

REGULAR MEETING – DECEMBER 20, 2022

A Regular Meeting of the Highland Park Mayor and Council was held in Borough Hall, 221 South 5th Avenue, on Tuesday, December 20, 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, 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 January 5, 2022, and has remained continuously posted as required by law.

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

Absent: Councilperson Kim-Chohan.

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

Ayes: Councilpersons Canavera, Foster, George, Hale, Hersh.

Opposed: None.

Absent: Councilperson Kim-Chohan.

Abstain: None.

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

Councilman Hale reported that at the end of the year he thinks it's important to take a quick look back at the year and he thinks this was a fantastic year in economic development. He wanted to thank the people on the economic development team, Teri, Stephanie and Matt. He thought it was a great team and he is really happy with a lot of the things they did. We have a redevelopment plan that passed for tracts A, B, C and D and we have conditional developers for tracts A and C. We're moving forward with one for tract B. That's quite an accomplishment for a year and there's a lot of work to go next year, but he thinks it's exciting that we were able to make a lot of progress on that. All of that work on redevelopment couldn't happen without a lot of the great staff that we have. He gave a shout out to Code Enforcement Officer Scott Brescher, Borough Engineer Bruce Koch, Redevelopment Attorney Joe Baumann, and Borough Planners Chris Casenza and Jim Constantine. Next year we have a lot on our plate and Stop and Shop is going to take up a lot of our time. I think we've laid a lot of really good groundwork for that and we are going to move forward on opening South 3rd Avenue to pedestrians and closing it to cars. He wanted to end with a list of the neighborhood preservation programs and a lot of the things that were accomplished this year. We put power on 26 telephone and light poles on Woodbridge Avenue that leads directly to the things like the string lights and the snowflakes that have really brightened up that area and connected the town. We purchased \$40,000.00 worth of new benches, trash and recycling cans, and bike racks. All of those are going to be implemented next year. We did a lot of pruning of street trees all up and down Woodbridge Avenue and it was paid for by the NPP Grant. We did milling and paving of the crosswalks on South 7th Avenue and South 9th Avenue which completed the striping and the work that PSE&G, the County and the Borough had done earlier. It's really exciting to see those things connected together. We did an inventory of existing conditions at Molimock Park that's going to allow for some significant improvements for next year. We replaced the fence around the basketball court at the park and added electrical service out there. He thanked Jon Marron from the Arts Commission as they were able to do four pilot murals and crosswalks up and down Benner Street and all of them look amazing. Next year we're going to work on things like the new sign for Irving School, more tree planting, more purchasing of planters, do improved parking and striping. We have a façade grant program launching, porch renovations launching and more sidewalk grants. I think 2022 was a fantastic year. He thinks 2023 is going to be an amazing year.

Councilwoman Canavera reported that she wanted to wish all of our residents a very happy and healthy holiday season and New Year. The Board of Health would like to remind residents that in Middlesex County the Covid level is high. The CDC recommendations include wearing masks indoors in public, stay up-to-date with vaccinations, get tested if you have symptoms and take additional precautions as may be needed. 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 after that Thursday from 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Donations can be made using their amazon wish list. The HP Gives a Hoot food pantry is open every Tuesday from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Donations can be made by mailing a check to Borough Hall. They are also taking donations at the Zone 6 Teen Center. Food prices are still rising and we have a bigger demand than we ever had before. The Mental Health Commission would like to thank our Police Department for all their compassion with the increased mental health calls that they've had to answer. The Officers have been well trained and she thanked Chief Abrams. The Mental Health Commission wants to remind everyone that if you have a mental health crisis to please reach out for help. You can call the National Suicide Prevention line at 988. The Middlesex County hotline numbers are Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care HOTLINE: (855) 515-5700; Raritan Bay Medical Center HOTLINE: (732) 442-3794 Or Text HOME to 741741.

Councilwoman Foster reported that the Police Department is still looking for dispatchers and for Police Officers. This evening the teen center is celebrating their Winter Wonderland and they have a beautiful tree set up with gifts that were donated from all over for those teens that attend the teen center and for those who don't have a gift under the tree this year. They can retrieve one from the teen center. She thanked everyone who donated their time, their energies and their money to make sure that teens in Highland Park will have a lovely Christmas, Hanukkah, and Kwanzaa. She wished everyone a Happy Holiday Season.

Councilman Hersh reported that he wanted to take this opportunity to piggyback off of Councilman Hale and talk about our list of accomplishments for this year. We'll hear more at the Reorganization Meeting but he thinks it is important to understand as we take this break as a community and enjoy our families and

togetherness and the comfort of home that we remember how important it is to give back to your community and to help your neighbors. I think you hear a lot of that just intertwined into all of these reports every day and very intentionally. There are a lot of ongoing projects that will carry over into next year. We've invested a lot of time and effort into making sure that our limited park supply is up-to-date, safe and adequate and that includes a handful of our pocket parks that Councilman Hale referred to. We are celebrating a new track and field here in Highland Park that had been in disrepair for 15 years. He thanked Mayor Brill Mittler and the Administrative team for working so diligently to acquire the funding from the State in order to provide this necessary capital need. We have new leadership all throughout the Borough and that is important to highlight and that takes some time, but it also brings in some new ideas and new energy. In my area, Kim McGraw, our new Recreation Director Anne-Marie Sabovick and the team there have really hit the ground running and taken over leadership from a department that had other visions previously and they are now interacting with the community in very different and more direct ways and they're doing an amazing job. They're also increasing programming and serving the needs of the community. They were nimble throughout the Covid pandemic in order to provide programming for our outdoor spaces as well as provide space indoors for a necessary testing site. The Arts Commission is firing on all cylinders. He does not think we could be luckier to have a group of volunteers like the Arts Commission. They are not only artists, but they are extremely creative and they have really creative ideas about how to include the community and how to use their limited resources. I fought really hard to get increase funding this year so we can actually pay muralists and do the type of investment that other towns do. Arts is not just local, it is a regional effort. Our Chairperson Jon Marron makes a very strong effort to be connected with the arts communities in surrounding towns and that really manifests itself in things like Windows of Understanding which spans multiple jurisdictions. We see how other towns do things and take the good ideas and tailor them so they suit our own needs and we move forward. Park Stock, something the Mayor has been talking about forever, finally got underway this year. This is Highland Park's own music festival, three days of peace, love and music and it was actually four days, with a rain date. He thanked the Mayor for her vision, the Recreation Department, Sheila Shukla, Gary Kaplan and all those who organized and helped put this together, it was a really great effort. The more successful these things are, the more the Borough invests in these types of things and compensates artists for their work, the more opportunity we have to create a greater presence for public art and music. Hopefully we can make the case to our friends at the County that public performance infrastructure is necessary in certain parts of the Borough. He is proud to be the liaison to the Safe Walking and Cycling Committee. They lost a few years during Covid, but in 2019, the Safe Walking and Cycling Committee, under the leadership of then Council President Susan Welkovits, released the bike and pedestrian plan which is a comprehensive transportation, bicycling and pedestrian mobility plan that we were looking forward to finally implementing to make sure that our crosswalks are safer, to make sure that it's easier to get around town on foot and on bike, and to encourage other modes of transportation. I think that's really important when we talk about the future of a walkable community to encourage and provide opportunities to interact with all kinds of traffic through different modes of transportation. The streets do not exist solely for cars, but that is the culture that we often live in and that's something that we're really trying to change. It's not just Highland Park, it's the County as well as they have committed through their long-term revisioning plan to promote pedestrian safety, cycling mobility and alternate modes of transportation. We are working very closely with the county on their vision and trying to implement things that we can do here in Highland Park with significant challenges, we have a state road as our spine. Even non-municipal-owned roads like County Roads, Woodbridge Avenue, are possible to have them improved. Tonight we're going to be voting on something that has been in the works for a long time and that's moving forward with the Raritan River Trail Study. It will look at a connector trail between Donaldson Park and Johnson Park and that was thanks to funding from the State. He thanked the Mayor for securing that funding and moving forward on eight incredibly exciting prospects. He knows that Councilman Hale and others share the excitement. You wouldn't know it, but we're a river town and I think that it is really important to remember that we have this asset, this natural resource that is waiting to be interacted with.

Councilman George reported that he knows everybody is celebrating the holidays and taking a deep breath in many ways. We have the trail feasibility which is going to involve pretty much everyone's bucket in the coming year for the river planning. It was originally done with Federal money in 1995 and because of DEP and State regulations, nothing much was done. This time it seems like it really will happen. We have a lot of impediments to do, including land rights, land easements and DEP regulations. Some years ago, we tried to get a kayak launching spot down at the native plant sanctuary and DEP went riot on us, but we'll work all that out. Sustainable Highland Park had a number of projects that they worked on including the when the State re-implemented the plastic bag ban, they were on the spot with all the stores getting them up to speed immediately. Many of the merchants had already gone back to the conversion and never left it. They also implemented the adopt a drain program which coincided very nicely with the storm water utilities grant that was put out. We are waiting for results on that to try and determine whether we can modernize our storm water management given the emphasis on the DEP with regard to runoff pollution, street drainage, etc. The Shade Tree Advisory Committee completed the inventory of planting. They streamlined the planting process and will be sending out a letter to all property management companies and their services reminding them of the proper way to mulch trees in the spring because improper mulching kills the trees and we lost 50% of our trees because of that in a couple of years and we pay for that. The Environmental Commission was instrumental in putting in some of the input with regard to the selection of the consultants that will be putting our plan together for the potential for a river trail. They are still working on the outline of an ordinance and doing the background research on new equipment for electric leaf blowers and currently we're trying to look at whether there are some that are of a lower decibel level because part of the solution is noise pollution which is a quality of life issue. Leaf blowers are still blowing at a very high decibel level, but at least they're not emitting the pollution. The new generation does allow a commercial grade of blower so we're looking at that. The Library has made a lot of quiet progress under its Director Kate Jagers. In repairs, we're still waiting for the state to release the funding for the library improvement bond. We did win in the second round a grant, which the Borough will match for internal improvements. The good news is the Board of Trustees approved the more carefully studied improvements to the roof to hopefully stop the leaking problem. It will involve some substantial repairs to what they call the dog houses. The roof is flat where the HVAC units and that is where most of the leaking is occurring. We got an architect who specializes in forensic roof repair and examination and specializes in the field of

libraries. We got a quality report and DEP is up there every time it rains just checking things out. We've started a monthly DPW report which is the nuts and bolts of where your taxpayer money is going. We have a 16-member department with 128 man hours available every day. For sanitation, we've collected 281 tons on eight collection days delivered to the landfill. As of November, the Borough has paid \$242,700.00 in tipping fees to dispose of trash. We recycled 88 tons in November. We had 13 work order requests from residents and nine of those requests were completed. We had 20 vehicles repaired in-house by our full-time mechanic. Leaf collection resulted in 72 tons of leaves being collected.

Borough Administrator Jover reported that the Borough will be closed on the 26th of December and on January 2nd. The 4th quarter water and sewer bills are due.

Borough Attorney Schmierer – No Report.

Mayor Brill Mittler reported that the last few weeks of December are a joyous time of year for so many of our residents. The celebrations of Hanukkah, Christmas and Kwanzaa are woven into the December life of our community. Highland Park's beautiful patchwork quilt of diversity does not and should not separate us, but unite us in sharing the joys of each other's cultural celebrations. I thank Main Street Highland Park and Kinetic's physical fitness studio for their commitment over many years to enhancing our community's celebrations and understanding. I have had the unique privilege over these last 13 years, since 2009, of serving on the Borough Council for five years and as your Mayor for another eight years. This community has given so much to me and my family through our school system, our community life, our religious life and our friendships. I love our community of educated, densely populated, moderate income residents who are not afraid to stand up and advocate for the causes they strongly believe in. That is why over the past few weeks I have had to make one of the most difficult decisions in my life. Effective midnight, December 31, 2022, I am resigning from my position as Mayor. After much thought and deliberation, I made this decision because, while I am very passionate about leading this Borough, I also care very deeply about my family and my grandchildren. Simply put, I want to spend a lot more time with those charming little boys who call me Mimi. Though the position of Mayor here in Highland Park is technically a part-time position, it is not in my nature to do anything halfway. I am proud of the changes and accomplishments my Administration has brought forward over the years. As you know, I have asked our Council Members to work with me in improving life here in Highland Park along five major areas of municipal living. They include creating a sustainable infrastructure in our municipality, taking multiple steps towards tax stabilization, actively advancing downtown redevelopment with a coherent plan, enhancing the quality of life in town for all of our residents and reorganization of the Police Department, Fire Department and First Aid Squads. I've achieved these accomplishments in concert with this dedicated and hard-working Borough Council and I thank you all Phil, Elsie, Tara, Matt, Matt and Stephanie wherever in the world you are traveling now. I thank you for your participation with me and I wish you much success moving forward and I thank you Highland Park for allowing me to be your Mayor.

Mayor Brill Mittler asked the Borough Attorney to advise the next steps that would come into effect upon her resignation.

Borough Attorney Schmierer explained that in New Jersey, we have a vacancy law that's applicable Statewide so when there is a vacancy on a Governing Body as will occur at the end of this month. The process is for the Municipal Clerk to notify the local committee of the political party of the individual who is vacating the office and in this case it would be the Democratic organization. So, the Municipal Clerk, upon the effective date of the Mayor's resignation will notify the Democratic Committee that there is a vacancy in the position of Mayor. The Municipal Committee then, under the law, has 15 days to prepare a list of three residents of the Borough who will be interested in filling the Mayor's unexpired term, which would be one year and that list gets submitted to the Borough Council. The Borough Council then has 15 days to select someone from that list to fill the position of Mayor for the remainder of the Mayor's term which would be at the end of 2023 and that is the process that the Borough will follow.

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.

Josh Pruzanski, 141 North 10th Avenue, is the President/CEO of the Rock of New Jersey which is located here in the community representing the Jewish community. He wanted to express his appreciation to the Mayor for her eight years of service to this community. The Mayor has worked with our community and with him and has worked professionally on behalf of the community at large and the Jewish community. He wished her the very best of luck in the future and he looks forward to working together with whoever is her successor.

Diane Reh, 68 Donaldson Street, personally thanked the Mayor for all she's given us. She is one of the most generous person with her time and her energy and we appreciate all that she has given us. She wished her the very best in her future endeavors.

Arlene Tarshish, 146 North 10th Avenue, commented about the rent control ordinance and noted they had a refugee family staying with them for over 3 ½ months while they tried to find an affordable apartment in Highland Park. She would like the ordinance to be adopted.

Sandy Gomez, 501 Raritan Avenue, commented about the rent control ordinance and noted that she and some other tenants have met with Matt to discuss how the landlords are taking advantage and increasing rents exorbitantly.

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

Councilwoman Foster noted that she has worked with the Mayor the longest. We started this journey in 2000 and it has been a long and wonderful journey with some interesting bumps along the way because it's not always peaches and cream. We were able to agree to disagree, to look at things objectively and subjectively and through it all, it has been a wonderful ride. I've enjoyed working with you. You have been an absolute delight. You're fair, you're firm and your heart is always in the right place. Your heart belongs to Highland Park and I wish all the best in everything you do going forward.

Councilman Hersh thanked everyone for coming out tonight. You did not give them much time to get their thoughts together. I want to emphasize something that Elsie said, that your heart belongs to Highland Park because there's so much negativity in the world today, particularly now and particularly since I started. I started first serving in 2016 and it was right before that presidential election and things were feeling very ominous. The list of things that you have been able to do for Highland Park are not only forward-looking, but it was also undoing a lot of the complications that you found yourself in and the Council found themselves in when your Administration took over. I think that's really important to note because immediately before the Mayor took office, there were two relatively quick incumbencies for Mayor and not only is that disruptive, but it's incredibly challenging from just a Borough business standpoint to get acclimated to a new Administration, set goals, be on board with the Council and make sure that you know you have the right team in place. There was a real time of uncertainty for a while when you came into office in 2014. You have really been able to right the ship of the Borough and that's so important to understand and it takes a long time and you have really established those building blocks for us to build on and create and maintain success and create more success. We talked about some of your accomplishments and I'm just going to right on the list. In your eight years, there has been so much that the Borough has dealt with race relations, religious and cultural relations, police relations, including bringing on a fantastic new Chief, Chief Abrams, who has completely changed the tenor of the department. Bringing on a fantastic new Administrator, an Assistant to the Administrator, an Assistant Clerk, a new CFO and Assistant CFO, a Redevelopment Team, a Recreation Director and Public Works Superintendent. You've set us up for continued success that is an unbelievable change of leadership across the board in our municipal agencies. While the public may not really see the fruit of that from a management perspective, from an organizational perspective, it's the most important thing that America can do and the fact that you have set us up with a solid team that cares deeply about Highland Park and will put in the sweat necessary and creativity and outside the box thinking because guess what Highland Park, we have very few resources. Our \$14 million dollar municipal budget pays for exactly what you see. It's when we are the most creative with those funds and we seek to leverage those funds outside funding. Teri and Matt have done an amazing job on economic development. In order to ensure that, you built a communications apparatus and that's how we first met in 2009 at PJ's. When I met with you and then Mayor Nolan to talk about how the Borough can be more intentional on getting information out, we didn't have a Facebook page, we didn't have social media channels, and we didn't have any of that. Working with you and HPTV and others that situation has really taken off and is really now baked into everything the Borough does, including live streaming these meetings. Thank you for being here. Thank you for addressing the organizational concerns of our Fire Department and Rescue Squad. Downtown Development, we've been talking about it for years now, it's actually happening and these are growing pains that are really challenging and there's going to be a lot of disagreement and there's going to be a lot of encouragement, but these are as the Mayor has repeatedly said, the most consistent thing that you have said, is we either change or we die and that is so important to remember that we have to change and adapt with the times. We have to be reactive, but we also have to be preventive. We have to be forward thinking and we have to be creative; cannabis and the weathering of the lawsuit where the Borough ultimately prevailed. While the Council does not oversee our public schools, we are deeply enmeshed and I think the public knows we have to operate together. Your administration's work throughout the pandemic straddling two superintendents with two different visions was particularly inspiring. When the announcement was made of the loss of the grocery store in our town, the Mayor was on the phone with the property owners and with folks from the industry. Matt and Teri were all hands on deck and that is among our top priorities for 2023. We talked about Covid and the enormous responsibility that that put on local government in order to manage and make sure that people are safe and comfortable and still can be out in public in some capacity in order to enjoy their neighbors because that is all we have right. That's why I know that this was particularly hard for you and I think it's particularly hard for all of us who really rely on Democracy happening in person, to having that interpersonal exchange and transitioning so quickly to the computer makes things very challenging and I think we adapted quickly and as best we could. Rent control, vacant properties revaluation, parks improvements, a new teen center, public arts investment, we mentioned Park Stock, and the thing that I think you might be most proud of is HP Gives a Hoot. That was really your flagship initiative when you came into office and you established that because you wanted to intentionally help families and children in need and treat them with dignity. That is the best thing that a Mayor can do for all the residents. Togetherness is how we survive. We have tough conversations, but I think we talked almost every day and I have unbelievable gratitude for what you've done and how you've led. None of us is here for anyone but the people of Highland Park and we have to use our best judgment, good temperament and individual and global understanding of the needs and expectations of our neighbors to address the big fundamental issues that towns like ours face. I think you've led through that example. We all work, we all commute, and everybody up here has or have had kids in the schools. We all grew up, lived in or developed an interest in local government in a downtown community setting. I think that's really important to understand when you think about the perspective that this Council brings. You grew up in Brooklyn and you frequently reference your city upbringing when you're talking about new ideas for town. I had to remember my kids and the amazing times shared with my Mayor from demonstrating and not rioting at the Capitol and around Washington, DC on January 21, 2017, the day after former President Trump's inauguration, being sworn in on the Council again four years later under the welcome pavilion on January 6, 2021 when our nations institutions were absolutely being tested and at stake. Yet, we all swore to uphold the U.S. Constitution and the Constitution of New Jersey and we can't really understate how profound that obligation is. You will fight political battles, you've been unfairly criticized, you have been fairly criticized, and you refuse to take credit for anything because you believe the credit goes to Highland Park. You got me involved in local government and I can't even begin to thank you or communicate how much of a part of my civic life you are. My kids call you Mayor Gayle and built a town hall in their Lego city that includes you, Kamala Harris and President Biden breathing outside sharing a cup

of coffee from Penstock. They know how much you care and here at Borough Hall you have become a real leader and you've earned the trust and respect of the staff, which from a business standpoint, is among the most important things you can do as an executive, your experience as a business owner deeply connected to the community, through your service as President of your temple, President of the Highland Park Educational Foundation, and 3rd Vice President with the New Jersey League of Municipalities gives you a unique and deeply ingrained perspective on what it means to lead Highland Park. We're very lucky to have you here in Highland Park and you've taught me really how to be a Highland Parker and how important it is to understand this complex, intertwined, sometimes frustrating wonderful community. You've also shown me that when people don't agree, if concerns are expressed, if those concerns are expressed with facts, are delivered with good faith and they guarantee the health, safety and stability of the town and if the complaint is delivered with a willingness to help, then there's no issue that is illegitimate or not worth discussing. We're really lucky that you and Uri chose Highland Park. Finally, your lack of cynicism and lack of self-interest are rare and welcome in local government. The rest of us interlopers 15 years in have learned so much from you and will try to lead by your example.

Councilman Hale commented that every single word that Matt Hersh just said is underlined by optimism. Every single accomplishment that he listed, every single thing that you've done since I've known you is an unbelievable optimism in the goodness of this world and all the things that you've accomplished are because you believe that ultimately good things are going to happen if you were a good person, if you work hard and you think that the world is going to be a better place because of your efforts, so it's an amazing list of accomplishments. The fact that you are still optimistic for the most part, that you have your moments, but the optimism that you have taught us and the optimism that you bring to this world is absolutely amazing. In my Council report I was going to end saying that 2023 is going to be a fantastic year but not as good a year as it could be if you were still here. I believe the optimism that you bring to us and the optimism you bring to this town is irreplaceable. Thank you very much for that. I'm going to end on a very serious and important question. Would it be possible for Uri to go to some baseball games even though you're retired now? You know in the summertime every once in a while we'll go to a baseball game. If it's okay, I'd like to be able to still take him to a game. Mayor Brill Mittler noted that she may need people to take him away for a little while. He thanked Uri for letting us have her for so long and letting that optimism that we learn from. Thank you so much for your contribution to that, but Gayle thank you for everything.

Councilwoman Canavera commented that as the newest member of Council she came onto the Council and say to this day, I'm not a politician, I'm just a volunteer who's volunteering in a different way. You have mentored me and taught me so much and I could not have done this without you. I'm going to cry, sorry, but it's also the love and compassion you have for others. When I was going through a personal crisis, you were there calling me and checking on me. When other residents were in need you were anonymously helping without getting any credit for anything. I want to thank Uri for always letting your wife talk to me and talk to me off that ledge through some of the things I've been through lately. Thank you for everything you've taught me and done for our community.

Council President George commented that first of all I want to apologize to Uri, as I apologized to my wife tonight. Our six phone calls a day really were about Highland Park. Other Councilmembers have summarized what we feel and what we've accomplished under your leadership. I came on Council to fill your seat when you moved up and took the Mayor's seat. At that time and since then, we put together a working team, especially after I became Council President. Rather than address all those achievements, which you empowered Council, you kind of did it deliberately to say it's Council's job to set policy and it's Council's job to lead. That was a period of time where we were losing a Council member, including at one point in time, Councilman Hersh had to leave because he took a significant position with State government and we were shuttling Council people in and out constantly. I remember I went with Jim on a cycle ride because he had never been down the Delaware and Raritan Canal and he was in charge of Public Works and was dealing with the parks and we rode all the way to Zerapath on our bicycles. When we got back, I found out the next morning that he was leaving Council. What we all took from that was that embodiment of the responsibility of setting policy across the board. It doesn't matter whether it was the painting of a crosswalk. It doesn't matter whether it was responding to someone's complaint about a pothole. It doesn't matter whether it was a \$10 million dollar contract to save our water utility from disaster. It doesn't matter whether it was trying to deal with all the new requirements of DEP and trying to figure out how we would make that budget or balancing the budgets every year and trying to make them. It was the empowerment with the overriding watchword of transparency to which we added in our team equity to make sure that everything that we did was considered as equal for everyone in town to make sure that everyone was addressed and she would insist on this that we make sure that everyone's needs were addressed to the best of our ability. It didn't matter what part of town you lived in, what you drove to work, whether you even worked, and it became most apparent during the pandemic, when on top of everything else, it was the anxiety of just being able to keep this town running and that's actually when I noticed that it became a full-time job. You would think that this was a ghost town during the pandemic and it probably was, however, there was more activity than ever. We had to reinvent how we did all of the things that we just talked about here on Council and it was Mayor Brill Mittler who led the way constantly, saying the things that she ran for when she first ran for Mayor, tax stabilization, equality and opportunity for everyone and that's my biggest takeaway, not the ability, but the insistence that every policy decision consider not only economics, but every single resident, both transparency and inequity. One of the things I remember teaching you at one point, from my perspective, when we were having one of our arguments about transparency, and I said transparency is not a mirror where we hold ourselves up to it, transparency is a window everyone has to look in and see that we're honest and true and you may not like what we decide, but we stick to our word, but also that window is looking out. What do people need, what do they want, what are they not telling you that they need and the assessment and that's the best ability that I found. It was my pleasure to work with you doing that and it was my delight to see all of Council take that to heart and do that and I thank you.

The Clerk reported advertising an ordinance entitled, ORDINANCE NO. 2065 A AN ORDINANCE BY THE BOROUGH OF HIGHLAND PARK, MIDDLESEX COUNTY, NEW JERSEY, AMENDING CHAPTER 303, "PROPERTY MAINTENANCE," TO ADD ARTICLE V, TITLED "LEAD-BASED PAINT INSPECTION.", for consideration of passage on final reading by title and that affidavits of publication thereto are on file. She also reported that the ordinance had been posted and made available to the public, as required by law.

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

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

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

On motion made by Councilwoman Foster, seconded by Councilwoman Canavera, the ordinance entitled as above, being Ordinance No. 22-2065, was duly adopted by the following roll call vote, to wit:

Ayes: Councilpersons Canavera, Foster, George, Hale, Hersh.

Opposed: None.

Absent: Councilperson Kim-Chohan.

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

No. 12-22-280

BE IT RESOLVED by the Borough Council of the Borough of Highland Park that the Ordinance entitled, ORDINANCE NO. 2065 A AN ORDINANCE BY THE BOROUGH OF HIGHLAND PARK, MIDDLESEX COUNTY, NEW JERSEY, AMENDING CHAPTER 303, "PROPERTY MAINTENANCE," TO ADD ARTICLE V, TITLED "LEAD-BASED PAINT INSPECTION.", passed on final reading at this meeting be delivered to the Mayor for his/her approval, and if approved by her, that the same be recorded in full by the Borough Clerk in a proper book kept for that purpose, and be advertised by publishing the same by title in the "Home News Tribune", of Neptune, New Jersey, a newspaper published in the County of Middlesex and circulating in this municipality, there being no newspaper published in this municipality, in the manner prescribed by law.

The Clerk reported advertising an ordinance entitled, ORDINANCE NO. 2066 - AN ORDINANCE BY THE BOROUGH OF HIGHLAND PARK CONCERNING RENT CONTROL REGULATIONS AND AMENDING CHAPTER 321 OF THE "CODE OF THE BOROUGH OF HIGHLAND PARK", for consideration of passage on final reading by title and that affidavits of publication thereto are on file. She also reported that the ordinance had been posted and made available to the public, as required by law.

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

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

Flavio Kumoves, 304 Lincoln Avenue, commented that he has been involved in drafting, litigating and counseling people on rent control for 20 years. He commended the Council for reintroducing the concept of rent control. He noted that there could be a number of improvements made to this ordinance and suggested that they make those changes in the future.

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

On motion made by Councilwoman Foster, seconded by Councilwoman Canavera, the ordinance entitled as above, being Ordinance No. 22-2066, was duly adopted by the following roll call vote, to wit:

Ayes: Councilpersons Canavera, Foster, George, Hale, Hersh.

Opposed: None.

Absent: Councilperson Kim-Chohan.

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

No. 12-22-281

BE IT RESOLVED by the Borough Council of the Borough of Highland Park that the Ordinance entitled, ORDINANCE NO. 2066 - AN ORDINANCE BY THE BOROUGH OF HIGHLAND PARK CONCERNING RENT CONTROL REGULATIONS AND AMENDING CHAPTER 321 OF THE "CODE OF THE BOROUGH OF HIGHLAND PARK", passed on final reading at this meeting be delivered to the Mayor for his/her approval, and if approved by her, that the same be recorded in full by the Borough Clerk in a proper book kept for that purpose, and be advertised by publishing the same by title in the "Home News Tribune", of Neptune, New Jersey, a newspaper published in the County of Middlesex and circulating in this municipality, there being no newspaper published in this municipality, in the manner prescribed by law.

Resolution Nos. 12-22-282 through 12-22-288 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, Foster, George, Hale, Hersh.

Opposed: None.

Absent: Councilperson Kim-Chohan.

Abstain: None.

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

No. 12-22-282

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 the Memorandum of Understanding between the Borough of Highland Park Office of Emergency Management and Middlesex County Office of Emergency Management, Department of Public Safety and Health for utilization of specialized equipment for a period expiring December 31, 2022 attached to the original of this resolution.

The following resolution, introduced by the Finance Committee, was duly adopted as above:
No. 12-22-283

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 basis, there have been the following changes, to wit:

Jennifer Adams, Part-time Public Safety Telecommunicator, at \$22.90 per hour, effective 12/26/2022.

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. 12-22-284

WHEREAS, the Borough Council of the Borough of Highland Park has determined that there is a need for 95 gallon recycling totes for the business district on Raritan Avenue; and

WHEREAS, the Highland Park Department of Public Works has estimated a need for 301 totes for this purpose; and

WHEREAS, quotes for said purchase were received from the following vendors:

<u>NAME</u>	<u>PRICE</u>
Sanitation Equipment Corporation	\$21,010.00
IPL	\$27,247.10
Global Industrial	no response

WHEREAS, the Highland Park Superintendent of Public Works recommends the purchase and delivery of 301, 95 gallon totes from Sanitation Equipment Corporation at an amount not to exceed \$21,010.00; and

WHEREAS, funds are available for this purpose in Capital Account No. C-04-55-808-004 in the amount not to exceed \$21,010.00, as reflected by the certification of funds available by the Chief Financial Officer, no. 2022-41.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Borough Council of the Borough of Highland Park that the Superintendent of Public Works and Public Utilities is hereby authorized and directed to purchase 301 95 gallon totes from Sanitation Equipment Corporation, 80 Furler Street, Totowa, NJ 07512.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this resolution be forwarded to the Superintendent of Public Works and Public Utilities and the Finance Department.

The following resolution, introduced by the Council as a Whole, was duly adopted as above:
No. 12-22-285

WHEREAS, violence against people whose gender identity or expression differs from the perceived norm is tragically becoming a common occurrence on the national scene. In the last two years alone, there have been reported violent incidents in Costa Mesa, CA; Philadelphia, PA; Basin, Montana; Eugene, Oregon; Bushwick, Brooklyn; Tampa, FL; New York City; Fort Lauderdale, FL; Defiance, Ohio; Decatur, Illinois, Burlington, VT; and Camden, Ohio; and

WHEREAS, as the New York Times reported on December 3rd, “In the last two years, state legislatures nationwide have introduced hundreds of bills targeting transgender people and drag performances, according to LGBTQ+ advocacy groups. Conservative political and media figures have accused LGBTQ people of ‘grooming’ children, a homophobic trope that conflate homosexuality with pedophilia”; and

WHEREAS The Asbury Park Press reported, on December 6th, “The Human Rights Campaign Foundation, in partnership with the Equality Foundation, released its [11th annual Municipal Equality Index](#) on Nov. 30, scoring LGBTQ+ equality in municipal policies, laws and services in 506 American cities, including a dozen in New Jersey. The average New Jersey score was 86 out of 100 possible points, well ahead of the national average of 68. “; and

WHEREAS The Borough of Highland Park treasures the diversity of its residents and seeks to accentuate the trends in New Jersey noted in the Human Rights Campaign Foundation and Equality Foundation’s recent report; and

WHEREAS, Mayor Gayle Brill Mittler stated in her report to Council, on December 6th; “‘Hate has no home here’ is not merely an idealistic meme in Highland Park. It’s a guiding principle and a firm commitment” and noted efforts by the Highland Park Police Department, the Human Relations Commission, the Highland Park Public Schools, and the Mayor and Council to foster greater acceptance of diversity and to deter any acts of intolerance; and

WHEREAS the residents of Highland Park take pride in the presence of The Pride Center of New Jersey in our town and that our Borough is seen as a welcoming haven to members of the LGBTQ+ community.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Borough Council of Highland Park dedicates itself to ensuring the safety, security, acceptance, and freedoms of all members of the LGBTQ+ community in our community and welcomes their participation in all areas of public life.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED The Borough Council of Highland Park seeks to hold programs and activities that foster greater understanding and integration of LGBTQ+ people into the community and directs the Human Relations Commission to pursue the creation of such activities, in cooperation with The Pride Center of New Jersey.

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

No. 12-22-286

WHEREAS, the Borough of Highland Park received a grant in the amount of \$250,000 from the State of New Jersey for a feasibility study of a bicycle and pedestrian River Trail that would connect Donaldson and Johnson Parks along the Raritan River; and

WHEREAS, the Borough issued a request for proposals from qualified firms and received responses from Arterial LLC, CME Associates, ETM Associates LLC and Suburban Consulting Engineers; 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, the Borough's proposal review committee found that ETM Associates, whose offices are located in Highland Park, demonstrated the strongest understanding of the project area as well as offered a project schedule that best met the needs of the Borough while also providing adequate opportunity for public outreach and engagement; and

WHEREAS, the Borough Council of the Borough of Highland Park desires to award a contract to ETM Associates, LLC, whose proposal is attached, in an amount not to exceed \$100,000.00; and

WHEREAS, funds for this purpose are available in Grant Account No. G-02-41-757-200 in an amount not to exceed \$100,000.00 without further Council Authorization, as reflected by the Certification of Funds Available by Chief Financial Officer certification no. 2022-42.

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 ETM Associates, LLC, 1202 Raritan Avenue, Highland Park, NJ 08904, and that notice of this contract be published as required by law and that a copy of executed Agreement be placed on file in the office of the Borough Clerk.

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

No. 12-22-287

WHEREAS, pursuant to Resolution No. 7-22-175, adopted by the Borough Council on July 5, 2022, a contract was awarded to CCM Contracting Inc. of Greenbrook, NJ, 2021 Roadway Improvements Project for the resurfacing and reconstruction of South 1st Avenue between Johnson Street and Valentine Street, Tenth Avenue between Raritan Avenue and Woodbridge Avenue, North Tenth Avenue between Abbott Street and Raritan Avenue, Lexington Avenue between the Borough limits and Raritan Avenue, and Alcazar Avenue between Central Avenue and Cherry Street; and

WHEREAS, it appears from Pay Estimate No. 1, filed by CME Associates, that certain work under said contract has been completed and approved and there is due to CCM Contracting Inc. the sum of \$68,768.35 in accordance with said Pay Estimate for work performed from November 2, 2022 to November 23, 2022; and

WHEREAS, funds for this purpose are available in Account No. C-04-55-825-001 in the amount of \$68,768.35, as reflected by the Certification of Funds Available by the Chief Financial Officer, no 2022-43.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Borough Council of the Borough of Highland Park that the Chief Financial Officer be and is hereby authorized and directed to pay CCM Contracting Inc. the sum of \$68,768.35, as certified by the Engineer in Pay Estimate No. 1, subject to the Clerk's receipt of the Certified Payroll and Project Manning Reports; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this resolution be forwarded to Chief Financial Officer and the CME Associates forthwith.

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

No. 12-22-288

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 12/202022 can be found in the Bills List Journal Book No. 42.

The following resolution, introduced by the Economic Development and Planning Committee, was duly adopted on motion made by Councilwoman Canavera, seconded by Councilman George, and carried by the following roll call vote, to wit:

Ayes: Councilpersons Canavera, Foster, George, Hale, Hersh.

Opposed: None.

Absent: Councilperson Kim-Chohan

No. 12-22-289

WHEREAS, the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law, *N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-1 et seq.*, as amended and supplemented (the "Redevelopment Law"), authorizes municipalities to determine whether certain parcels of land located therein constitute an area in need of redevelopment; and

WHEREAS, on September 6, 2022, by Resolution No. 9-22-221, and in accordance with the provisions of the Redevelopment Law, the Borough Council of the Borough of Highland Park (the "Borough Council") authorized and directed the Planning Board of the Borough of Highland Park (the "Planning Board") to conduct an investigation of certain property identified on the tax maps of the Borough as Block 3002, Lots 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 30, 34, 35, and 37 (the "Study Area") and to determine whether all or a portion of the Study Area meets criteria set forth in the Redevelopment Law, *N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-5*, to be designated as a non-condemnation redevelopment area in accordance with the Redevelopment Law, *N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-6*; and

WHEREAS, on September 6, 2022, by Resolution No. 9-22-222, and in accordance with the provisions of the Redevelopment Law, the Borough Council authorized LRK, Inc. ("LRK") to conduct a preliminary investigation to determine whether all or a portion of the Study Area should be designated as a non-condemnation area in need of redevelopment; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Board received a report setting forth the basis for the investigation prepared by the Planning Consultant, entitled, "Preliminary Investigation of a Non-Condensation Area in Need of Redevelopment Stop & Shop Site" dated November 2022, concerning the determination of the Study Area, and Block 3002, Lot 36, as an area in need of redevelopment (the "Report"); and

WHEREAS, the Redevelopment Law requires the Planning Board to conduct a public hearing prior to a determination whether the Study Area should be designated as a non-condemnation area in need of redevelopment, at which hearing the Planning Board shall hear all persons who are interested in or would be affected by a determination that the property is an area in need of redevelopment; and

WHEREAS, in addition to the Study Area, the Planning Board additionally studied Block 3002, Lot 36, which is owned by the same property owner as Block 3002, Lots 1, 34, and 35, within the Study Area, who received notice of the Planning Board’s public hearing in accordance with the Redevelopment Law; and

WHEREAS, on December 8, 2022, the Planning Board reviewed the Report, heard testimony, conducted a public hearing during which members of the general public were given an opportunity to present their own evidence and/or to cross-examine representatives from LRK, and to address questions to the Planning Board and its representatives, concerning the potential designation of the Study Area and Block 3002, Lot 36 as an area in need of redevelopment; and

WHEREAS, after the conclusion of the public hearing described above, the Planning Board voted to adopt and accept the recommendation contained in the Report, and to recommend that the Study Area, and Block 3002, Lot 36, be declared a non-condemnation area in need of redevelopment, in accordance with the Redevelopment Law, and for the reasons set forth in the Report; and

WHEREAS, the Borough Council agrees with the conclusion of the Planning Board that the Study Area, and Block 3002, Lot 36 satisfies the criterion for redevelopment area designation set forth in the Redevelopment Law and finds that such conclusion is supported by substantial evidence; and

WHEREAS, the Borough Council now desires to designate the Study Area, including Block 3002, Lot 36, as a non-condemnation area in need of redevelopment pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-6*, such designation authorizing the Borough and Borough Council to use all those powers provided by the Redevelopment Law for use in a redevelopment area, other than the power of eminent domain.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Borough Council of the Borough of Highland Park, New Jersey:

Section 1. The aforementioned recitals are incorporated herein as though fully set forth at length.

Section 2. The recommendations and conclusions of the Planning Board are hereby accepted by the Borough Council.

Section 3. Based upon the findings and recommendations of the Planning Board, the Study Area, including Block 3002, Lot 36 is hereby designated as a “Non-Condensation Redevelopment Area” as referenced in the Redevelopment Law. The designation of the Study Area and Block 3002, Lot 36 as a “Non-Condensation Redevelopment Area” shall authorize the Borough to exercise all powers under the Redevelopment Law except the power of eminent domain.

Section 4. In accordance with the Redevelopment Law, the Borough Council hereby directs the Borough Clerk to transmit a certified copy of this resolution forthwith to the Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs and to all record owners and person(s) who filed a written objection with respect to the herein designation.

Section 5. If any part of this resolution shall be deemed invalid, such parts shall be severed and the invalidity thereby shall not affect the remaining parts of this resolution.

Section 6. A copy of this resolution shall be available for public inspection at the offices of the Borough Clerk.

Section 7. This resolution shall take effect immediately.

The following resolution, introduced by the Finance Committee, was duly adopted on motion made by Councilwoman Foster, seconded by Councilman George, and carried by the following roll call vote, to wit:

Ayes: Councilpersons Canavera, Foster, George, Hale, Hersh.

Opposed: None.

Absent: Councilperson Kim-Chohan

No. 12-22-290

BE IT RESOLVED by the Borough Council of the Borough of Highland Park that transfers of 2022 budget appropriation balances shall be made as follows:

Budget Transfer #4		
Description	From	To
Tax Assessor OE	10,000.00	
Community Econ & Dev OE	7,000.00	
Group Insurance		10,000.00
Social Security		5,000.00
DCRP		2,000.00
	<u>17,000.00</u>	<u>17,000.00</u>

Borough Clerk reported that the Highland Park Fire Department has approved the appointment of Nathan E. Ogden as a Firefighter.

The above appointment was approved on motion made by Councilwoman Foster, seconded by Councilwoman Canavera, and carried by the following roll call vote, to wit:

Ayes: Councilpersons Canavera, Foster, George, Hale, Hersh.

Opposed: None.

Absent: Councilperson Kim-Chohan

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.

Bill Gorduek, 13 Lewis Street, commented about the speeding on Crowells Road and asked if speed bumps could be installed.

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

Work Session:

Taxi Cab Rates – Councilman Hale noted that next year the Council is going to vote on taxi cab rates and he wanted to know what the Council’s role is in the process. With Stop and Shop closing, he believes that taxi cabs will become a lifeline to some residents. Can the Council negotiate with the taxi cab owners regarding rates? Borough Attorney Schmierer advised that the Council does regulate in the code what the rates are. Before introducing an ordinance in January it would be appropriate for a representative of Council to meet with the individual who sent the letter and share with him your concerns. Eventually, the Council will have to address whether or not the increase is fair. Councilman Hale asked if there were state guidelines on what a reasonable increase would be. Borough Attorney Schmierer noted that they could do a survey of surrounding communities to find out what they charge. Councilwoman Foster mentioned that the current tax ordinance has flat rates for seniors for medical visits and maybe something could be worked out with the taxi company regarding trip to supermarkets. Councilman Hale will reach out to the taxi cab company.

Veo Scooters – Councilman Hale noted that the scooters will be on hiatus for the winter. He noted that if anyone has any issues that should be raised to improve upon the program they should raise them now. Councilwoman Canavera raised issue about kids under the age of 18 on those scooters without helmets. There are no safeguards for a child not to be able to get on those scooters. Borough Administrator Jover noted that use of the scooters is app based and a license is not required. Perhaps they could work with the schools to help educate parents about scooter usage.

There being no further business, on motion made by Councilman George, seconded by Councilwoman Canavera, and carried by affirmative voice vote of all Councilpersons present, the meeting adjourned at 9:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Santiago
Borough Clerk