

## REGULAR MEETING – MARCH 1, 2022

A Regular Meeting of the Highland Park Mayor and Council was held via Zoom, on Tuesday, March 1, 2022, and was called to order by Mayor Brill Mittler at 7:01 PM. Annual Notice of this meeting was provided to The Home News Tribune, the Star Ledger and the Highland Park Planet on January 5, 2022. In addition, notice of this meeting via zoom was faxed to The Home News Tribune and emailed to The Star Ledger and the Highland Park Planet on February 24, 2022 and was posted on the Borough website at [www.hpboro.com](http://www.hpboro.com) and on the bulletin board at Borough Hall, 221 South Fifth Avenue, Highland Park, NJ on February 24, 2022 and has remained continuously posted as required by law.

Present: Mayor Brill Mittler; Councilpersons Canavera, Foster arrived at 8 pm, George, Hale, Hersh, Kim-Chohan; Borough Attorney Schmierer; Borough Administrator Jover; Borough Clerk Santiago.

Absent: None

### **Council Reports:**

Mayor Brill Mittler asked the Council members to present their reports.

Councilman Hersh – No Report.

Councilwoman Canavera sent prayers to everyone in the Ukraine and asked if any resident is affected by this, please reach out to her. The Board of Health would like to remind everybody about the baby formula recall, please check before giving your child formula. Information is available at [simalacrecall.com](http://simalacrecall.com). The Commission for Universal Access would like to remind everyone that March is National Disabilities Awareness Month, it calls for people to provide understanding, encouragement and opportunities to help persons with a disability to lead a productive and fulfilling life and to focus on the person's abilities. March is National Nutrition Month. Nutrition is one of the biggest factors in our health in helping us fight disease and injury. We have two programs to help residents in need get much needed food: The Community Food Pantry is open the second and fourth Thursday, 9:00 am to 10:45 am and 6 pm to 7 pm and the Saturday following Thursday 9:30 to 10:30. Donations can be made using their Amazon Wish List. The Highland Park Gives a Hoot Food Pantry is every Tuesday at the Zone 16 Center from 10:30 am until 11:30 am. Donations can be made by mailing a check to the Borough Hall with a memo that says it's for the Highland Park Gives a Hoot. Both programs are serving over 30 families each month. The Mental Health Commission wants to remind everybody with a mental health crisis to please reach out for help. Middlesex County Crisis Hotlines are Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care 855-515-5700, Raritan Bay Hotline 732-442-3794 or you can text home to 741 741.

Councilwoman Kim-Chohan – No Report.

Councilman Hale said the Run In the Park, our 5K event is coming back for the first time in two years on May 1<sup>st</sup>. It's very exciting to actually have an outdoor event. You can go to the Main Street website and sign up for the Run In the Park and the 5K.

Council President George said he hopes that everyone keeps in their minds and hearts, the people in the Ukraine, as well as their democracy. This shows how fragile it is and we face the same threats in our Country. In particular it touches base, my Grandfather escaped from Minsk in 1922 and my Grandmother was raised outside of Kiev and escaped with my Grandfather in 1922. He said that he will waive his report and give a detailed report on trash and recycling at the next meeting.

Borough Administrator Jover reminded everyone there are two public hearings scheduled for the March 15<sup>th</sup> Council meeting. One regarding the Amendment to the Cannabis Ordinance as well as the Ordinance dealing with the retail stores of automobiles at existing garages in the commercial district. The notifications to residents where our records indicate they may have a lead service line did go out last week. I've been hearing back from folks and it's been a very good process. She encouraged anyone who received a letter to feel free to reach out and get in touch with her. Also a nixle went out to the community at large briefing everyone as to where we are in the process. The information's been pushed out to our usual outlets as well as on our website. If anybody has any questions about that she encouraged them to reach out to her. She said that she been fielding some good questions so the calls have been appreciated. The 2022 Budget has tentatively been scheduled Work Session for the March 15<sup>th</sup> Council meeting

Borough Attorney Schmierer – No Report.

Mayor Brill Mittler said like Councilman George, her ancestors came from the Ukraine. They did not leave under good circumstances back then but I do know a lot of interesting stories

from them about life there in the early 1900s. Our newspapers, news shows and social media feeds are filled with updates on and acts of solidarity with the Ukraine. The War launched by Russia against the Ukraine we all know was unprovoked, unwarranted, unethical and criminal. What can we do in Highland Park to demonstrate our concern and make any impact on the situation? Let me suggest two activities. Number one call the Russian Embassy in Washington D.C. and register your dismay at Russia's invasion of Sovereign Ukraine, for best results please keep your comments brief and respectful in your call. Their phone number is 202-298-5700. Secondly make a commitment to learn about Ukraine's rich history culture and flourishing democracy. To start I recommend a three and a half minute BBC video on YouTube called A Brief History of Modern Ukraine or an article called The Real and Imagined History of Ukraine, which was published by vox.com on February 25<sup>th</sup> and an article the Empire Returns Russia Ukraine and the Long Shadow of the Soviet Union published on the Financial Times website on January 28<sup>th</sup>. As a small but symbolic gesture the Public Works Department and the Borough Administrator have been asked to light the Doughboy Statue in blue and gold, which are the colors of the Ukraine flag and I want to thank Councilman Matt Hersh for sharing that idea. On She recognized an exemplary public servant who has announced her plans to retire as of next month, Renee George who has been Administrative Assistant and Bookkeeper at the Highland Park Public Library for over 16 years. During that time she has not only been the keeper of their accounts but also created reports for the Library Board of Trustees, and later kept their minutes, organized and executed their highly successful annual Appeal Fundraisers, provided notary service and issued many Municipal ID cards and communicated with many vendors. Renee has been a staple at our library and she will be sorely missed by staff and by members of our community as well. We wish you much success in your retirement. Thank you for your service, Renee. Everyone has read and heard recently about some criminal activity in Highland Park in recent weeks and we don't often hear about situations taking place in our town, so many of us were shaken up when we heard the updates last Wednesday morning that a man fired a gun at a family residence in the Borough. The shooter was considered armed and dangerous and was at large in the Borough. On behalf of all of us and all of our residents I want to thank the Highland Park Police Department for bringing this troubling situation to a close successfully within hours and also making a serious effort to keep us all informed by nixle and social media. Thank you to our Police Department for keeping us safe. The Mayor shared the great news when one of the Borough residents from our Borough receives recognition outside of our borders in that vein, I'm pleased to congratulate Reverend Seth Kaper-Dale who received the 2021 Faith-Based Medal from the PNC New Jersey State Governor's Jefferson Awards Program. This award publicized and in the Star Ledger where they described Pastor Seth as someone quote, "who has spent decades creating housing for women aging out of foster homes and homeless veterans reentering citizens, justice involved youths, chronically homeless, mentally ill adults, refugees and asylum seekers. Pastor Seth we greatly admire your work and commend you on receiving this well-deserved award. She shared some local opportunities coming up to improve our health and well-being, and thanked Kinetics New Jersey for its plans to hold their second annual Half Marathon on Sunday, March 27<sup>th</sup> starting at 8 am. The Half Marathon entitled A Walk in Her Shoes is free and open to the public and offers four different routes of roughly 3.1 miles each. Kinetic Zone Amiga Lundy wrote a book also entitled To Walk in Her Shoes about her experience walking the same path that Harriet Tubman took as she escaped slavery to the North. As part of this event The Kinetics New Jersey Team is collecting stories of women who make the world a better place so to learn more about the Half Marathon and to register to participate, please go to [www.kineticsnj.com/latest-events/](http://www.kineticsnj.com/latest-events/), and finally The Mayor's Covid Medical Advisory team has been meeting to discuss next steps as we emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic, provided that the trajectory of Covid-19 cases inpatient hospitalizations, intensive care unit admissions and deaths continue on their current downward course we will be following their advice on how to safely resume in-person meetings. I expect that we will have this re-opening plan in place by mid-March so stay tuned.

### **Public Participation:**

Mayor Brill Mittler opened the meeting for public discussion

Lois Lebbing, North 2nd Ave. said she had two questions on what was just reported. Does anyone know the date of the Star Ledger article about Reverend Seth Kaper-Dale. She heard the Universal Access or that March is the month of remembering about accessibility. When does the Commission here in Highland Park meet and how does it meet. She asked if some would describe Items 14a and 14b on the agenda when you get there. Councilwoman Canavera replied the Universal Access Commission meets on the second Monday of every Month and it's done through Zoom. The Zoom link is available on the Borough Website on the calendar section.

Mayor Brill Mittler stated the article was in the Star Ledger last week, but did not recall the date.

No one further appearing to be heard, the Mayor closed the public discussion.

**Consent Agenda – Resolutions:**

The following Resolutions 14a-14f were duly adopted on a motion made by Councilman George, seconded by Councilwoman Canavera, and carried by the following roll call vote, to wit:

- Ayes: Councilpersons Canavera, George, Hale, Hersh, Kim-Chohan
- Opposed: None
- Abstained: None
- Absent: Councilwoman Foster

**NO. 3-22-69**

WHEREAS, a sustainable community seeks to ensure that its environmental, economic, and social objectives are balanced and mutually supportive; and

WHEREAS, the Borough of Highland Park strives to assure clean land, air, and water for current and future generations; and

WHEREAS, New Jersey’s Energy Master Plan: Pathway to 2050 (“EMP”) established that community-level action is necessary to achieve the state’s goal of 100% clean energy by 2050; and

WHEREAS, the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities has created a Community Energy Plan Grant program for municipalities to develop a community energy plan to meet the goals of the state’s Energy Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Borough of Highland Park is invested in developing a community energy plan to help the state achieve the goal of 100% clean energy by 2050; and

WHEREAS, the Community Energy Plan Grant program will help Highland Park to plan for and invest in renewable energy and to work towards a better environment for all residents by using the State’s EMP as a guide to develop sustainable strategies that increase clean energy production, reduce energy use, and cut emissions.

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 submit the grant application to NJ Board of Public Utilities.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Mayor and the Borough Clerk are hereby authorized to sign the grant agreement upon acceptance on behalf of the Borough of Highland Park and that their signature constitutes acceptance of the terms and conditions and approves the execution of the grant agreement.

**No.3 -22-70**

BE IT RESOLVED by the Borough Council of the Borough of Highland Park that the following schedule of proposed use of CDBG funds allocated to the Borough of Highland Park for the funding period 2022 – 2023 be and the same is hereby approved and a certified copy hereof be submitted to the Middlesex County Housing and Community Development Committee for their approval. If there is a reduction in the CDBG allocation, the reduction should be divided evenly to each project.

Dept. of Aging: Senior Outreach	\$13,000
Dept. of Aging: Senior Transportation	\$15,000
Main Street Highland Park: Sign, Building Façade Improvement Program	\$12,000
Dept. of Recreation: Summer Camp Program/HP Gives A Hoot	\$20,000
Dept. of Recreation: Community Youth Outreach Programs	\$13,445
Highland Park Community Food Pantry	\$3,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$76,445</b>

Councilwoman Kim Chohan responded to Ms. Lebbing’s question about item 14b, which is the CDG Grant, which is the Community Development Block Grant, which is funding through HUD. Actually my committee met last week to go over this. The committee in town that went over the application and funding does cover Senior Outreach-thirteen thousand, (\$13,000.00) as listed in the Resolution. Senior Transportation-fifteen thousand, (\$15,000.00) Façade Improvement Program-twelve thousand, (\$12,000.00) that will go to Main Street, the summer camp programs, which also is Highland Park Gives a Hoot-twenty one thousand, (\$21,000.00) our Youth Outreach Programs-thirteen thousand four forty five (\$13,445.00) and our Food Pantry-three thousand, (\$3,000.00). If you have any more questions I can definitely answer them for you. This is a Grant that we rely on happily every year. The Grant requires that we have a committee that their recommendations come to the Council and then I’m their liaison to the County and it goes under finance and we’re excited thank you. Also we apply for these Grants

because we have a part of in our census tract that allows us that we qualify for that as well. I learned all of this.

**NO. 3-22-71**

WHEREAS, RHN01 LLC, and AA Checker, have filed with the Clerk of this Borough an application for a License to operate taxicabs under the provisions of the Ordinance providing for such Licenses for the year 2022; and

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

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

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Borough Clerk be and is hereby authorized and directed to issue an Owners Licenses to the aforesaid applicants.

**NO. 3-22-72**

WHEREAS, Robert Hala, Kenneth J. Leo have 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 2022; 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 applicants are 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 Licenses to the aforesaid applicant.

**NO. 3-22-73**

BE IT RESOLVED by the Borough Council of the Borough of Highland Park that the Borough Clerk be and is hereby authorized and directed to notify the Borough Finance Director that since the adoption of a resolution on January 4, 2022 showing the names of the officers and employees of the Borough of Highland Park whose salaries are on an annual and hourly basis, there have been the following changes, to wit:

MaryAnn Autunnale, Principal Clerk Typist, at an annual salary of \$43,839.00, effective 12/01/2021

Linda Jacus, Deputy Clerk, at an annual salary of \$48,000.00, effective 2/28/2022

Jennifer Smith Mullen, Senior Library Assistant, at an annual salary of \$43,337.00, effective 3/16/2022

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Finance Director be and is hereby directed to make the necessary changes in the payroll records of the Finance Department in accordance with the changes established by this resolution.

**NO. 3-22-74**

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 3/1/2022 can be found in the Bills List Journal Book No. 42.

**Second Public Participation:**

Mayor Brill Mittler opened the second public participation

Elizabeth Rosner, 22 Harrison Avenue said she was a resident and an employee of the Borough of Highland Park. I am currently suspended without pay for my position as a crossing guard. My suspension is due to my lack of compliance with the Borough's current Covid-19 Policy, my work conduct is not in question. As a governing body you have decided to implement mandates on town employees. This supposes that you are lowering risk of Covid-19 with those mandates. It is a negligible cost to the citizens of this town and I disagree for financial costs. The citizens need to know some facts. For two weeks the Borough has paid Police Officers time and a half with a mandatory minimum of two hours per shift for overtime or has pulled an active duty Police Officer off their job to cover the vacancy. I am perfectly capable to work to avoid the extra cost or cost of staff reassignment. There is a cost to my personal freedoms. The Borough

has no authority over my body or how I spend my time off the clock. The idea that you have a system to protect the immune compromised is diminished by the punitive system in place which in fact punishes them. I must pass a physical performed by the Borough's doctor of choice. To hold this position I will not spend my personal time complying to mandates that make no sense. I have a right to keep my personal medical information private from you, the Administration of this town, even the Human Resource Department doctors and health insurance companies have password blocked emails and portals for any communications involving their patients. I am concerned the Borough failed to provide safe secure emailing throughout this entire situations regarding my medical privacy. One of the many unintended consequences of government overreaching Covid-19 policies has been an increase in auto deaths. Auto fatalities had a downward trend since 1960. In 2019 while one of the lowest death rates since 1960. She does not need to read studies to know that it's a fact you are running this town as laptop elites working safely from home while DPW, Police Officers and Crossing Guards work out in the streets of the community. You have hit your mute button on a computer screen when a citizen speaks for more than 3 minutes or says something offensive. I have no eject button. I stand there and take it while people scream curses at me and wish death upon me by vehicular homicide. It's time for the mandates to go away and it's time for these meetings to be in person again.

Robert Roesener 22 Harrison Ave., requested that the Borough revise Covid-19 policies for employees to stop discriminating against unvaccinated people and to follow sound logic and science first and rightly so. This Borough would cringe at the thought if discriminating against LGBTQ people, people of color, and people of a particular religious tradition or any other group of people. Yet the Borough has no problem overly discriminating against the unvaccinated. The Borough requires two weekly Covid tests for the unvaccinated employees but this is not the case for vaccinated employees and asked why the unvaccinated people have different roles then the vaccinated. The cost benefits analysis does not justify your twice weekly testing policy for exclusive workers and unvaccinated employees in general. Do the right thing scrap it despite weekly testing mandate save money and reduce waste.

Devin McRimmon, 39 Tall Oaks Drive in East Brunswick was present with business partner, Devin Vick and shared same address and are co-owners of Hazel and Leaf. He indicated that they was to open a retail cannabis shop in beautiful Highland Park. Mr. McRimmon shared a little background on his company. He indicated they aim to actively participate in changing the narrative and stigma of the cannabis industry. Highland Park has always been a main street full of locally owned businesses and we would love to add to that.

Betty Epstein, said she surprised that that last gentleman was allowed to speak, he doesn't live in Highland Park, and he lives in East Brunswick. If he wants to open a cannabis shop he can open it where he lives in East Brunswick and improve the community there, not in Highland Park. I am very against having recreational marijuana shops in Highland Park. I think it's going to change our community. I

Edward Epstein 208 Cedar Ave, said he spoke at the Council meeting a few weeks ago on the same topic that my wife had just addressed, the opening of recreation marijuana stores in Highland Park. I was an adult Probation Officer for 20 years in the Chicago area, My case flow consisted of many individuals with extensive marijuana and other drug problems as well as youth problems. I solved the devastating issues on these individual's lives from using marijuana and the price they had to pay. I don't want to see these issues and problems arise in Highland Park. He said that he is suggesting the Borough recognize the importance of something that really is not appropriate and not appropriate for six spots in Highland Park.

Lois Lebbing, North 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue said that added to the gentleman who just mentioned discrimination. It extends statewide. I can't find one New Jersey town out of 566. I can't find one state in this union that abides by The Americans with Disabilities Act for existing facilities 36.304. She asked about the TV or just the jet backing report for last year completed yet from Middlesex Water Department what was going on with River Road when it was closed a few weeks ago and all the traffic came down North 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Borough Administrator Jover said all that traffic and disruption at River Road/Raritan Avenue intersection was a problem with the sewer trunk line along the river that kind parallels Adelaide Avenue. There was a crack due to a support that was holding up the trunk line. In order to repair it we had to establish bypass pumping from a manhole that unfortunately is right in the middle of that intersection. The other questions regarding the report, her understanding from the last update from Middlesex Water was they've received the report from a NAP Group that did all that inspecting many months ago and they are going through recommendations.

Council President George said part of the delay with sewer truck line repair in part as everyone knows, the County has been doing a lot of work. The MCUA has a connector line

which in part lies in our native plant sanctuary there's a lot of work going on there. That as a result they did notice the repair most the delay was in laying out the work. It was done fairly quickly but it takes a lot of work to install bypasses like that, including a lot of state permits. It was done on an emergency basis so fortunately it was done fairly quickly, regarding the camera report, we're hoping that we get it at the next Middlesex Water Utility Community Committee meeting in March. We're hoping we get that report then if not it will be in April. Middlesex Water has just recently received it. They are still going thru it. As the Borough Administrator said, that Camera Program was actually part of our original Capital Improvements report. If you recall our 10-year report done by Professor Andrews and his crew, which I refer to all the time for DPW work, listed that a one of the important things to do and because of our 10 year contract with Middlesex Water, we actually got it done a lot earlier. We don't anticipate receiving it until the next Utilities Committee meeting. Hopefully in March if not then, definitely in April.

Dan Stern Cardinale, 221 Harper Street said that he is fully supportive of having retail recreational cannabis in town and reminded everybody that there's no association with increased crime and recreational cannabis businesses and per the very detailed statistics out of the Colorado Department of Transportation following the cannabis legalization in Colorado there's no association with cannabis legalization and increased traffic fatalities.

Abby Stern Cardinale, 221 Harper Street said she knows know everyone's adjusted to zoom and it's a little bit different and we're just figuring it out, but I would love clarification on when there's two people in a household. Does the time start over and can you kind of piggyback on someone's time. I just want to know because obviously there's a time limit to public comments. Mayor Brill Mittler said each person that comes up to speak gets three minutes whether they live in the same household or not.

Abby Stern Cardinale, Harper Street acknowledged and thanked Council Member Matt Hersh for the work that he was doing with the pocket parks and she is really excited. She said that she was excited for the town tables to come back hopefully sooner than later. She thanked everyone for all the work that's being done there and hoped the momentum continued. I've talked about this before, there still is not a vaccine for under five. We need places as the weather gets warmer. It's so much easier to have them play outside. Let's keep the ball rolling there. Thanks Matt.

Mayor Brill Mittler said he has been a strong advocate and we were just in a meeting to discuss some of the smaller parks around town also, he's there for all of our families.

Councilman Hersh thanked the Mayor and Abby Stern Cardinale, he pointed out the strong effect of advocacy in this instance. You know we all use and appreciate Highland Park in different ways. I have young kids but they're old enough to be vaccinated so I have a different experience with our recreational areas. It was really important to hear from Abby and Dan and the families who need our pocket parks to be functioning particularly as you know our county park is out of commission right now. As the County works to replace the equipment that was hurt in Hurricane Ida so advocacy is so important and more effective than name calling that we may if we sometimes hear up here, but thank you, thank you very much.

Dr. Pandey, Riverview Terrace said he was a scientist and professor. I used to be the exhibit my board of managers at Red Girls University and also Middlesex County College. Mayor, you are doing a good job as Mayor. Is there any Community Center where people of Highland Park can meet together and have some meetings? We have to build America great again. We have to do all the good things. Somebody was talking about marijuana and how people are exploiting it so we have to educate the younger generation. Bring younger generation in the right way to tell them the importance that America is a great Country. I have a business in New Brunswick, NJ and unfortunately the owner of the building is trying to demolish that building and make apartment complexes. I have already invested 3 million dollars there. I'm the first guy in the world who brought the first medicine to treat sickle cell anemia. We made history. It is very, very important that we the community we must meet we must talk about certain things and build the community to be great again. That's all and the compliments to you, young lady and as Mayor you are doing a good job. Keep up the good work.

Mayor Bill Mittler thanked Dr. Pandey. One of the things that she was working on with the Medical Professionals on the Covid-19 Advisory Panel and with the Borough Administrator is a plan for reopening our buildings which we'll make access at our Community Center, which is also our Senior Center so that we can once again utilize our buildings for meetings. So I'm hoping that by the middle of March we'll have a plan in place for reopening. Thank you so much for selecting Highland Park for your residence. Good luck in New Brunswick with your business and the building.

Elizabeth Roesener said that she has some people in the community texting her and saying that they're unable to get into this meeting and I just wanted to let you know. She said she has a concern as a crossing guard who stands on the main corner in town, she stands there with all the kids and it smells like weed non-stop. If we're going to be high in Highland Park, what's going to be our agenda going forward? How are we going to curb this? How safe is it for our kids? Are there studies on smoking pot while hot that are smoking pot and driving? What does this mean for our kids?

Mayor Brill Mittler asked the Chief of Police to please address the concerns raised stated by Ms. Roesener.

Chief Abrams said he noticed it as well when he drives in and drives home from work. He is not particularly sure if it's coming from a passing motor vehicle or from people walking from houses. You're not allowed to drive intoxicated so a DUI would work for alcohol and for any other kind of intoxicating liquor or drugs. If you think they are impaired call the Police Department and we will send an officer out to try to locate the vehicle and if they also witness bad driving they will conduct a motor vehicle stop. Throughout the course of that stop if they determine that there might be the use of alcohol or intoxicating drugs then they will conduct field sobriety tests and go from there. The laws did change decriminalizing marijuana and just like beer and wine. Liquor is legal to own and possess and use recreationally, they're not legal to use while you operate a motor vehicle while you're intoxicated to the laws did not affect that. That is still illegal to do. So if you smell it, if you see it call and we'll see if we can get an officer out there as quick as we can. Obviously there's a lot more people driving than there are officers. You know we do our best, if you see it call us let us know.

Mary Botteon, 709 Madison said she also wanted to speak on that topic of what I'm going to call erosion of the public trust related to the Council's handling of the proposed pot ordinance and the proposed amendments. Two days after the last Council Meeting on February 15<sup>th</sup> in which they rolled out a bunch of amendments to the already controversial pot plans, one of your sitting Council members Matt Hersh issued an appeal on social media for anyone who wants these commercial businesses in Highland Park to call in at the next meeting and say so. This was not an open appeal to all residents to call in at the meeting which there will be a vote. This was really to only those who agreed with the proposal. You know it's apparent now that the temperature out here on this is pretty chilly on all this so for you to actively go out and start recruiting people to agree with the seven of you is really, really incomprehensible. The Council has been ignoring those of us who disagree with their pot plans and to actually invite in only people who want as many pot shops here as the seven of you do, I really think it's unethical. The second issue you know really is a big issue and this is a bit more complex. I may have to send you some information you know subsequent to this but this is. Inaccurate information has been presented to the public and the Planning Board regarding the issue of Class 6 delivery services. Towns in fact can opt out and regulate Class 6 businesses they just cannot prevent drivers employed by those businesses to enter the town. This is completely contrary to what you have been presenting to the public and to the Planning Board for months.

Rita Polos, 48 Sky View Terrace said she wanted to state that she am opposed to six pot shops opening up. She thinks it is highly irresponsible to have as many pot shops as we do nail salons. If not more, I think it would be more reasonable to test the waters rather than to jump in like that. I think that there should be more community input regarding this. think it's a little irresponsible and that's my opinion.

Borough Attorney Ed Schmierer said this afternoon the Clerk's Office received a message from a resident who could not attend tonight and asked to read it into the record so with your permission I'll do that. "I'm reaching out regarding our Council's seemingly fast track decision introducing multiple pot stores in our small town. I've listened to several Town meetings and I don't understand why the Council never addresses the legitimate concerns. The question should be simple due diligence ones and yet are dismissed with abrupt responses or silence. Many including myself strongly support decriminalization of pot as that is a social justice issue, however, that's a far cry from going to zero to six pot stores and unlimited delivery when pot was illegal just a year ago or more and even longer for decades. Studies have been done, in the communities of Colorado and California both have expressed regret how fast they approved the seemingly legitimate process. An odd answer of five to six stores paralleling themselves and a number of liquor stores doesn't make any sense. Why risk impaired public behavior and driving because you can also drink excessively at least with alcohol, we know how to spot the abuse. Seventy percent of the Municipalities smartly are waiting and seeing. We risk Highland Park being the one-stop pot shop for the area. Do you want to be known as pot city New Jersey, I'm against selling with any psychedelic drugs on the street? At lease I would hope

you would pilot one store and assess the impact in all directions. Who are you really serving? Lower income communities are against such legalization for fear of abuse as are many others. I can't see this process as being driven by middle class personnel, personal recreational desire or faux economic projections which don't pay into account the real cost. I hope the Council reconsiders or at least slows down a decision from which it's impossible to pull the pot back into the plastic bag" that regards, Peter Avery. Thank you Madam.

Abby Stern Cardinale, 221 Harper said she wanted to comment on some of what she's heard tonight. She is hearing things that are inaccurate about people saying you never reply that you're just giving the cold shoulder, and understands that it's frustrating but Borough has given clear replies. I also think that there's complete misrepresentation of what the community wants.

Bob Aiello, Cedar Lane said he would like to propose that we ask for two or three volunteers from each side of this issue to put together a basic simple report listing a few studies. It would make sense if we approach this in a rational way and have two or three people on each side of this issue prepare a report come back with studies from some of the other places that have implemented this and let's have a little bit more of an opportunity to look at the pros and cons.

Leah Kambitsis, 459 Lincoln Ave said she has have major concerns about the six stores that are supposed to be coming out into the neighborhood and particularly for the children, many who are walking our streets in Highland Park throughout the day. So I have a lot of concerns about this and the message that's going to be sending to our children. She was informed the Program being led by the Highland Park Police Department Lead, which was titled, "Too Good For Drugs" was canceled suddenly and that the majority of the members of the Board of Ed voted against continuing this program because they thought it was not appropriate for a Police Officer to teach this program. So I thought it was just ironic that this happened and Highland Park is planning on still putting up these pot stores throughout town, this is my concern. She stated that she was not in favor of it.

Steve Rubin, 66 South Adelaide Ave expressed his objection to these stores as well, and is not an asset for the community. He indicated that he did not think it was right of someone like Abby to make a comment that the people who she knows are in favor of it but don't show up and talk but she's speaking for the majority all of the town.

Karen Evile Avery, 402 Graham Street said she was a pediatrician in the Central Jersey area as well as in the Highland Park and asked about educating the children. Was concerned about school programming cancelled. She asked how all students, public and private or specialized would be educated and how will that be addressed and how can you go forth with this type of plan without putting that firmly in place?

Mayor Brill Mittler said it was her understanding that the Board of Ed, which is separate from the Council did not discontinue the Leads Program, it's going to be taught by a regular teacher so I don't want anyone to think that the program has gone away altogether.

Councilman Hale said she knows that she forwarded to the Board of Education a series of seminars that the Cannabis Regulatory Committee is doing to put forth ideas how Municipalities can use money from cannabis sales and state money for activities like that was discussed. There are three seminars helping communities plan and put forth those types of activities. Mayor Brill Mittler said yes that's true and what can be done is publicize when one first Central Jersey is happening. I'll make sure that Harry does get that at least that seminar out there for folks if they're interested.

Milagros Aguayo, Highland Park spoke against the sale of marijuana in Highland Park and asked if someone could answer her questions, is there are any specific marijuana prevention programs for schools and is it true that the former drug free zone has been removed in Highland Park and if so why?

Mayor Brill Mittler suggested speaking with the Board of Education about school programming and asked the Borough Attorney to address the drug free zone areas.

Borough Attorney Ed Schmierer said the drug free school zones will still remain. But if the marijuana and the cannabis is deregulated that would not qualify as a drug that would necessarily be picked up in that zone but the drug-free zones are not going away. They'll remain around every school.

Ilona Rizzo, 11 Exeter Street said I just also wanted to state my concern related to these shops in the area and in the neighborhood. Her children are already grown, but at the same time we



are such a small borough such a small town and we do have a lot of young children walking around because we are so small. I am very much against having these shops in the neighborhood and basically just handed out to us on a silver plate to our children.

Mayor Brill Mittler asked the Borough Attorney or Borough Administrator if there was an age requirement for entering a cannabis shop. Borough Attorney Ed Schmierer stated it is 21 years of age just like alcohol.

Mayor Brill Mittler said she wanted to ensure folks understand that their children or young adults under 21 cannot enter these shops.

Borough Administrator Teri Jover made an additional clarification she has heard a couple of speakers say in our neighborhoods. The areas where cannabis retail or delivery is permitted is the central business districts, which is mainly that Raritan Avenue corridor that we consider Main Street Upper Raritan, 27 on our way to Edison and Woodbridge Avenue, which are our commercial districts.

Karen Avery expressed concern that the Council does not have a clear understanding of what the Borough's Programs will be and referred to seminars without having this firmly in place that's my first statement again, concern for the kids. Secondly I did not hear any answer to my question regarding numerous non-public school students who attend other academic institutions. Plus the children who are too young for school less than say four years old.

Mayor Brill Mittler indicated that the Borough did not have control over the schools as but do work very closely with the President of the Board of Education, however, private schools are certainly something we have no control over. She suggested reaching out the non-public schools. She said she has asked the Board of Education to speak with the Borough Social Worker as well as about programs that we might implement for the residents here. She noted that that children cannot go into these shops,

Mary Botteon, 709 Madison said she just needed to address again two inaccurate statements that have just recently been presented. The statement that children are not allowed inside these businesses that is not correct. The Borough Attorney said that drug-free zones still exist but in Highland Park do not exist for commercial pot. These facilities can be near churches, synagogues, schools, the parks and public places of gathering. Highland Park has made a terrible decision to not put back drug-free zones for commercial marijuana and that's disgraceful and you did not accurately describe that.

Mayor Brill Mittler, clarified when speaking about children not being able to go into the stores, certainly was not referring to a parent taking their child in there, because that's the parents option.

Speaker Maha said considering we are very close to Rutgers University here, how are we going to maintain a congregation of young adults outside these shops and probably causing a nuisance for the neighbors and is there going to be any specific rules on that?

Mayor Brill Mittler indicated that the Borough does have noise ordinances, any of the Noise Ordinances would also apply to any place in Highland Park.

Speaker Maha said but in connection with what everybody has been echoing, I also want to raise my concern regarding this and I think that just the noise ordinance might not be the way to go because unless we have a very clear plan of how we will maintain the neighborhood in terms of crowding outside the shop or people getting it and then passing it on to others outside. If we don't have a policy, I think that is a little concerning overall.

Ted Manhire, 5A South Adelaide Avenue, said that this is going to bring in a lot of people that we really don't need and are unwanted in town. They're going to be sitting around in lounges getting high and does not think anybody here can agree that it's a good thing. I'm glad and happy that you heard me.

Melanie O'Connell, 234 Carsey Street said questioned as to why the business district that's between Upper Raritan and Upper Woodbridge is the one that's being looked at for these shops. I just don't understand why we're not looking at other business districts within our Borough. You know we have residential neighborhoods right off of those districts. Houses are literally 50 feet from what we might be calling business districts. I'm not in agreement with that but if you could please explain.

Councilman Hale said he wanted to say that the cannabis businesses are not being targeted in a particular neighborhood. One of the places they could be is Woodbridge Avenue, downtown Raritan and Upper Raritan.

Anik Avidras, 412 Harrison Avenue, said she loves living in Highland Park. Unfortunately, two years ago neighbors on Harrison ended up being drug dealers, the drug dealers came day and night causing so much traffic and all kinds of people, teenagers and crazy people were coming in and out. Police were called but wouldn't come. Finally the owner of the house decided to terminate the lease and opened the house, it was a wreck. Bringing this type of business in Highland Park is a very scary business and was not in favor of cannabis in Highland Park.

Mayor Brill Mittler said there being no one further, closed public participation.

**Work Session Items: No formal action to be taken:**

- a. Use of Borough Property: 212 Raritan Ave and 101 Raritan Ave (TJ)

Borough Administrator Teri Jover said 212 Raritan is the property adjacent to the Municipal Parking Lot on Raritan Avenue, where the main street offices are. We have as you probably recall purchased the building a number of years ago and we assumed the lease from the prior owner, the one that Main Street had an agreement with and we're overdue for establishing a new agreement. I've already been in touch with Main Street. She will be working with the Borough Attorney on a lease agreement for their offices as well as for the emergency shelter that we're using the apartment upstairs. I just wanted to put that on the Governing body and the public's radar that it's coming up at forthcoming meeting. No proposed changes to the existing use and occupancy of the building. The Borough owns 101 Raritan Avenue, otherwise known as Bergen Auto, which is being utilized briefly as a place to build the bookmobile, and is now on display over at that Main Street building. A proposal was from the Lower Raritan Watershed Partnership requesting to utilize the space for their Boat Building Program that they had successfully launched in New Brunswick. They lost their space there and they're very eager to get it back up and running in our area. They want to maintain the connection to New Brunswick and Highland Park. They've also established some local Watershed Based Environmental Education Programs to supplement part of that program. The Borough is working with the Reformed Church and their partners on using the space temporarily for the refugees. Most likely just through the end of the calendar year as you know it would be a temporary usage.

- b. Energy Tax Receipts

Mayor Brill Mittler said there's something in the order of 11 million dollars that the Borough is owed to date, there are plans for going back as far as 5 years to find a way to get some of the funding back to the municipalities and going forward allowing the municipalities to keep the money that's rightfully theirs.

Borough Attorney Schmierer said it was good news that's picking up some momentum again and we'll have to see if they do follow through. At least it's back on the agenda.

Council President George said on that matter he thinks that there are some municipalities circulating a resolution supporting the bill. At least one of its formulations I think it's actually designed as tax relief because at least the one version I read has a dollar for dollar credit. It's supposed to reduce taxes to some extent by some formula. He asked if the Borough received a proposal resolution to join the momentum because as you've said there's finally some momentum to maybe actually get this done. He said that he would check with the League of Municipalities and see if there's a resolution that we can pass along at our next meeting.

Councilwoman Foster thanked the Mayor for staying on top of this since you got on Council you've been at this and you stayed at it, you had tenacity and it's paying off, 11 million dollars is a lot to lose.

There being no further business, on motion made by Councilwoman Canavera, seconded by Councilwoman Foster, and carried by affirmative voice vote of all Councilpersons present, the meeting adjourned at 8:47 pm.

Respectfully Submitted

Jennifer Santiago  
Borough Clerk