

REGULAR MEETING – MARCH 4, 2014

A Regular Meeting of the Highland Park Mayor and Council was held in Borough Hall, 221 South 5th Avenue, on Tuesday, March 4, 2014 and was called to order by Mayor Minkoff at 7:05 PM. Mayor Minkoff read the Open Public Meetings Statement.

Present: Mayor Minkoff, Councilpersons Brill Mittler, Erickson, Foster-Dublin, Millet, Potts, Welkovits; Borough Attorney Schmierer; Borough Administrator Kovach, Borough Clerk Hullings.

Absent: None

Mayor Minkoff asked for a moment of silence for Neera Davis, a former member of the Library Board of Trustees, who passed away.

Mayor Minkoff declared March 2014 as Youth Art Month.

Mayor Minkoff asked the Council members to present their reports.

Councilwoman Foster-Dublin reported that with the weather we have experienced recently, the Borough will be going out to bid for generators so that they can have warming centers and charging stations operational in the event of an emergency. Bill Rausch, a firefighter for the Borough for 25 years, passed away recently. She extended prayers to his family.

Councilman Potts reported that deadline to register for Men's Basketball is March 19. Teams have grown from 4-6 and they are hoping to get more teams. Summer Camp information will be out soon. Jonathan Horowitz will be appointed to the Arts Commission and they have received other applications for future appointments. Interested people should submit applications to the Borough Clerk's Office. The Mayor's Teen Advisory Committee met last Thursday and they are working on a Box Ball Tournament for March. Mayor Minkoff added that youth ages 7-12 are encouraged to join. Councilman Potts and Andrea Baay have information about the Committee.

Councilwoman Welkovits reported that the Commission for Universal Access is offering a 10 week Theater Arts Program on Friday afternoons. It is free to participants and is paid for with money from the handicapped fines fund. The CFUA meets the first Thursday of the month at 7:30 p.m. The Board of Health meets on the second Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m. There is an Affordable Care Act Event scheduled for March 25th from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at the Senior Center. Matt Hersh and the Communications Committee met last week and March 10th at 7:30 p.m. is the next meeting. Read Across America is next week at the schools and she thanked those Council members who volunteered to read.

Councilwoman Brill Mittler announced that residents should watch their mail for the latest edition of Highland Park News, spring edition. It contains lots of information. She thanked the Communications Committee for their efforts in getting this out to print.

Councilman Erickson reported that the Council is introducing the 2014 Municipal Budget tonight. The 2014 budget is a work in progress to comply with law. The public hearing on the budget is scheduled for April 8, 2014. Governor Christie has set State Aid at 2013 levels. Mayor Minkoff commented that the budget introduced is not exactly the final budget. The Borough will not exceed 2% CAP.

Councilman Millet reported on the recent water main break on Montgomery Street. The Borough had planned to make repairs in the spring and now the Borough will move up those repairs. Mayor Minkoff commented that the overwhelming majority of the time when there is a break, this 1,000 foot section is the culprit. The age of the pipe and the weather conditions are contributing factors. The goal is to alleviate and eliminate the problem.

Borough Administrator Kovach – No report.

Borough Attorney Schmierer – No report.

Mayor Minkoff – No report.

Mayor Minkoff deferred public discussion until the end of the meeting.

The Clerk reported that an ordinance entitled, CALENDAR YEAR 2014 ORDINANCE TO EXCEED THE MUNICIPAL BUDGET APPROPRIATION LIMITS AND TO ESTABLISH A CAP BANK (N.J.S.A.40A:4-45.14), had been introduced in writing by the Finance Committee for consideration of passage on first reading by title.

On motion made by Councilman Erickson, seconded by Councilman Millet, the ordinance entitled as above was duly adopted on first reading by title by the following roll call vote, to wit:

Ayes: Councilpersons Brill Mittler, Erickson, Foster-Dublin, Millet, Potts, Welkovits.

Opposed: None.

Absent: None.

The following resolution, introduced by the Finance Committee, was duly adopted on motion made by Councilman Erickson, seconded by Councilman Millet, and carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote:

No. 3-14-94

WHEREAS, an Ordinance entitled, CALENDAR YEAR 2014 ORDINANCE TO EXCEED THE MUNICIPAL BUDGET APPROPRIATION LIMITS AND TO ESTABLISH A CAP BANK (N.J.S.A.40A:4-45.14) has been introduced and duly passed on first reading;

REGULAR MEETING – MARCH 4, 2014

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Borough Council of the Borough of Highland Park that this Council meet at the Borough Hall, 221, South Fifth Avenue, Highland Park, New Jersey, on Tuesday, March 18, 2013 at 7:00 PM, for the purpose of considering said Ordinance on final passage.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that said Ordinance be published once at least one (1) week prior to the time fixed for further consideration of said Ordinance for final passage in the "Home News Tribune", of East Brunswick, New Jersey, a newspaper published in the County of Middlesex and circulating in this municipality, there being no daily newspaper published in this municipality, together with a notice of the introduction thereof and of the time and place when and where said Ordinance will be further considered for final passage as aforesaid.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of said Ordinance shall be posted on the bulletin board at Borough Hall, 221 South Fifth Avenue, Highland Park, New Jersey, forthwith and that the Borough Clerk have available in her office for the members of the general public of Highland Park copies of said Ordinance for those members of the general public who may request the same.

The Clerk reported that the 2014 Municipal Budget and Tax Resolution were introduced in writing by the Finance Committee for consideration of passage on first reading. Copies of the full text will be available at the Highland Park Public Library and Borough Hall. The full final budget as adopted and approved will appear in the minutes of the meeting at which the budget is finally adopted.

On motion made by Councilman Erickson, seconded by Councilman Millet, the 2014 Municipal Budget and Tax Resolution were duly adopted on first reading by the following roll call vote, to wit:

Ayes: Councilpersons Brill Mittler, Erickson, Foster-Dublin, Millet, Potts, Welkovits.

Opposed: None.

Abstained: None.

Absent: None

The following resolution, introduced by the Finance Committee, was duly adopted on motion made by Councilman Erickson, seconded by Councilman Millet, and carried by affirmative voice vote of all Councilpersons present:

No. 3-14-95

BE IT RESOLVED, that the following statements of revenues and appropriations shall constitute the Municipal Budget for the year 2014;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that said Budget be published in the Home News Tribune, Neptune, N.J. in the issue of March 14, 2014.

The governing Body of the Borough of Highland Park does hereby approve the following as the Budget for the year 2014:

General Appropriations

Appropriations Within "CAPS"

Municipal Purposes \$10,883,663.00

Appropriations Excluded from "CAPS"

Municipal Purposes 2,931,631.00

Reserve for Uncollected Taxes – Based on

Estimated 99+ Percent of Tax Collections 280,000.00

Total General Appropriations 14,095,294.00

Less: Anticipated Revenues Other Than Current

Property Tax 3,307,098.00

Difference: Amount to be Raised by Taxes

For Support of Municipal Budget:

Local Tax for Municipal Purposes Including

Reserve for Uncollected Taxes 10,359,470.33

Minimum Library Tax 428,725.67

Total Amount to be Raised by Taxes: \$10,788,196.00

Water & Sewer Utility Operating Fund:

Total Water & Sewer Utility Revenues \$3,942,000.00

Total Water & Sewer Utility Appropriations \$3,942,000.00

Notice is hereby given that the Budget and Tax Resolution was approved by the Mayor and Borough Council of the Borough of Highland Park, County of Middlesex, on March 4, 2014.

A hearing on the Budget and Tax Resolution will be held at Borough Hall on April 8, 2014 at 7:00 o'clock P.M. at which time and place objections to said Budget and Tax Resolution for the year 2014 may be presented by taxpayers or other interested persons.

The Clerk reported advertising an Ordinance entitled AN ORDINANCE CONCERNING TAXICAB FARES AND AMENDING THE "CODE OF THE BOROUGH OF HIGHLAND PARK, 2010" for consideration of passage on final reading by title and that affidavits of publication thereto are on file. She also reported that the ordinance had been posted and made available to the public, as required by law.

On motion made by Councilman Millet seconded by Councilwoman Brill Mittler, and carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote, the above entitled ordinance was taken up on final reading by title.

Mayor Minkoff declared the public hearing on the ordinance open to all officials and persons present and called upon all those wishing to speak for or against the ordinance to do so.

No one appearing to be heard and no objections having been received in writing, the Council President closed the public hearing.

On motion made by Councilman Millet, seconded by Councilwoman Brill Mittler, the ordinance entitled as above, being Ordinance No. 14-1857, was duly adopted, by the following roll call vote, to wit:

Ayes: Councilpersons Brill Mittler, Erickson, Foster-Dublin, Millet, Potts, Welkovits.

Opposed: None.

Absent: None.

The following resolution, introduced by the Finance Committee, was duly adopted on motion made by Councilman Millet seconded by Councilwoman Brill Mittler and carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote:

REGULAR MEETING – MARCH 4, 2014

No. 3-14-96

BE IT RESOLVED by the Borough Council of the Borough of Highland Park that the Ordinance entitled AN ORDINANCE CONCERNING TAXICAB FARES AND AMENDING THE "CODE OF THE BOROUGH OF HIGHLAND PARK, 2010", passed on final reading at this meeting be delivered to the Mayor for his approval, and if approved by him, that the same be recorded in full by the Borough Clerk in a proper book kept for that purpose, and be advertised by publishing the same by title in the "Home News Tribune", of East Brunswick, New Jersey, a newspaper published in the County of Middlesex and circulating in this municipality, there being no newspaper published in this municipality, in the manner prescribed by law.

The Clerk reported advertising an Ordinance entitled AN ORDINANCE CONCERNING THE HIGHLAND PARK ZONING MAP AND AMENDING THE "CODE OF THE BOROUGH OF HIGHLAND PARK, 2010" for consideration of passage on final reading by title and that affidavits of publication thereto are on file. She also reported that the ordinance had been posted and made available to the public, as required by law.

On motion made by Councilman Millet seconded by Councilwoman Brill Mittler, and carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote, the above entitled ordinance was taken up on final reading by title.

Mayor Minkoff declared the public hearing on the ordinance open to all officials and persons present and called upon all those wishing to speak for or against the ordinance to do so.

No one appearing to be heard and no objections having been received in writing, the Council President closed the public hearing.

On motion made by Councilman Millet, seconded by Councilwoman Brill Mittler, the ordinance entitled as above, being Ordinance No. 14-1858, was duly adopted, by the following roll call vote, to wit:

Ayes: Councilpersons Brill Mittler, Erickson, Foster-Dublin, Millet, Potts, Welkovits.

Opposed: None.

Absent: None.

The following resolution, introduced by the Finance Committee, was duly adopted on motion made by Councilman Millet seconded by Councilwoman Brill Mittler and carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote:

No. 3-14-97

BE IT RESOLVED by the Borough Council of the Borough of Highland Park that the Ordinance entitled AN ORDINANCE CONCERNING THE HIGHLAND PARK ZONING MAP AND AMENDING THE "CODE OF THE BOROUGH OF HIGHLAND PARK, 2010" passed on final reading at this meeting be delivered to the Mayor for his approval, and if approved by him, that the same be recorded in full by the Borough Clerk in a proper book kept for that purpose, and be advertised by publishing the same by title in the "Home News Tribune", of East Brunswick, New Jersey, a newspaper published in the County of Middlesex and circulating in this municipality, there being no newspaper published in this municipality, in the manner prescribed by law.

Borough Attorney Schmierer reported that the installation of traffic light was done by the County of Middlesex. The Borough needs to adopt the following ordinance so that procedures are in place for enforcement.

The Clerk reported that an ordinance entitled, AN ORDINANCE APPROVING THE INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS FOR RIVER ROAD AT ITS INTERSECTION WITH CEDAR LANE AND JOHNSON DRIVE BY THE BOROUGH OF HIGHLAND PARK had been introduced in writing by the Finance Committee for consideration of passage on first reading by title.

On motion made by Councilman Millet, seconded by Councilman Erickson, the ordinance entitled as above was duly adopted on first reading by title by the following roll call vote, to wit:

Ayes: Councilpersons Brill Mittler, Erickson, Foster-Dublin, Millet, Potts, Welkovits.

Opposed: None.

Absent: None.

The following resolution, introduced by the Public Safety Committee, was duly adopted on motion made by Councilman Millet, seconded by Councilman Erickson, and carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote:

No. 3-14-98

WHEREAS, an Ordinance entitled, AN ORDINANCE APPROVING THE INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS FOR RIVER ROAD AT ITS INTERSECTION WITH CEDAR LANE AND JOHNSON DRIVE BY THE BOROUGH OF HIGHLAND PARK has been introduced and duly passed on first reading;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Borough Council of the Borough of Highland Park that this Council meet at the Borough Hall, 221 South Fifth Avenue, Highland Park, New Jersey, on Tuesday, March 18, 2014, at 7:00 PM, for the purpose of considering said Ordinance on final passage after public hearing thereon.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that said a Notice of Pending Ordinance and Summary of said Ordinance be published once at least one (1) week prior to the time fixed for further consideration of said Ordinance for final passage in the "Home News Tribune", of East Brunswick, New Jersey, a newspaper published in the County of Middlesex and circulating in this municipality, there being no newspaper published daily in this municipality, together with a notice of the introduction thereof and of the time and place when and where said Ordinance will be further considered for final passage as aforesaid.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of said Ordinance shall be posted on the bulletin board at Borough Hall, 221 South Fifth Avenue, Highland Park, New Jersey, forthwith and that the Borough Clerk have available in her office for the members of the general public of Highland Park copies of said Ordinance for those members of the general public who may request the same.

Consent Agenda Resolution Nos. 3-14-99 through 3-14-104 were duly adopted on motion made by Councilman Millet, seconded by Councilman Erickson, and carried by the following roll call vote, to wit:

Ayes: Councilpersons Brill Mittler, Erickson, Foster-Dublin, Millet, Potts, Welkovits.

Opposed: None.

Absent: None.

REGULAR MEETING – MARCH 4, 2014

The following resolution, introduced by the Community Service Committee, was duly adopted as above:

No. 3-14-99

BE IT RESOLVED by the Borough Council of the Borough of Highland Park that Section 10. of Resolution 1-14-19, adopted by the Borough Council on January 7, 2014, shall be supplemented by adding the following fees for programs:

<u>PROGRAM</u>	<u>PARTICIPANT FEE</u>
Sustainable Highland Park - Earth Day	\$75.00

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a certified copy of this resolution be forwarded to the Finance Department and Director of Community Services forthwith.

The following resolution, introduced by the Finance Committee, was duly adopted as above:

No. 3-14-100

BE IT RESOLVED by the Borough Council of the Borough of Highland Park that all claims presented prior to this meeting as shown on a detailed list prepared by the Borough Treasurer, and which have been submitted and approved in accordance with Highland Park Ordinance No. 1004, shall be and the same are hereby approved; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Borough Clerk shall include in the minutes of this meeting a statement as to all such claims approved as shown in a Bills List Journal in accordance with said Ordinance.

The bills approved for payment at this meeting, Bills List 3/04/14, can be found in the Bills List Journal Book No. 33.

The following resolution, introduced by the Public Works and Public Utilities Committee, was duly adopted as above:

No. 3-14-101

WHEREAS, Middlesex County, through the Division of Solid Waste Management, will provide partial funding for a three-year period to participating municipalities for each appliance from which chlorofluorocarbons (CFC's) are properly removed under the CFC Recovery Reimbursement Program; and

WHEREAS, the Borough of Highland Park wishes to participate in said Program, which would address environmental issues such as the depletion of the ozone layer;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Borough Council of the Borough of Highland Park that the Mayor and Borough Clerk are hereby authorized and directed to execute and attest the three-year interlocal service agreement covering the CFC Recovery Reimbursement Program, a copy of which is attached to the original of this resolution, with Middlesex County, said Agreement commencing January 1, 2014.

The following resolution, introduced by the Public Works and Public Utilities Committee, was duly adopted as above:

No. 3-14-102

BE IT RESOLVED by the Borough Council of the Borough of Highland Park that the Mayor shall be and is hereby authorized to execute the Proposal with the County of Middlesex for the "Municipal Partnership Program for Consumer Electronics", said proposal to be in a form approved by the Borough Attorney.

The following resolution, introduced by the Public Safety Committee, was duly adopted as above:

No. 3-14-103

WHEREAS, Wayne Errichello has filed with the Clerk of this Borough an application for a License to operate taxicabs under the provisions of the Ordinance providing for such License for the year 2014; and

WHEREAS, the Chief of Police and/or his designee has investigated said applicant and has reported favorably upon said application;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Borough Council of the Borough of Highland Park that said applicant is qualified and that public necessity and convenience would be served by the issuance of said License.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Borough Clerk be and is hereby authorized and directed to issue an Operator License to the aforesaid applicant.

The following resolution, introduced by the Public Safety Committee, was duly adopted as above:

No. 3-147-104

WHEREAS, Guaranteed Motor Towing Service, New Brunswick, NJ; Coppa's Service Center and Towing, Inc., North Brunswick, NJ; Spartan Towing, Hillsborough, NJ; Rich's Towing Service, Inc., North Brunswick, NJ and George Logan Towing, Inc., North Brunswick, NJ have filed with the Clerk of this Borough for a Wrecker/Towing License to operate heavy duty wreckers in this Borough under the provisions of the Ordinance providing for such license; and

WHEREAS, the Chief of Police has investigated said applicants and has reported favorably upon said applications;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this Council hereby determines that said applicants are qualified and that public necessity and convenience would be served by the issuance of such Licenses.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Borough Clerk be and is hereby authorized and directed to issue Heavy Duty Wrecker/Towing Licenses to the aforesaid applicants.

Mayor Minkoff appointed Jonathan Horowitz to serve as a member of the Arts Commission for a term to expire August 1, 2016.

REGULAR MEETING – MARCH 4, 2014

The above appointment was confirmed on motion made by Councilman Millet, seconded by Councilman Potts, and carried by the following roll call vote, to wit:

Ayes: Councilpersons Brill Mittler, Erickson, Foster-Dublin, Potts, Welkovits.

Opposed: None.

Absent: None.

The Clerk reported receipt of notification of the election of Volunteer Firefighter Thomas Bolen to the rolls of the Highland Park Volunteer Fire Department.

On motion made by Councilwoman Foster-Dublin, seconded by Councilman Millet, the above confirmation was confirmed by the following roll call vote, to wit:

Ayes: Councilpersons Brill Mittler, Erickson, Foster Dublin, Millet, Potts, Welkovits.

Opposed: None.

Absent: None.

Mayor Minkoff complemented the children on their exceptional behavior and stated public discussion is usually 15 minutes and 5 minutes per person, but this evening we are not going to do that and opened the meeting for public discussion and called upon all those wishing to speak to identify themselves.

Ann Gowan, residing at South 2nd Avenue, stated she has 2 children in the school district and is concerned about the direction and priorities of the school district under the leadership of the school board and Superintendent of Schools Capone. They are aware that the Borough Council and the school board are two separate entities and that the Governing Body has no direct control over the decisions of the school board. They wanted to bring these issues to the Borough Council's attention because everyone will be affected by the missteps made by the school board and the administration. Property values and Highland Park's reputation as a community are at stake and more importantly, the well-being of their children. Recent problems started with mid-year employee eliminations of nine staff members, including the President and Vice President of the teacher's union. Eliminating union leadership left the staff vulnerable without workplace protection. Eliminating staff that worked directly with students, while at the same time creating two new administrative staff positions, have left many people to question the judgment of our school leaders. The speed at which decisions are being made, whether it be about staffing, curriculum changes, school schedules, etc. has not left time for proper vetting and consideration and has led to distrust of many throughout the community. There are concerns about the overall philosophy of the administration and it differs from what they find essential here in Highland Park. Great schools are the foundation of great communities and Highland Park is a great community. Things happening now could affect our schools and our town for years to come. They see an administration that relies on scare tactics instead of smart planning, cooperation and implementation that is usually practiced in Highland Park. We see leadership that embraces the current national obsession with standardized testing rather than a leadership that listens to the community and challenges that as other districts have successfully done. The key justification for many of the recent changes is that they need to fix the achievement gap which is the term used by the State to describe the different test scores obtained by different subgroups in our diverse community. They acknowledge that the Highland Park schools are not perfect and that there is more they can do to assure proficiency for all students. In a small and engaged community this is manageable. Rather than sudden draconian changes we require specialized measures to ensure that we are reaching children in all demographics, including those that are historically underserved. When you look to the literature about effective strategies for closing so-called achievement gaps, when you have programs that have succeeded, they all share several features. They involve collaboration between the community and educators. They involve creativity, integration and services for all students. Finally, they involve thoughtfulness and an understanding of the community and its philosophy. This Council and many in this room are an example of the "it takes a village saying" and many of you have done your share of heavy lifting for many years. We are here tonight to ask for more. Although there are places where the Mayor and Council cannot interfere with the schools, we ask that in those places where you can intersect and provide support, that you do so.

Bobby Theivakumaran, Cedar Avenue, commented that every year the New Jersey Department of Education provides New Jersey Schools report card. It provides statistics regarding the high school based on the HSPA tests taken by the junior class as well as college and career readiness, and graduation details for high school. Our school district, under its new direction, has unfortunately taken some of this data in a limited way to make wholesale changes to our school district and direction for the students and staff. If you are going to use numbers to make drastic decisions to redirect the courses and philosophy of the schools you need to use more than limited data points. It is critical to know that when conducting any review looking at data, accuracy, context and trends trumps anything else. Of equal importance is the size of the data set. In Highland Park, there is an exceptionally small data set and therefore a greater susceptibility to volatility. The data showed that Highland Park is a district with several isolated concerns and she too would like them to take initiatives so that the teachers are supported in their teaching and the students are on the best learning environment that can be provided. Given our small size we can take an approach to look inward instead of outward. This is why contexts and trends play an important role. The DOE states that the performance report card should be used carefully and with deep consideration and not as a final directive to justify overall without careful and sound review. "While some viewers of the school performance report may try to utilize them to create a ranking of school akin to a best New Jersey schools list, the NJDOE is not encouraging their use in this fashion. As educators know well, measuring school performance is both an art and a science. The NJDOE does not collect data about other essential elements of a school as many of these data are beyond both the capacity and resources of schools to measure and collect well". By their own admission this is not a complete analysis or holistic approach to our schools. When she saw the most recent school report card, she and her husband called realtors and private schools and neighbors have already started discussions about charter schools. She was ready to give up on her beloved Highland Park, a place where she grew up and came back to raise her family. Before they acted in haste they went on a mission to get context. The current school performance report card is broken up into three categories; academic achievement,

college and career readiness and graduation rates. There are two sets of data utilized by the NJDOE; assessment reports, which is the most recent set of data for purposes of determining academic achievement and the report card performance data, which in the most recent report card is rooted in the HSPA scores from the spring of 2012. For this report card it uses a single graduating class for the academic achievement category. In that category, this year's report card shows our high school ranking in the 26th percentile. This is based on the HSPA scores alone. This year's ranking equates to a 92% proficiency rate in language arts and a 78% proficiency rate in mathematics. This ranking is composed of data from students who took the HSPA's as 11th graders at one or more of three times the test was offered starting in the spring of 2012. When looking at the specific data for this 2012-2013 school year; our math scores are one of the lowest there have been in 10 years based upon the assessment data, which is the primary driver of the percentile ranking. However, just one year later, the 2013 data for the graduating class of 2014 who already took the HSPA's as 11th graders in the spring, but those results are not reported on the report card until January 2015, show an aggregate of 88% proficiency in mathematics and a 93% proficiency in language arts. This further correlates to 100% proficiency for language arts and 98.8% proficiency for mathematics in the general education population. This will be a 10 year historic high. We already know, based upon the class of 2014 HSPA scores that next year's report card will show historic high statewide ranking as well. This is critical to note, particularly if the new report card issued in about a year under the current administration and will show a new performance data set reflective of these high scores. The upcoming data will likely more than double our current ranking and make bring us closer to 60%. She feels it is imperative to point out that this will not be a result of any new administrative changes and these results will already have been from a time before this current administration had arrived. We already have these results and the results of any of the current administration's initiatives won't be reflected in the state performance report until January of 2016. Our testing population is approximately 100 test takers. It is important to understand that changes in a small handful are enough to make a material difference in results and rankings. A change in one test taker can make a change in a whole percentage point. Now you understand why trends become valuable information. Ten years ago, they had a proficiency rate of 86% in language arts and 73% in mathematics. Last year's data, not reflected in any report card, was 93% in language arts and 88% in mathematics. In 2012, the Commissioner of the NJDOE and Governor Christie decided to eliminate the HSPA requirement which has since been replaced by the Park test. Gov. Christie touted that "we need to make sure that the students we send from New Jersey's high schools out into the workforce or into higher education are prepared on that first day to sit in the college classroom or to perform the job that a business is asking them to perform". Is it the HSPA's or college readiness that is the more important matrix? The NJDOE seems to suggest that perhaps college and career readiness are more essential. We are in the highest category called very high performance for both college and career readiness and graduation rates. These are academic measures put forth by the NJDOE. College and career readiness measures the degree to which students demonstrate behaviors that are indicative of future attendance and/or success in college careers. This includes standardized testing and high school course work. Highland Park High School's ranking for these two indicators has gone up over the last two years. Highland Park High School's ranking is in the 82nd percentile for college and career readiness. It is higher than Metuchen's and is in keeping with New Providence High School, which was recently ranked by New Jersey Monthly as the best high school in New Jersey. For the past five years our SAT scores are generally around 1,600. A score of 1,550 and above is viewed to be a benchmark indicator of post-secondary success and indicates of 65% likelihood of obtaining a B average or higher in the first year of college. 54.4% of our students score above 1,550 on the SAT's versus the State average of 43.9%. Participation in the SAT's has increases steadily. Currently, Highland Park has SAT participation of 90.4% versus the State average of 75.3%. Highland Park meets 100% of their high school level state-wide targets while Edison's JP Stevens, South Brunswick, Woodbridge and Metuchen do not. Over the last four years Highland Park's graduation rate has been increasing and is about 94% with a 0% dropout rate. This puts us in a very high performance category. Districts such as Princeton, Metuchen and West Windsor all have higher dropout rates than Highland Park. The NJDOE advises careful and sound review, deep consideration, and the report cannot be used as a directive to overhaul a district. The takeaway from her efforts have shown her and her husband that trends for the HSPA scores have been increasing for the past 10 years and that Highland Park was already on a trajectory for an historic high with the spring 2013 data, ranking us close to 60% with aggregate language arts scores of 93% and mathematics scores close to 90% and a general education population scoring of 100% for language arts and 98.8% proficiency for mathematics. This will be reported in January 2015. As she has learned, this Administration could do nothing whatsoever and will still reap the rewards of nearly doubling our statewide ranking. Highland Park appears to place an emphasis on college and career readiness and the SAT's. She learned that Highland Park has problems in certain subject matters in the schools and that looking at reports is both an art and a science. It is a function that requires careful and thoughtful review to understand and calibrate to solve the concerns. The data tells her that Highland Park subgroups are at or above State averages with regard to proficiency rate and that the State itself, as well as the nation, has gaps in proficiency. Given our small size, we can provide creative, informed solutions if we so choose. She has learned that the picture of this district is much broader than a brush stroke. While it is not ideal that all of the scores are not higher, she does not feel that the schools are in a crisis. She would rather focus on a quality education for all where all of the students are ready for college and career upon graduation. She learned that the three things that drove them to move to Highland Park to raise her family are the same three things that will keep them here; small class sizes, a good school experience, and diversity not found in other communities they looked at. The problems in the schools may mirror those statewide and nationwide, but we can commit to overcome them here in Highland Park. We are not a district with 10,000 students and tons of schools. We have an ability to look inward and figure out how to serve all of our children with the precision of a scalpel and not a sledge hammer. She does not ascribe to failure for any demographic. Public education is the great equalizer. We have a mobile, nimble and motivated community here in Highland Park. The Board did not know or understand the data when they secretly decided that Mr. Capone was going to be the saving grace. When they hired more people that subscribed to his philosophy, they missed the point. The most effective way to address a diverse student need is in collaboration with the community and educators which entails creativity, integration and opportunities for services for all students. It also entails thoughtfulness and understanding of a

REGULAR MEETING – MARCH 4, 2014

community and its philosophy. Mr. Capone and members of the board have not to date engaged the community or provided a vision or describe means by which they will serve the students. Instead, the central office, as agents of the board, and the board itself have sprung a crisis narrative on the community and forced a turnaround of the community with no prior communication or discussion. She refuses to buy this narrative of crisis and having Highland Park fall prey to an agenda that doesn't conform to the philosophy of this community. She also stated that she is not afraid of change for the schools. She does have a fear of a cavalier attitude toward community friends, neighbors, the teachers and the children. She wants technology when it is used to enhance learning. She understands that they are beholden to State requirements. She welcomes change when it is made for the benefit of the student and their learning experience. She expects best practices and sound judgment. She also expects an administration and board that explains critical and major decisions and can put forth the informed strategies with experience and vision. As people that enjoy good governance, we expect transparent, participatory and responsive government. The Highland Park school board operates on tax dollars. The saddest part is that it is not about the money that will be spent on the testing regimes, data analysts, new yet unscripted curricula, or a top heavy administration. These things at the end of the day are fundable. What will be lost is our children, our staff, our neighbors and our homes. Some are considering leaving and looking into private schools. Others will stay and fight. They are committed to doing what is necessary to ensure all of the students are fortified with the best education possible. They hope that this Mayor and Council remain hopeful in the future of our schools.

Tim McKinnon, 22 North 4th Avenue, commented on the education controversy and that it has been a long five months. There has been a lot of change and a lot of disappointment and anger but the way forward is not through the extension of this education conflict to other bodies such as the Governing Body, but instead through the hard work and collaboration among neighbors. The claim that people are leaving town is speculative. What town can people move to that can offer the kind of walkable, close-knit community with social capital, top flight educational opportunities and dedicated civic organizations that are here in town? The Board and the Superintendent did something in November that outraged many residents. In response to the community outcry additional board meetings have been called, separate meetings with the Superintendent and community members have occurred, task forces in communication and technology have been formed, citizens have been asked to participate in the hiring of principals and the structure of public meetings has been rearranged. Things are still not perfect, but to those who claim the district has not heard them and made any changes, he asked what they need to do before they acknowledge they have been heard. This is a real, very diverse community and there are a lot of perspectives to consider in decision making.

Jenni Chapman, Magnolia Street, commented that she is here wearing many hats. She is a resident with deep roots, she graduated from HPHS, her father was a science teacher here for many years, she has 2 children and some nieces and nephews in the school system, she owns a home in Highland Park, and she is a local business owner. There are three things that make Highland Park a wonderful place to live and raise a family. These same three things make it a wonderful place to run a business. Highland Park welcomes diversity. Highland Park has a classic downtown. The schools are a reflection of everything they value in Highland Park. The schools welcome each child and provide them with a happy and safe learning environment, so happy and safe, that the upperclassmen still have open campus. The students thrive here, whatever their background, in ways that they wouldn't thrive elsewhere. Highland Park has a reputation for a welcoming, safe and happy learning environment for a really diverse bunch. The schools are within walking distance for most of the residents in town as is the business district. The schools have a reputation for sending kids out into the world who are creative, confident and happy individuals to become productive and thriving adults. They leave here college and career ready whatever their HSPA scores may be. These kids come back to raise their families here as a testament to Highland Park and what the community offers. Her son has three teachers who grew up in Highland Park, graduated from Highland Park schools and came back to live and work and raise their families. If the schools take on a different reputation what does it mean for the downtown or the reputation for welcoming diversity. Will parents want to send their children to schools that over test or have a scripted curriculum or teach to the test? Will teachers want to work in a school district where they constantly worry about their job? Will they want to work in a district where they have no autonomy and a community that doesn't value their work? Will the next generation return to Highland Park if their experience at the school is poor? Will diverse groups of families continue to move here if we lose our reputation for good schools? What will happen to our downtown if families don't want to live here? She would not have moved here had she not had an excellent and safe learning experience. She would not want to live here if I didn't feel welcome. She would not have opened her business here if she did not want to live here. Her business downtown will not succeed if other people don't want to live here. She is here as someone who has much to lose should the schools lose their good reputation. Her children's education, her home property values and the success of her business are all at stake. There is a wonderful movement of engaged residents working very hard to protect the schools. She asked that Council work with these engaged residents to help protect Highland Park children, the downtown, the property values and our schools.

Liz Estes, 311 North 4th Avenue, commented that she has 4th grader, an 8th grader and a 29 year old at Rutgers who attend/attended Highland Park schools. Melanie McDermott, resident and Professor at Rutgers, organized an amazing conference on February 19th (available on audio). It presented what is happening in the State of New Jersey and what is happening on the Federal level. They also heard from a Superintendent and a Director of Curriculum who are parents in Highland Park and work in Kenilworth and West Windsor. They got a perspective that what is happening in town is not unique. Superintendents in other towns are feeling the same push from movements that are statewide and federal wide. The three things are the common core curriculum, teacher assessment and student testing. These three things coming for the Federal level are putting a lot of pressure on the schools. She presented a resolution that is taking off from town Councils. The resolution talks about high stakes testing and what should be done. It was passed by the New York City Council and it is something they would like the Highland Park Borough to think about and consider for passage.

REGULAR MEETING – MARCH 4, 2014

Heather Wilkerson, 247 Lincoln Avenue, commented that she wished the conversation would have ended with Liz Estes' comments. The presentation given by Bobbie focuses on the HSPA scores. Mr. Capone was brought to the Highland Park school district not in response to the HSPA scores but for the "achievement" gap and those are not based on the HSPA scores. Her analysis was wonderful, but she would love to see an analysis on the achievement gap, which is based on the NJASK test. She is here as a parent and she and her partner have five kids in the school system. She graduated from Highland Park High School. She is concerned about the direction the school district is taking, but is more concerned about the direction the rhetoric and dialogue is going. A great characteristic of a good school district is one that provides an equitable education to all and provides to students that need more, more resources. She thinks that Highland Park, at this moment in time, provides less to the students that need more and that is devoid of race, and socio demographics. She feels that Capone, in his awkward and stumbling manner, is attempting to address this issue. She encouraged more of a constructive dialogue that can reach to the collaboration that everyone is asking for and come to the Board and help this administration find their way to the place that Highland Park really wants to be for the education of their children.

Ashely Wharton, Johnson Street, stated that he echoed Heather and Liz's comments and also Tim McKinnon's comments from earlier. He thinks it is important that the Council knows that there is a diverse opinion in the town in terms of how they should progress going forward. There are many people that believe to go forward is through negotiation. At the last two board meetings, the Union President has stood up and stated that progress is being made with the administration. The rhetoric about people leaving their homes and abandoning Highland Park is just that, rhetoric. It is designed to incite the very fear that we are accusing the administration and school board of conducting.

Mayor Minkoff stated that he does not want to take place of Board of Education, but does not want to get into public debate.

Bobbi Theivakumaran, noted that she did similar analysis for Middle School.

Mayor Minkoff asked for her to share those analyses, and closed public discussion. He thanked everyone for their thoughtful comments. One of the things that is special about Highland Park is not just the diversity of our opinions, but about our ability to agree to disagree.

Mayor Minkoff asked for comments from the Governing Body.

Councilwoman Welkovits thanked everyone for their amazingly well-researched speeches and for speaking from the heart. That shows how much our schools mean to this community. She thanked them for coming out tonight.

Councilman Millet asked where the Council and Board of Education intersect. He liked the comments made about the smallness of the data set. His wife is a teacher and he is aware of the changes every year. The Council is interested in where and how they can intersect and help dialogue move forward.

Councilwoman Brill Mittler echoed comments of her fellow council members. Sitting here and listening, it is apparent that the schools and our children are very important and we want the best. Her kids went through the public school system. She moved from Brooklyn to Highland Park for the schools. There has always been an achievement GAP that does need to be addressed. She encouraged parents to continue to speak up and she thanked them for coming.

Councilwoman Foster-Dublin echoed the sentiments of her colleagues and appreciated that the residents came to the meeting to express their concerns. She has received many emails from residents. Her son went to Highland Park Schools and he appreciates the education that he received.

Mayor Minkoff commented that Highland Park ceaselessly amazes him. He is continually left with a sense of wonderment for the passion this community shows for the things that matter the most. There is nothing more important than the future of our children. He is intrigued by the resolution Liz Estes mentioned and is eager to look at it under the guidance of the Borough Attorney, with the consent of Council, to utilize the spirit and intent of the resolution to make Highland Park's voice heard in a way that will not undermine but hopefully amplify what it is the schools would like to accomplish. Appreciates the positive spirit everyone came with this evening. He and the Governing Body share the same concerns. Given the frustration people feel, he thought it was important that they provide some mechanism and some venue for people to be heard and for the Governing Body to hear their concerns. The Governing Body has tried to encourage the Board of Education Members and the Superintendent to be sensitive to what they are hearing.

There being no further business, on motion made by Councilman Millet, seconded by Councilwoman Brill Mittler, and carried by affirmative voice vote of all Councilpersons present, the meeting adjourned to the Conference Meeting at 8:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Hullings
Borough Clerk