 0 opposed (Miguel Barrios absent).

Miguel Barrios	*Absent*	Kady DeWees	*Approved*
David Glustrom	*Approved*	Hannah	*Approved*
Amy Harward	*Approved*	Tim Langan	*Approved*
Ben McKenzie	*Approved*	Kyle Mehl	*Approved*
Jaron Ness	*Approved*	Heena Patel	*Approved*
Adam Struletz	*Approved*		

- Motion #4: (Langan) Motion to recommend approval of the rezoning request Z-26-056 for 992 North Highland Avenue, from RLC-C to NC-11-C, with the conditions dated 10-7-2026 as read.
- Motion seconded. Motion Passed 10 in favor / 0 opposed (Miguel Barrios absent).

Miguel Barrios	*Absent*	Kady DeWees	*Approved*
David Glustrom	*Approved*	Hannah	*Approved*

Amy Harward	*Approved*	Tim Langan	*Approved*
Ben McKenzie	*Approved*	Kyle Mehl	*Approved*
Jaron Ness	*Approved*	Heena Patel	*Approved*
Adam Struletz	*Approved*		

- Parks Committee
  - Friends of John Howell Park - Quarterly Update (Jim Coe): Friends of John Howell Park is an LLC formed in 2025 to fundraise for and implement the John Howell Park master plan under a five-year operating agreement with VHCA, with quarterly updates to this board. The master plan has five components: the oval at Barnett (turf), restoration of the Great Lawn (erosion repair), a connection between the east and west halves of the park (staircase, ADA ramp, slide), an updated playground, and stormwater improvements. Phase 1 covers the playground, stormwater, a picnic area, and ADA accessibility. Funding for Phase 1 includes $300,000 from the City of Atlanta (Moving Atlanta Forward bond) and a $100,000 Park Pride grant. A pre-construction agreement has been signed with Core Landscape; permitting begins in early 2027, with groundbreaking estimated for June 2027 (after Summerfest). Fundraising: $279,000 raised in the past year (82 founding-member families giving $1,000 or more; 13 donors over $10,000), on top of $113,000 raised in 2021-2022, for $793,000 of the $950,000 goal (83%). Cash on hand is $318,000. A $300,000 grant application to the Cox Foundation is pending, with a decision expected by October 31. The donation agreement between VHCA and the City of Atlanta for the city's $300,000 is being finalized; the city would like to transfer the funds by the end of the year. Commemorative bricks are for sale. Requests of the board for 2027: continued communications and marketing support, help reaching donors through personal relationships, advocacy with the City of Atlanta, and leads on grant opportunities (particularly stormwater and accessibility funders). The Friends of John Howell Park quarterly presentation is appended at the end of these minutes. [PDF INCLUDED AT BOTTOM OF MINUTES DOCUMENT]
  - North Highland Park (Stephanie Coffin): The neighborhood-owned park at North Highland and St. Charles is held in a conservation easement as a

passive park. Volunteers maintain it daily; lawn care is by Quiet Lawn (battery-powered equipment). The semi-annual work day is Saturday, October 24, 10:00 am - 1:00 pm; volunteers will plant river oats along the wrought-iron fence on North Highland, plant pansies and other bedding plants, and clean up the park. All are encouraged to attend. A detailed report on the park is available on vahi.org.

- John Howell Park and Orme Park held volunteer work days in the past two weekends.

- Tour of Homes Update (Melissa Clarke): homes are locked in, releasing in November; early-bird tickets $35; signature experiences dropping in a few days; $45,000 in sponsorships received with approximately six more pending; the volunteer form is live and house captains are needed; elementary school students are creating tiny doors in local businesses, with a ribbon cutting on tour weekend; event date December 12.
- Safety & Transportation (Amy Harward)
  - Atlanta Comprehensive Transportation Plan: the city is soliciting neighborhood feedback on this new citywide initiative. The District 2 meeting is Tuesday, October 27 at David T. Howard Middle School; the District 6 meeting is Thursday, November 19, 5:00 - 7:00 pm at Morningside. An online survey is also available; links will be shared with the board.
  - Virginia Avenue Bike Lane Pilot: the pilot has completed its first year. The Safe Streets Committee's summary document has been posted on vahi.org and published in The Voice; it will be passed to Aaron Fortner and the Master Plan steering committee. The board is awaiting the city's response on the requirements for renewing the pilot for a second year (the VHCA's point of contact for the city has moved out of state and have not been reassigned new contact; the expected 90-day advance notification has not been received from the city as well despite efforts). There are currently no plans or action taken to extend, adjust, or modify the pilot. If the city confirms the pilot is eligible for renewal, the committee will make a recommendation whilst considering neighborhood feedback received and this board will vote on whether to request a one-year extension. Any decision on a permanent bike lane will be made informed by professional planning studies and data. Extensive public comment was heard, including from Virginia Avenue residents Crystal, Brett Al-Massey, and Melissa

MacLeod (online). Concerns raised included: the absence of data and success criteria for the pilot; loss of parking for residents and for businesses in the Virginia-Highland commercial district; driveway safety with scooters and e-bikes; and whether all Virginia Avenue residents received the feedback survey. Suggestions included speed enforcement and speed reduction on Virginia Avenue, a HAWK pedestrian signal (e.g., at Barnett), a stop sign at Maryland Avenue, and considering St. Charles Avenue, which is wider, as the cross-neighborhood bike route contemplated in the 2014 plan. Kay Stephenson offered to ask the Zone 6 Major to organize speed enforcement on Virginia Avenue. The board thanked residents for their feedback, all of which will be forwarded to the steering committee. The board also noted that the pilot application and proposal were developed jointly with the Midtown Neighbors' Association. Several residents said the flyer about the pilot made it sound as though a permanent bike lane was fully approved and moving forward. Kady DeWees has emailed the city directly, to Councilmembers Alex Wan and Kelsea Bond, to pause any forward movement on the bike lane, and will post that email on vahi.org so residents can see the pause is in place [EMAIL PROVIDED AT BOTTOM OF MINUTES]. The board emphasized that the updated master plan is the community's opportunity to define what it wants for corridors like Virginia Avenue and to set guardrails for city decisions and highly recommends getting involved/volunteering. The letter to Alex Wan and Kelsea Bond states that no city funds are being requested at this time and that no projects should begin before the master plan is complete. The survey was designed to collect themes and experiences, not to measure support or opposition, and survey responses will not be released, as respondents were given implied anonymity.

- Residents participating in discussion include Jerry Riemer and James Garvey
- *Since the occurrence of this meeting, an additional email has been sent to Kelsea and Alex clarifying the above and leading to further discussion slated for the monthly board meeting on 11/9/26.*

- History Committee: the committee chair was not present; recent history meetings at Atkins Park are drawing approximately 100 attendees each.
- Communications Committee: the board submission form is circulating; all updates are to go through the form.

- Elections Committee: results certified; the voter address verification process has been documented and the report distributed.

Old Business

- None recorded.

New Business

- None recorded.

Action Items & Next Steps

1. Board: Approve the September 2026 financial reports at the November meeting (postponed from this meeting).

2. Ben McKenzie: Circulate 2026 committee budget baselines and follow up with committee chairs over the next few weeks to finalize proposed budgets before December 31.

3. Board: Approve the budget line item for Canvas Planning's master plan support at the November meeting.

4. Board: Finalize voting for the Master Plan steering committee (8-10 members, no more than 3-4 board members) at the November meeting.

5. Board: Select the VHCA representative to the Virginia Highland District CID master plan steering committee.

6. Kady DeWees / Board: Finalize committee chairs ahead of the November meeting. Committee and chair interest or nominations go to Kady at kady@vahi.org.

7. VHCA: Convey conditional support for V-26-135 (811 Ponce de Leon Place) per plans dated 10-15-2026, including the Greenwood Avenue retaining wall change and pool sound screening for 740 Greenwood Avenue.

8. VHCA: Convey support for the parking special exception V-26-139 (992 North Highland Avenue, 31 spaces to 7) and the recommendation to approve rezoning Z-26-056 to NC-11-C with conditions dated 10-7-2026. Board of Zoning Adjustment and Zoning Review Board both meet November 5.

9. Friends of John Howell Park: Continue Phase 1 fundraising, including commemorative brick sales; Cox Foundation grant decision expected by October 31.

10. Friends of John Howell Park: Finalize construction documents by year-end and begin permitting in early 2027; groundbreaking estimated June 2027.

11. All: Atlanta Comprehensive Transportation Plan meetings: District 2 on Tuesday, October 27 at David T. Howard Middle School; District 6 on Thursday, November 19, 5:00 - 7:00 pm at Morningside; online survey also available.

12. Safe Streets Committee: Pass the Virginia Avenue bike lane pilot summary document and resident feedback to Aaron Fortner and the Master Plan steering committee.

13. Kady DeWees: Post her email to Councilmembers Alex Wan and Kelsea Bond, pausing any forward movement on the Virginia Avenue bike lane, to vahi.org.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 PM. Note: the Zoom feed to online attendees dropped during the Safety & Transportation discussion, and the available recording ends at that point; any business after the bike lane discussion is not reflected above, inclusive of Tour of Homes updates due to technical issues.

Respectfully submitted by:

Hannah Harrison (VHCA Secretary)

Appendix A: Friends of John Howell Park - Introduction & Q3 Update (October 19, 2026)



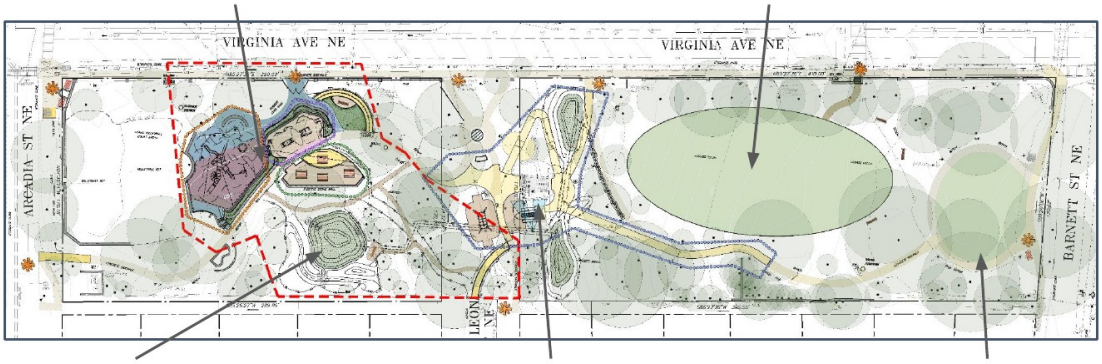
Friends of John Howell Park, LLC

- Planning and fundraising began in 2021, led by VHCA Parks
- Created LLC in 2025
- Single member LLC, VHCA is the sole member
- Operating Agreement tasks FOJHP with fundraising and executing the Master Plan for JHP Renovation over next 5 years
- 8 Board Members
  - Johnson Bazzel, Jim Coe, Chase Johnson, Alex Bevel Jones, Mary Frances Jones, Blair Ness, Matt Perrine
  - Miguel Barrios (VHCA Parks Committee Chair)

Master Plan

New and Expanded Playground

Revitalized Great Lawn



Stormwater Improvements

New Accessible East/West Connection

Barnett Oval Activation

Phase I



Project Status & Timeline

- Master Plan and Phase I design created by Frawley & Assoc.
- Recently signed pre-construction agreement with CORE Landscape
- Finalize construction drawings by year end
- Permitting in early 2027
- Estimated Phase I groundbreaking in June 2027 (after Summerfest)

FOJHP Fundraising - Since October 2025

Founding Members
$267,914

- 82 Families
- 13 donors of $10k or more
- 10 donors between $5k and $10k

Commemorative Bricks
$4,514

- 12 bricks sold
- Focus for Q426 & 2027

Other Donations
$6,676

- 68 donors
- Yard Sale & Signs in Park

Total Fundraising in the Past Year: **$279,104**

Fundraising Overall (as of 9/30/26)

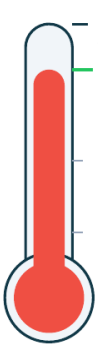
VHCA — $113k
Pre-2025 Fundraising

FOJHP — $279k
2025-26 Fundraising Campaign

City of Atlanta — $300k
Moving Atlanta Forward Initiative

Park Pride Grant — $100k
Community Park Improvement Grant

Fundraising Progress



Overall Goal
$950k

Total Raised To Date
$793k (83%)

Financial Position (as of 9/30/26)

Bank of America
Checking Account
$13,419.95

Bank of America
CD: Maturity 12/23/26 • 3% APY
$291,243.77

PayPal
Online Balance
$13,683.35

TOTAL: **$318,347.07**

Note: *Cash position does not reflect $4,000 in donations due from VHCA to FoJHP.*

Upcoming in Q4

- Cox Foundation Grant
  - Notification before October 31
- Final Construction Documents and Begin Permitting Process
  - Working with CORE Landscape
- Donation Agreement with City of Atlanta
  - Finalizing agreement, legislation and distribution before year end
- Continued Fundraising
  - Still accepting Founding Members
  - Brick Sales - Individual and Business Bricks

How VHCA can help in 2027

- Communications & Marketing
- Personal Relationships & Fundraising
- Advocacy with City of Atlanta
- Grant opportunities

Appendix B: Email to Kelsea Bond and Alex Wan from Kady DeWees re: Bike Lane Pilot

Dear Councilmembers Bond and Wan,

On behalf of the Virginia-Highland Civic Association (VHCA) Executive Committee, I want to share an update on an important priority for our new Board: updating the Virginia-Highland Master Plan.

The Master Plan update will be our first comprehensive look at the neighborhood in approximately a decade. Working with Aaron Fortner of Canvas Planning Group, we will address land use and zoning, streets and streetscape, transportation, parks, and public safety, including a bicycle infrastructure component and a study of Virginia Avenue.

The Virginia Avenue bike lane pilot was installed in September 2025 through the City's Tactical Urbanism program, jointly sponsored by VHCA and the Midtown Neighbors' Association. Under the City's guidelines, pilot projects are intended to last less than one year, and the original pilot period has now elapsed. We are unclear whether the pilot is still eligible for renewal and would appreciate clarification on that point.

Councilmember Bond, thank you for joining our September Board meeting and for your offer to secure $200,000 in Moving Atlanta Forward funding to make the Virginia Avenue bike lane permanent and extend it. However, until the Master Plan's studies and resident engagement are complete, we are not prepared to commit the dollars you identified. We value this investment as an option for future improvements on Virginia Avenue and would like to revisit it once the Master Plan is finished. Therefore, we are not currently asking the City to spend the $200,000 on Virginia Avenue, nor to undertake any study, survey, design work, or other action toward making the bike lane permanent or extending it.

With that in mind, we respectfully ask:

1. That the City hold off on any study, design, or permanent bicycle infrastructure along Virginia Avenue until the Master Plan is complete.

2. Whether the $200,000 allocation can remain available while the Master Plan process is underway.

We will share the planning project timeline and opportunities for public participation with both of your offices as soon as those details are available. Once the plan is complete, we would welcome the chance to sit down with your offices and ATLDOT to discuss how this funding could best support the neighborhood's recommendations.

Thank you for your partnership and for your investment in Virginia-Highland.

Warm regards,

Kady DeWees

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