

REGULAR MEETING – MAY 17, 2022

A Regular Meeting of the Highland Park Mayor and Council was held via Zoom, on Tuesday, May 17 2022, and was called to order by Mayor Brill Mittler at 7:00 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 May 13, 2022 and was posted on the Borough website at www.hpboro.com and on the bulletin board at Borough Hall, 221 South Fifth Avenue, Highland Park, NJ on May 13, 2022, and has remained continuously posted as required by law.

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

Absent: None.

Mayor Brill Mittler read a proclamation honoring Dwayne Haskins.

On motion made by Councilman George, seconded by, Councilwoman Canavera the minutes of the Regular/Work Session Meetings held February 1, 2022 and February 15, 2022, were approved, as distributed, by the following roll call vote, to wit:

Ayes: Councilpersons Canavera, Foster, George, Hale, Hersh, Kim-Chohan.

Opposed: None.

Absent: None.

Abstain: None.

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

Councilwoman Canavera reported that she would like to remind drivers that children walking to school have the right of way when crossing the street. She sees drivers daily not yielding the right of way and creating a dangerous situation for our children. She reminded everyone in need that we have 2 programs to help with food insecurity. The Community Food Pantry is open the 2nd and 4th Thursday from 9:00 a.m. to 10:45 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. and the Saturday following the Thursday of every month from 9:30 a.m. -10:30 a.m. Donations can be made using their Amazon wish list. The HP Gives a Hoot Food pantry is every Tuesday at the Zone 6 teen center from 10:00 a.m. until 11:00 a.m. Donations can be made by mailing a check to boro hall with a memo that it is for HP Gives a Hoot. If you can't get to the teen center during the hours, please call the teen center to arrange a pick up. Anyone with a mental health crisis please reach out for help: Middlesex county crisis hotlines - Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care HOTLINE: (855) 515-5700; Raritan Bay Medical Center HOTLINE: (732) 442-3794 Or Text HOME to 741741. On a personal note, while public safety is Councilwoman Foster's bracket, she wanted to thank four of our police members. She recently had a client who was scared of someone who was trying to take advantage of them. Throughout the day he was helped by Lieutenant Thomas Hammill, Officer Haas, Officer DeCosta and Officer Middleton. The client has cognitive disabilities and his family reported to me how thankful they were when they showed up and saw that their loved one was being treated with such respect and understanding. While all those involved were amazing, Officer Middleton saw how nervous the client was about his family and staff leaving for the night and gave his card to the client and told him he would be on duty all night and to call him if he needed him. My client is able to sleep and feel safe again because of these four officers. Thank you Elsie and Chief Abrams for getting our officers the training to deal with all of our residents and their different needs.

Councilwoman Foster reported that summer is upon us and children should be wearing their helmets as they ride their bikes. We need to watch out for pedestrians as they cross the street and we need to be very careful on the roads as we go about our day. Watch out for people riding their bikes or e-scooters. The Junior Cadet Academy is still accepting applications and it will start on July 11th at 8:00 a.m. It is a great learning experience for young people. Interested applicants should reach out to Officer O'Mara at 732-572-3800, ext. 4262. The last day for conversation with a cop is May 31st from 5:00 p.m. to 6:00p.m. at the community center. The Zone 6 Teen Center has been doing some really incredible things. They played against the cat crew and beat them 72 to 54. Young men from the Zone 6 Teen Center attended a function at Middlesex County College. It was a conference on young men and dealt with topics such as mental health and the impact of covid. It was an opportunity for them to share and to listen to panelists that have gone through similar experiences that they might be facing. They plan to work on a program for young women very soon. On June 5th, the Zone 6 Teen Center will be having their annual celebration with a cookout. On June 17th they are going to have a Juneteenth celebration that will start at 10:00 a.m. with a march from the high school to borough hall and then they will be hoisting the flag. They are getting ready to start their summer programs and they will be adding a conversational Chinese program. Lastly, she commented that she is tired of the violence and crime that's targeted against our community. On Wednesday night, in front of the Reformed Church at 7:00 p.m. there is a going to be a candlelight vigil.

Councilman Hersh reported that work continues in Donaldson Park on the restoration of the playground areas damaged from Hurricane Ida. He thanked the Recreation and Arts Committee, Borough Administrator Jover and Mayor Brill Mittler for keeping after the County and making sure that they adhere to fast tracking this project. They received an update from the County today that the contractor is hoping to have the surface materials on site tomorrow. There is an extensive area of the playground that requires surfacing and the contractor estimate that they will need about 10 good weather days to apply and then the equipment can be installed and be inspected by a certified playground safety inspector. The Grove 1 playground is also moving along and the contractor is finishing up drainage work. There is also surfacing work needed there. The contractor will be focusing on completing the tennis court playground and they hope to have everything completed before the 4th of July fireworks. The track and field at the high school and middle school is about to be restored and the project is going to commence on Monday, May 23rd. The Helles Construction Company will begin work upgrading the complex that is the football field, track and play areas. The work will include resurfacing the track, installing a new turf field and upgrading the area lighting

to energy efficient fixtures. The work is expected to be completed in early September. This is a huge municipal asset and a local and regional amenity. The renovation of the recreation complex is funded by \$750,000 from the New Jersey State budget, the fiscal year 2022 budget. Those funds were matched by funds from the Highland Park Board of Education. The fireworks event will be Sunday, July 3rd with festivities beginning at 6:00 p.m. The fireworks display begins at 9:20 p.m. in Donaldson Park. The rain date is July 7th. The annual Memorial Day Parade will take place on Monday, May 30th. The parade will begin in New Brunswick at the Redshaw Elementary School, 216 Livingston Avenue at 10:30 a.m. The parade will arrive in Monument Square around 11:00 a.m. and there will be a small ceremony. The parade will proceed into Highland Park and end at the Doughboy Monument. The Highland Park Arts Commission has been incredibly active. They were at the Farmer's Market on Friday where the Highland Park Guerilla Art Club, led by Arts Commissioner Nikki Gonzalez, with a huge backdrop of a beach scene that they designed and selfie takers got to choose from a box of beach themed props and stand in the beach scene to get their photo taken. Residents should keep an eye out for our positivity puffs that are popping up in expected places all over town, each with a message of hope and cheer made by the artists themselves. You can follow the Arts Commission on Facebook and Instagram. Lastly, he noted that our hearts are with the people of Buffalo who lost their lives in the racist attack.

Councilwoman Kim-Chohan reported that one the property assessment firm is hired to conduct the revaluation, visits to all private and commercial properties will start this summer. They will make three attempts to gain permission to enter your property. It is in your best interest to grant them access to your property to reassess its value. If they do not gain access, they will resort to estimating the property's value and that estimate may overstate its value. Her thoughts and prayers are with Buffalo as well.

Councilman Hale reported that the Highland Park High School baseball team is going to be playing against Bound Brook on Friday, May 27th at 7:00 p.m. at Somerset Patriots stadium. Tickets are available for purchase for \$15 and you get a ticket for a Somerset Patriot game. May 26th and 27th are planting days for Main Street Highland Park for the big planters that are up and down Raritan Avenue. On May 27th there will be a berry pie contest at the Farmer's Market. Saturday, May 28th is the first outdoor movie event of the season with a showing of Dark Star. May 28th is the first Night Owl Market of the season and you can find information about all of these events at mainstreethp.org. They are putting together and will be sending out a parking survey for thoughts about parking downtown. This is EMS week and his son is an EMT and as a result, he has become familiar with all of the things that our emergency services do and he thanked all who serve. Scooters will be coming to Highland Park around June 10th.

Councilman George reported that this is national public works appreciation week. He extended thanks and congratulations to all of the Public Works employees for their efforts to make Highland Park a more desirable place to be in rain, snow, cold or perfect spring days. They do everything from trash and recycling to planting and trimming trees, help to maintain our parks and natural spaces and help set up events for the residents. He is proud to be their liaison. Bulk trash pickups will continue through the summer and you need to make an appointment by calling 732-247-9379. Garden waste leaves and grass pickup is still in the leaf bags and that is separate from bulk trash. Pothole repairs will continue into June and paving season will be commencing this summer which will cause traffic problems. A listing of street maintenance can be found on the Borough's website. The Shade Tree Advisory Committee met last week and discussed amendments to the shade tree ordinance to improve the tree planting schedule. STAC worked with the Borough advising us to implement a more manageable scaled down schedule which allowed for greater emphasis on maintenance and putting more of the budget into maintaining trees and watering them which is the most critical task for the first two years of a new planting. STAC printed door hangers with care instructions about watering, mulching and feeding for the locations where they were planted. He thanked the volunteers who worked hard on the improvement and also walking the streets to put in the placards. Sustainable Highland Park participated in the recent presentation by New Jersey Food and Water Watch in opposition to the second proposed gas power plant. He and Tina Weishaus spoke and urged all Middlesex County towns to speak out about their concerns with the emissions from this plant which is now pending a permit approval from NJDEP. We pointed out that the NJDEP is actually considering regionalizing the regulatory permitting scheme so that more than just one site is considered, but all of the neighboring towns and populations and natural resources are considered and et they are still moving forward with the permit even though they are planning to change the way that permit is going to be done. He thanked Tina for appearing and he thanked the Mayor for the opportunity to address that group. The Environmental Commission is working on two initiatives. They continue to work on the leaf blower ordinance. They talked about research on that program, especially the growing availability of electric blowers. They run at a significantly less decibel level than gas blowers. They are also working on the green greenway trail system, doing an assessment of the old plan, so that we are in a position to move forward with the grant. The meadows trail crew has begun work on repair and expansion down in the meadows trail. They will be repairing and expanding the boardwalk trail which was washed out by Hurricane Ida. He reported that the Library is back to full access. It's been a long time due to storms and water damage as well as the pandemic. The Library has an energetic, talented and creative staff that were recruited by Executive Director Jagers. They had a myriad of events even when they were closed. They are expanding into neighborhoods and they are doing programs at the parks, at the schools, and at the community center. They have a branch library at a laundromat and the emphasis is on young readers who would ordinarily have to accompany a parent to the laundromat. He thanked Councilman Hersh and Councilwoman Kim-Chohan for joining him at the opening of the Gold Mine Barber Shop downtown. The shop is designed with a much more modern catch. He voiced his concerns about the shooting in Buffalo.

Borough Administrator Jover – No Report.

Borough Attorney Schmierer- No Report.

Mayor Brill Mittler commented that June is a busy month. There will be three separate flag raisings. On June 8th they will be raising the pride flag, on June 17th they will be raising the Juneteenth flag and on June 28th, which is Kiev Day, they will be raising the Ukranian flag. All of this will take place in the parking lot outside the Recreation Center. June is Caribbean Heritage Month and a flag will also be raised.

Tuesday, June 7th is the primary election and polls will be open from 6:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. Residents are urged to vote on June 7th either in person or by mailing in their ballot. There is a ballot mailbox in front of borough hall. She congratulated Merey Venezuelan Cuisine at 128 Raritan Avenue. They were voted one of the two best restaurants in Middlesex County. She congratulated Highland Park's newest retailer, Gold Mine Barber at 312 Raritan Avenue. She thanked Councilpersons George, Hersh and Kim-Chohan for showing up and joining in that grand opening. She had the pleasure of joining Highland Park's own and the Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner La Tourette in planting a tree on the grounds of Bartle School. She thanked Principal Jennifer Knapp for participating and allowing the borough to plant that tree there. Year to date, Highland Park has been successful in procuring over \$395,000 in grant funding for various initiatives. The figure does not include the American Rescue Plan Act monies that have been earmarked for capital improvement projects throughout the borough as well as a \$750,000 grant from the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs for upgrades to the recreation complex at the high school. Additionally, the Borough has more than \$432,000 in grant applications outstanding and they look forward to hearing about those in the coming months. She thanked all of the Council Members that worked on this. She also thanked the Borough Administrator and her Assistant for making sure that these things came our way. Lastly, she reported that she is working towards a return to in-person council meetings sometime in June. She will be watching the Highland Park numbers. Covid numbers were going down and now they are starting to trend back up. If the trend continues, we may have to stay virtual a bit longer. Many on Council and many of our residents are anxious for us to get back to in-person meetings and she wants to see that happen.

Mayor Brill Mittler opened the meeting for public discussion and called upon all those wishing to speak to identify themselves. The total time for this session is 21 minutes; three minutes maximum per speaker. Comments are limited to items on the agenda. If you want to speak on an item that is not listed, there will be an opportunity to do so later in the meeting.

Rebecca Cypess, Brookdale Court, commented that she is speaking on behalf of herself and the Middlesex Black Jewish Coalition. She expressed her gratitude to the Council for considering adoption of a resolution endorsing the establishment of a New Jersey Reparations Task Force.

John Kovac, 206 North 3rd Avenue, commented about the vandalism to the mural and the video Councilman Hersh posted on Facebook.

Alvin Chin, 31 South 3rd Avenue, commented about the affordable housing set aside ordinance on the agenda. He is worried about some of the wording in the proposed ordinance may disincentivize the type multi-family development that this community has accepted.

No one else appearing to be heard, Mayor Brill Mittler closed the public discussion.

The Clerk reported that an ordinance entitled, BOND ORDINANCE PROVIDING FOR VARIOUS 2022 ROADWAY IMPROVEMENTS BY AND IN THE BOROUGH OF HIGHLAND PARK, IN THE COUNTY OF MIDDLESEX, STATE OF NEW JERSEY; APPROPRIATING \$2,000,000 THEREFOR AND AUTHORIZING THE ISSUANCE OF \$1,900,000 BONDS OR NOTES OF THE BOROUGH TO FINANCE PART OF THE COST THEREOF, had been introduced in writing by the Finance Committee for consideration of passage on first reading by title.

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

Ayes: Councilpersons Canavera, Foster, George, Hale, Hersh, Kim-Chohan.

Opposed: None.

Absent: None.

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

No. 5-22-131

WHEREAS, an Ordinance entitled, BOND ORDINANCE PROVIDING FOR VARIOUS 2022 ROADWAY IMPROVEMENTS BY AND IN THE BOROUGH OF HIGHLAND PARK, IN THE COUNTY OF MIDDLESEX, STATE OF NEW JERSEY; APPROPRIATING \$2,000,000 THEREFOR AND AUTHORIZING THE ISSUANCE OF \$1,900,000 BONDS OR NOTES OF THE BOROUGH TO FINANCE PART OF THE COST THEREOF, 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, June 14, 2022, 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.

The Clerk reported that an ordinance entitled, AN ORDINANCE CONCERNING THE BOROUGH OF HIGHLAND PARK AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAM AND AMENDING CHAPTER 230 OF THE "CODE OF THE BOROUGH OF HIGHLAND PARK" CONCERNING DEED RESTRICTED CONTROL PERIODS AND MANDATORY SET-ASIDE REQUIREMENTS, had been introduced in writing by the Economic Development and Planning Committee for consideration of passage on first reading by title.

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

Ayes: Councilpersons Canavera, Foster, George, Hale, Hersh, Kim-Chohan.

Opposed: None.

Absent: None.

The following resolution, introduced by the Economic Development and Planning Committee, was duly adopted on motion made by Councilman Hale, seconded by Councilwoman Canavera, and carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote:

No. 5-22-132

WHEREAS, an Ordinance entitled, AN ORDINANCE CONCERNING THE BOROUGH OF HIGHLAND PARK AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAM AND AMENDING CHAPTER 230 OF THE "CODE OF THE BOROUGH OF HIGHLAND PARK" CONCERNING DEED RESTRICTED CONTROL PERIODS AND MANDATORY SET-ASIDE REQUIREMENTS, 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, June 14, 2022, at 7:00 PM, for the purpose of considering said Ordinance on final passage after public hearing thereon.

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Resolution Nos. 5-22-133 through 5-22-141 were duly adopted on a motion made by Councilwoman Foster, seconded by Councilman Hersh, and carried by the following roll call vote, to wit:

Ayes: Councilpersons Canavera, Foster, George, Hale, Hersh, Kim-Chohan.

Opposed: None.

Absent: None.

Abstain: Councilperson Hersh (Resolution No. 5-22-138).

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

No. 5-22-133

WHEREAS, the Borough of Highland Park has recently switched mobile telephone providers and has surplus mobile phones that can no longer be used; and

WHEREAS, Borough employees who had mobile phones were given the option to purchase their old mobile phones for personal use; and

WHEREAS, Scott Brescher, Director of Code Enforcement, indicated an interest in purchasing his cell phone from the Borough for its fair market value.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Borough Council of the Borough of Highland Park that the Borough may sell Scott Brescher his old mobile phone for personal use at the fair market value of \$100.

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

No. 5-22-134

WHEREAS, the Shade Tree Advisory Committee (STAC) desires to continue to replenish the Borough's tree canopy and meet the goals outlined in their approved Community Forestry Management Plan (CFMP); and

WHEREAS, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) has funds available for this initiative through the Urban & Community Forestry Program; and

WHEREAS, STAC desires to apply for a grant from NJDEP in the amount of \$150,000 which will require a 25% match totaling \$37,500.

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, on behalf of STAC, the grant application to NJDEP.

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.

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

No. 5-22-135

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:

Tracey Horan, Court Administrator, at an annual salary of \$77,650.00, effective 01/01/2022.

Thomas Mancuso, Tax Assessor, at an annual salary of \$51,068.00, effective 01/01/2022.

Kathleen Davies, Tax Assessor Clerk, at an annual salary of \$23,980.00, effective 01/01/2022.

Gladys T. Sepulveda, Part-time Telecommunicators, at an hourly rate of \$22.90, effective 05/16/2022.

Frank Santore, Part-time Fire Fighter, at an annual salary of \$50,000.00, effective 05/25/2022.

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.

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

No. 5-22-136

WHEREAS, the Borough of Highland Park has need of the services of an engineer to provide engineering services in connection with the Central Avenue One Way Traffic in accordance with letter proposal from Bruce Koch, CME Associates, dated April 22, 2022, attached to the original of this resolution; and

WHEREAS, such services are professional services as defined in the Local Public Contracts Law, N.J.S.A. 40A:11-1 et seq.; and

WHEREAS, CME Associates, Parlin, N.J., is a firm of licensed engineers of the State of New Jersey with extensive experience in providing these services; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor and Council desire to provide for the method of compensation of said consulting engineer; and

WHEREAS, funds for this purpose are available in Account No. 2-01-20-165-233 in an amount not to exceed \$8,000.00, as reflected by the Certification of Funds Available by Chief Financial Officer certification no. 2022-01.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Borough Council of the Borough of Highland Park that the Mayor and Borough Clerk are authorized and directed to execute and attest on behalf of the Borough an Agreement for professional services with CME Associates, 3141 Bordentown Avenue, Parlin, NJ 08859, a copy of which is attached to the original of this original, and that notice of this contract be published as required by law and

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

No. 5-22-137

WHEREAS, Michael McGlynn 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 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 Operator Licenses to the aforesaid applicants.

The following resolution, introduced by the Council as a Whole, was duly adopted as above:

No. 5-22-138

WHEREAS, housing insecurity is one of the biggest threats to public health and safety at any time, but never more so than during the coronavirus pandemic, and our policies must center those who have been harmed most by the pandemic so that we recover equitably; and

WHEREAS, Congress is considering once-in-a lifetime investments in housing affordability, stability and security that will lay a foundation that help create a more affordable NJ for generations to come; and

WHEREAS, the pandemic has caused untold economic hardship for residents and communities, with the threat of foreclosures, evictions and homelessness for many families through no fault of their own; and

WHEREAS, only one in four households eligible for rental assistance receives it due to decades of chronic underfunding by Congress. People of color – especially women of color – and other marginalized renters are most harmed by the housing crisis; and

WHEREAS, in NJ, renters need an income of \$31.96/hour on average to afford a modest, two-bedroom apartment. This is far above the incomes of many working families, seniors, and people with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, there is no state or congressional district in America with enough supply of affordable homes for families with the lowest incomes; and

WHEREAS, everyone has struggled under the weight of the pandemic, Black and Brown residents in our state have been disproportionately impacted, while continuing to suffer from hundreds of years of systemic racism and institutional inequities; and

WHEREAS Congress must work to bridge the gap between incomes and housing costs by expanding rental assistance; and

WHEREAS, by expanding rental assistance, the economic recovery package can help bridge the gap between wages and housing costs for America's lowest-income and most marginalized households; and

WHEREAS, by preserving the nation's public housing and building new homes affordable to people with the greatest needs through the national Housing Trust Fund, these essential investments directly address the severe shortage of affordable housing for people with the lowest incomes.

THEREFORE, the U.S. must make robust investments in affordable homes in any budget reconciliation bill similar to what was in the Build Back Better Bill that passed the House, including an expansion of rental assistance by \$25 billion to serve 300,000 additional households; \$65 billion to repair public housing, which is home to 2.5 million residents; and \$15 billion in the national Housing Trust Fund to build and preserve 150,000 homes affordable to people with the greatest needs.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Borough of Highland encourages Congress to include robust funding to address housing instability and unaffordability and to mitigate the threat of pandemic-related homelessness in any budget reconciliation bill.

The following resolution, introduced by the Council as a Whole, was duly adopted as above:
No. 5-22-139

WHEREAS, this is a resolution endorsing the establishment of the “New Jersey Reparations Task Force” to conduct research and develop reparatory proposals and recommendations to address the generational harms caused by New Jersey’s role in America’s institution of slavery and its legacy of systemic racial discrimination; and

WHEREAS, the Borough of Highland Park is a multicultural and diverse community; and

WHEREAS, over four hundred years ago, enslaved Africans were brought to Jamestown, Virginia as captives; and

WHEREAS, from 1619 to 1865, approximately 4,000,000 Africans and their descendants, under a practice that was constitutionally and statutorily sanctioned, were enslaved in the United States and the colonies that became the United States; and

WHEREAS, the system of slavery that flourished in the United States constituted an immoral, shameful, and inhumane deprivation of the life, liberty, humanity, citizenship, and cultural heritage of Africans and also denied them, among other things, the fruits of their own labor upon which this country, and its economy, was built; and

WHEREAS, an overwhelming body of scholarship, legal and community evidentiary documentation, and the modern day lived experiences of the descendants of enslaved Africans form the basis for inquiry into the ongoing effects of the institution of slavery and its legacy of persistent systemic structures of discrimination on living Black people and communities in the United States; and

WHEREAS, following the abolition of slavery, state actors at the federal, state, and local level continued to perpetuate, condone, and profit from practices that continued to brutalize and systemically disadvantage Black people, including sharecropping, convict leasing, Jim Crow laws, redlining, unequal education, and disproportionate treatment at the hands of the criminal justice system; and

WHEREAS, contrary to what many people believe, slavery was not just a Southern institution and took root very deeply in New Jersey. In the early 17th Century, the first enslaved African people arrived in New Netherland, a Dutch settlement established in the Mid-Atlantic, which included portions of present-day New Jersey; and

WHEREAS, in 1844, New Jersey also restricted access to the ballot box by denying the vote to people with criminal convictions the same year it restricted voting to white men in its Constitution, the first state in the Northeast to do so. While many Northern states abolished slavery following the Civil War, New Jersey opposed the Emancipation Proclamation and was the last Northern state to abolish slavery. Following the Civil War, New Jersey refused to ratify the Reconstruction Amendments; and

WHEREAS, a direct line can be traced from New Jersey’s role in American slavery to its system today of voter suppression, racial wealth disparities, mass incarceration, racial segregation, and crumbling infrastructure in Black communities in New Jersey, such as the current elevated lead levels in water and homes; and

WHEREAS, the full effects of the institution and legacy of slavery on Black people and communities in New Jersey have not been sufficiently examined, nor have there been remedies for past injustice and present harm, or sufficient efforts at transformation; and

WHEREAS, as a result of historic and continued systemic racial discrimination, Black people in New Jersey confront some of the worst racial disparities in America, including but not limited to these areas; and

WHEREAS, Generations of African American youth have experienced racism in the youth justice system. Today, Black children are almost 18 times more likely to be locked up than white children, the highest disparity rate in America, even though Black and white children commit most offenses at similar rates. As of February 9, 2022, just 11 white children are incarcerated in New Jersey, compared to 65 Black children, according to State data; and

WHEREAS, New Jersey also experienced racially restrictive covenants that prohibited Black people from buying, leasing, or occupying property based on race, and redlining, which targeted Black people who were refused housing loans. Because home ownership is a primary driver of wealth, Black people in New Jersey confront one of the worst racial wealth gaps in America. The median net worth for New Jersey’s white families is \$309,000, the highest in the nation. For New Jersey’s Black families, it is incredibly just \$5,900, respectively. New Jersey also leads the nation in home foreclosures, according to ATTOM Data Solutions; and

WHEREAS, to address these systemic challenges in New Jersey, the “New Jersey Reparations Task Force” will research, write, and publish a report that will make the case for State-based reparations in New Jersey and outline policy recommendations that seek to repair the harm that has resulted from America’s original sin in the Garden State and its aftermath; and

WHEREAS, it is in the interest of the State and of the people of New Jersey for the government to initiate and foster methods of improving knowledge and understanding between African Americans and other ethnic groups in New Jersey and to adopt and initiate means to foster communication and dialogue, for the purpose of achieving truth, transformation, and reparation. Therefore, it is in the interest of the State and the people of New Jersey to establish the “New Jersey Reparations Task Force” to urge New Jersey to take responsibility for its role in American slavery and its aftermath, and to set forth comprehensive and sweeping policy recommendations aimed to develop profound and reparative financial and other investments in Black communities impacted by New Jersey’s history of systemic racial discrimination; and

WHEREAS, the urgency for the establishment of this task force is compelling. The elder African American population, some of whom are the grandchildren of formerly enslaved Black people and can bear direct witness to some of the severest forms of racism and oppression, is advancing in age. As too many generations of Black people have already passed without benefit of any remedies for the injustices they endured, it is important that New Jersey make the establishment of this task force an imperative; and

WHEREAS, this resolution endorses that the task force recommend appropriate ways to educate the New Jersey public of the task force’s findings.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Highland Park that this body fully endorses the enactment of the “New Jersey Reparations Task Force” bill; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Municipal Clerk is hereby directed to forward a certified copy of this resolution to the New Jersey Assembly and the New Jersey Senate, including the Borough’s local representatives of those bodies.

The following resolution, introduced by the Finance Committee, was duly adopted as above:
No. 5-22-140

WHEREAS, on a property known as Block 3406, Lot 35, also known as 409 South 9th Avenue, Highland Park, New Jersey, Tax Sale Certificate #20-00009 was sold on December 18, 2020, due to unpaid Municipal charges to FIG Cust FIG NJ19, LLC; and

WHEREAS, it was found that the a subsequent tax payment in the amount of \$2,308.89 was made by the lien holder on December 13, 2021 and in error was not recorded to the lien; and

WHEREAS, the lien was redeemed with an erroneous redemption amount; and

WHEREAS, according to statutes, FIG Cust FIG NJ19, LLC is entitled to a refund of the remainder of the redemption amount of \$2,308.89, along with legal interest in the amount of \$189.75.

NOW, THEREFORE IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED by the Borough Council of the Borough of Highland Park, County of Middlesex, and State of New Jersey:

1. That the proper Borough Officials are hereby directed to issue FIG Cust FIG NJ19, LLC payment for the remainder of the redemption amount for a total of \$2,489.64; and
2. That the Tax Collector is hereby authorized to adjust the records accordingly.

The following resolution, introduced by the Finance Committee, was duly adopted as above:
No. 5-22-141

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.

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 5/17/2022 can be found in the Bills List Journal Book No. 42.

Mayor Brill Mittler opened the meeting for public discussion and called upon all those wishing to speak to identify themselves. Speakers are limited to 3 minutes and the discussion to end at 9:00 PM.

John Kovac, 206 North 3rd Avenue, read a statement regarding the vandalism of the mural in Highland Park.

Dan Stern Cardinale, Harper Street, commented about the affordable housing ordinances. He expressed is concern about returning to in-person meetings as online meetings are much more accessible especially for people who might need to find sitters to attend the meetings. He asked that they consider preserving the online format.

Mary Forsberg, 317 Denison Street, commented that the no left turn on North 4th Avenue is not being enforced. She asked how many RFP's have been submitted and what tracts people are interested in. She commended the Borough for putting out a survey on parking and again talked about parking garage. She suggested that they include designate podium parking for any developer who builds apartments on Raritan Avenue.

Elizabeth Roesener, 22 Harrison Avenue, commented about the pot issue in town. There is no kind or non-invasive way to test people if they are pulled over. She is concerned about the driving she is witnessing with people not adhering to no left turn signs and not stopping at stop signs. She commented about some video footage she saw when the Council discussed pot. The community needs to be able to speak without feeling intimidated. She disagreed with the meetings not going to in-person because there are a lot of elderly people in this community who are concerned about crossing the street that do not have a voice at these meetings.

Betty Epstein, 208 Cedar Avenue, commented about the affordable housing issue and noted that Highland Park is one of the densest municipalities in Middlesex County. She commented about the no left turn on North 4th Avenue. She it against a parking garage on Raritan Avenue.

Elizabeth Roesener, 22 Harrison Avenue, commented again about testing for marijuana when you get pulled over and her concern about repeat offenders driving in Highland Park.

Mary Forsberg, 317 Denison Street, commented about parking garage and the fact that it will be on Raritan Avenue. She commented about the cannabis issue and sent the Governing Body an article from the New York Times about Toronto.

No one else appearing to be heard, Mayor Brill Mittler closed the public discussion.

Work Session:

Rent Control – Councilman George noted that at the Finance Committee last week they talked about getting started on a comprehensive review of our rent control. The old rent control ordinance is not going to work and is probably too far gone to resuscitate. Need to figure out how to set a baseline for the rents and how they are going to be able to control increases. To manage a comprehensive annual registration lease review and control with an appeal process would require two to three full-time people and we are not in a position to do that. They talked about streamlining the appeal process from the old ordinance to have an appeal process of three people; a neutral landlord representative, a tenant representative, chaired by a non-voting Council Member with a final appeal in any particular case to the Mayor and Council. His office pulled the Montclair ordinance and he also has Irvington's ordinance which is for a bigger audience but it is also more streamlined. They don't have a large staff managing it and they don't do annual registrations. We have a couple of models to look at and Matt has some ideas from the substantive and affordability context. We are in general agreement that it has to key to the consumer price index as a reasonable but across the board standard so that there is no complaint or challenge that Highland Park is

using something abstract. Mayor Brill Mittler asked that they utilize the knowledge of Scott Brescher who deals with many of the rental agencies and smaller owners. Councilman Hersh thanked Council President George for providing an accurate summary of what we've discussed and he thanked the Borough Administrator for preparing the memo based on our discussions. There is a housing crisis nationwide, including New Jersey, but we've also seen a real increase in correspondence from renters. Over 60% of Highland Park is rentals and the increase in correspondence is from renters who are renewing their leases and being met with significant increases. Mayor Brill Mittler noted that she receives phone calls in her office from people with the same struggles. As we go through this she hopes that they don't limit their review and recommendations to just the big garden apartment complexes. Councilman Hale asked about a timeline for this ordinance. Councilman George noted that the Public Works Committee will meet next week and they hope to have a draft ordinance for the June meeting. Councilwoman Canavera commented that we really need to work quickly on this because being someone who lives in an apartment complex she knows that a lot of her neighbor's leases are going to be up in June and August. Councilwoman Kim-Chohan asked what would happen if landlords are capped on amount they could raise rents. They would not renew tenants lease and find a new tenant. Councilman George will work with Councilman Hersh on this ordinance and they will present to the Public Works Committee and then send it over to the Economic Development Committee.

Accessible Parking Amendment – Councilman Canavera noted that there is no appeals process for an accessible parking permit. People apply with the Police Department and they do an investigation, take pictures and bring it to the Commission for Universal Access for recommendations and then either a permit is granted or it is not. The Police Department and the Commission for Universal Access feel that there needs to be an appeals process for people. They recommended that if somebody is denied, they should have 90 days to present the Clerk with a written request for a hearing and that an appeals committee, which would be the Health and Human Services Committee, along with a member of the public, to be appointed by the Mayor and Council. A meeting would be set within 30 days of the resident filing an appeal. The committee would issue a reply within 10 days. The Police Department would forward all reports and pictures to the committee within 10 days of the appeal being sent and then we would review their information, meet with the resident, and within 10 days of meeting, given them an answer. The Police Department feels it is very important that you know residents do have that option to appeal and speaking with her committee, they agreed that it is a good idea. Decisions to be made by people who know the ordinance well and will stick to the ordinance. Councilwoman Foster commented that she thought there should be two residents so that it takes out the issue of a possible tie in voting. Councilwoman Canavera noted that it is hard for the Commission on Universal Access to hear the appeal since they made the initial decision. Discussion amongst Council about having only two members of the Health and Human Services Committee and having three residents to hear appeals. Also discussion about five people hearing an appeal is too cumbersome and the process should be streamlined. Based on discussions tonight, Mayor Brill Mittler asked Councilwoman Canavera to go back to her committee with the feedback and see if they want to come up with another plan. If not, we can come back to this on the next work session. This does not seem urgent as there is just one person that has ever filed an appeal

The following resolution, introduced by the Council as a Whole, was duly adopted on motion made by Councilman George, seconded by Councilwoman Canavera, and carried by the following roll call vote, to wit:

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

No. 5-22-143

WHEREAS, Section 8 of the Open Public Meetings Act permits the exclusion of the public from a meeting in certain circumstances; and

WHEREAS, the Borough Council is of the opinion that such circumstances exist.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Borough Council of the Borough of Highland Park, in the County of Middlesex, State of New Jersey, as follows:

1. The public shall be excluded from the closed session at close of tonight's open session.
2. The general nature of the subject matter to be discussed is as follows:
Executive Session: Litigation: Costas v Borough of Highland Park, Botteon v Borough of Highland Park
3. It is anticipated at this time that the above stated subject matter will be made public when these matters are resolved or as soon thereafter as it is deemed to be in the public interest to do so.
4. This Resolution shall take effect immediately.

There being no further business, on motion made by Councilwoman Foster, seconded by Councilman Hersh, and carried by affirmative voice vote of all Councilpersons present, the meeting adjourned at 10:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Santiago
Borough Clerk