BOROUGH OF HIGHLAND PARK

REGULAR MEETING SEPTEMBER 3, 2024 – 7:00 PM

A Regular Meeting of the Highland Park Mayor and Council was held on Tuesday, September 3, 2024, 2024, and was called to order by Mayor Foster at 7:01 PM. Annual Notice of this meeting was provided to The Home News Tribune, the Star Ledger and the Highland Park Planet on April 18, 2024 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 and has remained continuously posted as required by law.

Pledge of Allegiance.

Sgt. Gaetano Palumbo led the flag salute

Roll Call:

Present:Mayor Foster, Councilpersons: Canavera, Hale, Hersh, Kim-Chohan, Postelnik, Borough
Administrator Jover, Borough Attorney Shah, and Borough Clerk Santiago.Absent:Councilman George

Honors, Awards and Presentations.

Mayor Foster sworn-in Sergeant Gaetano Palumbo and Officer Oscar Cleaver

Council President Hersh read a proclamation Moms Helping Moms (MHM) Foundation and proclaiming September 23-29, 2024 as Diaper Need Awareness Week in Highland Park.

Approval of Minutes,

It was moved by Councilwoman Kim-Chohan and seconded by Councilman Postelnik the minutes of August 13, 2024 Regular and Executive Session minutes were approved, as distributed, by the following roll call vote:

ROLL CALL: Ayes: Councilpersons Canavera, Hale, Hersh, Kim-Chohan, Postelnik Opposed: None. Absent: George. Abstain: None.

Council Reports.

Councilman Postelnik reported that the annual summer outdoor concert series concluded this past Thursday with the last concert, he thanked everyone who was involved. Coming up there's a fall lunch on Tuesday, September 10th at 12:00 p.m. at the Community Center there will be lunch, dancing and entertainment provided by SP Candy, lunch will be catered by T Subs with kosher option available upon request. We have an abundance of fall recreation programs open for registration including some adult programs like adult fitness yoga and for the kids we have youth soccer, basketball, chess and flag football. As usual the Youth Theater group course filled up almost as soon as it opened so keep an eye out on the waiting list. He mentioned the Arts Commission is putting on a Poetry Festival plan for October more details to come.

Councilwoman Kim-Chohan reported that the Borough's most recent audit was up on the website to be reviewed by the public it can be found under Department-Finance-financial statements 2023 Municipal Audit. Your June through August water and sewer bill is in your mailbox, reminder this bill reflects the new rate increase cost the Borough must pass on due to Middlesex Water Company increase to purchase water and to support the ongoing repairs and capital upgrades. The Anchor benefit is back again you should have received the benefit letter in the mail by now if you have not or your status has changed please visit www.nj.gov treasury/taxation/anchor. The Finance department is currently looking for a Tax Assessor, if you are someone you know is interested please visit the Borough's website under the employment tab. The next Rent Control meeting is scheduled for September 26 right here in council chambers at 7 p.m. also check the Borough's calendar to make sure there's no cancellations. National Night out as always she was excited to get an up close and personal view of our public safety equipment and good to see some of the neighbors and residents. Hope everyone had a wonderful summer if you are anything like myself you've already ordered or picked up a pumpkin spice item and wishing all the students an awesome and safe school year.

Councilman Hale reported that Arts in the Park is coming this Saturday, September 8th it goes from 11:30 to 4:30 and then right so please make sure everybody shows up it's a premier event of the season, a wonderful opportunity to stock up on gifts for the entire year from a variety of different artists from all over New Jersey and beyond. There's environmental uh Outreach there is um On the heels of that will be the town-wide garage sale, there will be garage bands playing while you can pick out some of great things that could use a second home. The garage sale is scheduled for September 14th and 15th all throughout town more information on both of those of course you can go to mainstreet.org. The Farmers Market always continues, he gave a shout out to Council President Hersh for refereeing to the hot pepper eating contest shooting some very cool video of people turning

their face off so thank you very much. School is almost back in session so please if you're driving around watch out for the kids, it's important for them to be safe and then lastly just a big congratulations to Officer Cleaver and Sgt. Palumbo both fantastic Officers really wonderful to have them with us in Highland Park.

Councilwoman Canavera reported on a personal level her credit card was stolen and Officer Nickus gave her a lot of good advice after taking a report and thanked Officer Nickus. She welcomed new Officer Cleaver and congratulated Sgt. Palumbo who has always been outstanding. She indicated that the Mental Health Commissions reminds us September is Suicide Prevention Month, a time to raise awareness of this urgently important crisis. If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis, call or text 988 immediately. According to the CDC and NIMH, nearly 46,000 lives were lost to suicide in 2020 alone. Comments or thoughts about suicide, also known as suicidal ideation, can begin small, for example, "I wish I wasn't here" or "Nothing matters." But over time, they can become more explicit and dangerous. She provided the following warning signs: Increased alcohol and drug use, Aggressive behavior, Withdrawal from friends, family and community, dramatic mood swings, impulsive or reckless behavior, collecting and saving pills or buying a weapon, giving away possessions, tying up loose ends, like organizing personal papers or paying off debts, saying goodbye to friends and family. Research has found that 46% of people who die by suicide had a known mental health condition. Several other factors may put a person at risk of suicide, including but not limited to: a family history of suicide, substance use: drugs can create mental highs and lows that worsen suicidal thoughts. Intoxication: Analysis from the CDC indicates around 1 in 5 people who die by suicide had alcohol in their system at the time of death. Access to firearms, a serious or chronic medical illness, gender: Although more women than men attempt suicide, men are 4x more likely to die by suicide. A history of trauma or abuse, prolonged stress a recent tragedy or loss. Suicidal behaviors are a psychiatric emergency. If you or a loved one starts to take any of these steps, seek immediate help from a health care provider or call 988 to reach the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. If you are unsure, a licensed mental health professional can help assess. The Community Food Pantry is open on the second and fourth Thursday from 9 am to 10:45 am and again at 6 pm to 7 pm. Saturday following Thursday from 9:30 am to 10 am. The Highland Park Gives a Hoot Food Pantry is every Tuesday and Wednesday at the Zone 6 Center from 10 am to 11 am.

Council President Hersh reported happy back to school week, he reminded everyone to please be safe out there when driving it's about to get crowded. Tonight we're doing a second reading item 11a and hopefully the final passage that outlines the capital ordinance for road improvements on Graham from Fourth to Fifth Avenues then South 8th from Benner to Woodbridge and then all of Highland Avenue. Felton Avenue Tot Lot restoration is well on its way the new equipment and surfacing has been put in and the grass is now growing which is very exciting but not quite ready for public use. Nxt up there will be seating, tables and chairs and this is just part of the kind of larger network of passive recreational areas in our neighborhoods that the Mayor identified as a priority so we're really excited about this. Wednesday September 4th at 8:00 pm on Zoom please join the Environmental Commission for the regular monthly Meeting. We will talk about open space, leaf blower action and more. Neonicotinoids are a class of insecticides that are chemically similar to nicotine that are used to control harmful insects they're also among the most widely used in crop production protection and for veterinary purposes however they are also toxic to pollinators. We also will explore potential legislation at the state level that looks to address some of these harmful substances that might find their way into commercial products, curve the use of harmful chemicals so that's the kind of thing that you can get from attending Sustainable Highland Park meetings or Environmental Commission meetings. He thanked camp counselor Amon Springer for a terrific stream exploration for the camp for civic engagement and environmentalist week. This summer Mason will be joining us for the Environmental Commission meeting because when he led that exploration he's also an environmental history major. The campers named these as yet named unnamed streams so we are looking forward to kind of hearing that report. Join Sustainable Highland Park and the Highland Park Ecology and Environmental Group for our trash cleanups, gloves, bags and other supplies are provided. Cleanups are from 10:00 a.m. to noon unless otherwise listed and the location will be announced as the date approaches. He reminded everyone shrubs are still growing and we're still mowing our lawns so please trim your corner shrubs, one of the most common concerns we get is sight line interference particularly on corner properties where the shrubs have overgrown. Garbage collection schedule for the week of September 2nd because our offices were closed on Monday in observance of Labor Day, there was no recycling or garbage collection on Monday, today Tuesday there was collection in the business district, north side and triangle, recycling collection is tomorrow business district, north side and triangle garbage collection, not on Thursday Southside recycling as usual and on Friday will be garbage collection in the business district and the Southside. This week just to follow up from the Arts on the Park, the town wide garage sale and there will be a bulk pickup Tuesday September 17th and Thursday, September 19th these are bulk pickups that you do not have to schedule. For the rest of the year you do have to make an appointment this is leave your items out and it will be collected. Recycling will not be collected during the week of September 16th through September 20th. He congratulated Officer Cleaver and Sergeant Palumbo for their service.

<u>Administrator</u>. – No report.

Borough Attorney's Report – No report.

Mayor's Report.

Mayor Foster gave big shout out to Highland Park Police Department for a great turnout at National Night Out and I want to thank all the sponsor and organization that participated, all the staff that made it all happen thank you so much. There was a huge turnout and your support is always appreciated. It is hurricane season and if you need information on how to be prepared and how to get ready and how to stay safe in your home please go to FEMA or ready.gov they have lots of videos and they explain to you what you need to, what to have packed and ready and prepared. She stated school starts on Thursday please slow down, the kids are back in school and we need everyone to slow down and to keep each and every one of our children safe as we walk through town and also utilize the sidewalks as much as possible.

Public Participation.

Mayor Foster opened the floor for public participation.

There being no one, it was moved by Councilwoman Canavera and seconded by Councilwoman Kim-Chohan to close public participation, and carried by the following roll call vote:

ROLL CALL: Ayes: Councilpersons Canavera, Hale, Hersh, Kim-Chohan, Postelnik Opposed: None. Absent: George. Abstain: None.

Ordinances Requiring a Second Reading.

<u>Ordinance No. 24-2093</u> Capital Ordinance Providing for Improvements to Highland Avenue, in the County of Middlesex, State of New Jersey, Appropriating \$550,000 from the Department of Transportation Local Transportation Projects Program Therefor to Pay the Cost Thereof.

Clerk reported on Ordinance No. 24-2093 Capital Ordinance Providing for Improvements to Highland Avenue, in the County of Middlesex, State of New Jersey, Appropriating \$550,000 from the Department of Transportation Local Transportation Projects Program Therefor to Pay the Cost Thereof has been duly advertised for consideration of passage on final reading by title and affidavits of publication are on file.

Mayor Foster opened public hearing on Ordinance No. 24-2093.

Seeing no one, on motion by Councilman Hale and seconded by Councilman Postelnik, the public hearing on Ordinance No. 24-2093 was closed.

On motion by Council President Hersh and seconded by Councilwoman Canavera, the ordinance entitled as above, was duly adopted by the following roll call vote, to wit:

ROLL CALL: Ayes: Councilpersons Canavera, Hale, Hersh, Kim-Chohan, Postelnik Opposed: None. Absent: George. Abstain: None.

Consent Agenda Items - Resolutions.

Mayor Foster asked the Council Members if there were any Resolutions they would like pulled from the consent agenda. There were none.

Mayor Foster indicated the Attorneys were reviewing additional documentation that was submitted by bidders and therefore we will need to table Resolution 9-24-221 for consideration at our next meeting on September 17, 2024.

Resolution 9-24-221 was tabled on motion by Council President Hersh and seconded by Councilwoman Canavera and carried by the following roll call vote:

ROLL CALL: Ayes: Councilpersons Canavera, Hale, Hersh, Kim-Chohan, Postelnik Opposed: None. Absent: George. Abstain: None.

Resolution Nos. 9-24-218 through 9-24-220 and Resolution 9-24-222 through Resolution 9-24-224 were duly adopted on a motion made by Council President Hersh seconded by Councilman Hale and carried by the following roll call vote:

ROLL CALL: Ayes: Councilpersons Canavera, Hale, Hersh, Kim-Chohan, Postelnik Opposed: None. Absent: George. Abstain: None.

Resolution No. 9-24-218

WHEREAS, the Borough Council of the Borough of Highland Park is in support of the annual Arts in the Park Festival to be held on September 8, 2024.

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

- 1. Approval is hereby given to Main Street Highland Park to hold its annual Arts in the Park festival and activities on September 8, 2024 from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
- Permission is hereby granted to the Highland Park Police Department to make application to the New Jersey Department of Transportation for a permit to close a portion of Raritan Avenue (Route #27) between 2nd and 5th Avenues on September 8, 2024, between 9:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.
- 3. That Main Street Highland Park will work in close cooperation with the Highland Park Police Department to insure minimum inconvenience to Borough community members.
- 4. The Borough Council hereby waives the Transient Merchant permit fees and other Borough fees for vendors who register to participate in Arts in the Park.
- 5. Certified copies of this resolution be forwarded to Main Street Highland Park; Richard Abrams, Chief of Police; Police Bureau of Pedestrian and Traffic Safety; Highland Park First Aid Squad Captain.; H. James Polos, Emergency Management Coordinator; Michael Wieczorkiewicz, Dept. of Public Works.

Resolution No. 9-24-219

WHEREAS, there is a need for manhole sealing and rehabilitation services near South Adelaide Ave and Valley Place in the Borough of Highland Park; and

WHEREAS, three (3) quotes were solicited and only one quote was received as follows:Sewer & Water Evaluation & Rehabilitation Procedures\$10,230.00Vortex Services\$15,900.00En-Techno quote provided; and

WHEREAS, the Water and Sewer Department has recommended that said services be provided from Sewer & Water Evaluation & Rehabilitation Procedures Inc. (SWERP), Bristol, PA based on their quote for same and previous work done for Highland Park, their experience and equipment; and

WHEREAS, funds are available for this purpose in Account No. 5-05-55-500-423, as reflected by the certification of funds available by the Chief Financial Officer No. 2024-69.

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

- 1. The Water and Sewer Department is hereby authorized and directed to accept the quote for manhole sealing and rehabilitation services near South Adelaide Ave and Valley Place in the Borough of Highland Park from Sewer & Water Evaluation & Rehabilitation Procedures, Inc. (SWERP), 1237 Hayes Boulevard, Bristol, PA 19007, at a total cost not to exceed \$10,230.00.
- 2. That a certified copy of this Resolution be forwarded to the Water and Sewer Department and the Chief Financial Officer.

Resolution No. 9-24-220

WHEREAS, the Borough Council has determined that it is in the best interest of the Borough and its residents to publicly bid for the services of its Professionals, including but not limited to, the Borough Attorney, Bond Attorney, Labor Attorney, Auditor, Engineer, Planner, Planning Board Attorney, Board of Adjustment Attorney, Redevelopment Attorney, Planning Board Engineer, Board of Adjustment Engineer, Tax Appeal Attorney, Special Affordable Housing Planner, Risk Manager, Prosecutor, and Public Defender to perform services for the Borough.

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

1. That the Borough is hereby authorized to publicly bid for the services of its Professionals to perform professional services for the Borough by a Request for Qualifications.

Resolution No. 9-24-221 - Tabled

WHEREAS, pursuant to duly advertised Notice to Bidders solicited pursuant to the provisions of the Local Public Contracts Law, on August 8, 2024 eight (8) bids were received for the NJDOT FY 2024 Municipal Aid program resurfacing and reconstruction of Denison Street from North 2nd Avenue to North 5th Avenue, Harper Street from South 1st Avenue to South 4th Avenue (full width/halfwidth), and North 4th Avenue from Denison Street to Raritan Avenue. Including but not limited to Hot Mix Asphalt milling and/or pavement repairs, installation of new handicap ramps, installation of Hot Mix Asphalt 9.5M64 Surface Course and Hot Mix Asphalt 19M64 Base Course, storm sewer improvements and related work within the Borough of Highland Park; and

WHEREAS, eight (8) bids were received for the Project, which were opened on August 8, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. as follows:

| Company | Total Bid Amount |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| Fischer Contracting Inc. | \$569,197.74 |
| D.L.S. Contracting | \$581,003.25 |
| Black Rock Enterprises | \$610,000.05 |

| Top Line Construction | \$625,388.13 |
|-----------------------|--------------|
| Lucas Brothers | \$627,000.00 |
| Crossroads Paving | \$651,156.25 |
| Seacoast Construction | \$684,607.05 |
| Z Brothers | \$720,547.50 |

WHEREAS, the lowest bid was submitted by Fischer Contracting, Inc. of Scotch Plains, NJ with a bid of \$569,197.74; and

WHEREAS, the Borough Engineer has reviewed the bids and recommends that a contract be awarded to Fischer Contracting Inc. as the lowest responsible and responsive bidder; and

WHEREAS, the Borough Attorney's office has reviewed the bid documents submitted by Fischer Contracting Inc. and advises that its submission is in compliance with the minimum bidding requirements; and

WHEREAS, the award of this contract is subject to the approval of the New Jersey Department of Transportation, in accordance with a Municipal Aid Grant awarded to the Borough; and

WHEREAS, funds for this purpose are available in Capital Account No. C-04-55-836-001 in an amount not to exceed \$569,197.74, as reflected by the Certification of Funds Available by Chief Financial Officer Certification no. 2024-70.

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

1. The Council hereby awards a contract to Fischer Contracting, Inc. 10 Short Hills Lane, Scotch Plains, New Jersey 07076, NJDOT FY 2024 Municipal Aid program for an amount not to exceed contract amount of \$569,197.74, subject to the approval of the New Jersey Department of Transportation as may be required.

2. The Mayor and Clerk are hereby authorized and directed to execute an Agreement consistent herewith.

Resolution No. 9-24-222

WHEREAS, the Raritan Valley Road Runners, Inc. has made application to the Borough Council of the Borough of Highland Park for a license to hold, operate and conduct an On-Premise 50/50 for Cash and an On-Premise for merchandise in accordance with the Raffles Licensing Law (NSJA 5:8-50 to 76), on September 25, 2024; and

WHEREAS, the Borough Council has made or caused to be made an investigation of the qualifications of said applicant and the merits of said application and have determined that said applicant is qualified to hold, operate and conduct Raffles in accordance with the Raffles Licensing Law and the findings set forth in the Form 5A of the Legalized Games of Chance Control Commission.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Borough Clerk shall be and is hereby authorized and directed to issue a license to the Raritan Valley Road Runners, Inc., for the holding, operation and conduct of a raffle on the above date upon payment of a legal fee therefor, subject to the provisions of the Raffles Licensing Law and the rules, regulations and amendments thereto promulgated by said Control Commission.

Resolution No. 9-24-223

BE IT RESOLVED by the Borough Council of the Borough of Highland Park that the annual Salary Resolution No. 1-24-12, which was adopted on January 2, 2024, showing the names, titles and salaries of the officers and employees of the Borough of Highland Park, is amended as follows: Carlos Grajales, Laborer, \$44,803.20 Salary, Effective 09/03/2024

Michael Bobish, Library Director \$118,450 Salary, Effective 01/01/2024

Karen Jarzabski, Senior Librarian, \$84,468.24 Salary, Effective 01/01/2024

Nathalie Levine, Librarian 3, \$62,620.91 Salary, Effective 01/01/2024

Melaina Squicciarini, Librarian 2, \$62,082.22 Salary, Effective 01/01/2024

Indru Udeshi, Sr. Librarian, \$56,032.07 Salary, Effective 01/01/2024

Joseph Oriti, Library Asst. \$39,112.19 Salary, Effective 01/01/2024

Jennifer Smith Mullen, Sr. Library Asst. \$46,179.02 Effective 01/01/2024

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Chief Financial Officer 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.

Resolution No. 9-24-224

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.

1. The bills approved for payment at this meeting, Bills List 9/3/2024 can be found in the Bills List Journal Book No. 44.

Appointments.

Safe Walking and Cycling Committee Nathaniel Koenig

On motion made by Councilwoman Canavera and seconded by Council President Hersh, appointment of Nathaniel Koenig to the Safe Walking and Cycling Committee was approved and carried by the following roll call vote, to wit:

ROLL CALL Ayes: Councilpersons Canavera, Hale, Hersh, Kim-Chohan, Postelnik Opposed: None. Absent: George. Abstain: None.

Second Public Participation.

Mayor Foster opened the floor for public participation.

Elizabeth (Buffy) Greenberg indicated that it was her understanding that the crossing guards have been informed by members of the Police Department that they are seriously considering privatizing crossing guards and that this has not been brought to the Council and asked if the Police Chief could answer questions about this directly in a public forum on what exactly has been communicated to the Crossing Guards. She indicated that she was totally opposed to privatizing the Crossing Guards, privatization is bad for our crossing guards and it's really bad for the kids and families who walk to and from school every day

Michele Racioppi said she heard reference four times so far from people on this council meeting about references to pedestrian safety and so just like my friend Buffy said I am very concerned about pedestrian safety which crossing guards are a big part of that and I did not think we're going to get better services if we give them less money less benefits and if the current crossing guards now feel like their jobs are in jeopardy, no clarification was given to the crossing guards and in fact they still are under the impression that this is that the police department would like to have happen. She suggested reassuring your crossing guards that you prioritize them and you value them and that you don't want them to lose the meager benefits that they currently. This has been very distressing for them so I would hope we can get clarification on this in this meeting that would be really helpful.

Sal Baptist said the school crossing guards have been reappointed every year before the school year begins for the past few years however you know this meeting tonight did not include the appointment of any crossing guards despite as was just mentioned many references to pedestrian safety. School starts in two days how can the children be going to school on Thursday walking through these intersections that are dangerous and some of them are even deadly without the guidance of the experienced and trustworthy crossing guards

There being no one further, it was moved by Councilman Postelnik and seconded by Council President Hersh to close public participation, and carried by the following roll call vote:

Roll Call: Ayes: Councilpersons Canavera, Hale, Hersh, Kim-Chohan, Postelnik Opposed: None Absent: George. Abstain: None

Administrator Jover said they did have a meeting with a few of the guards today with their union representative and we explained where we were which was very early on and we've been contemplating such a move as the issue about the appointments was raised in the meeting and it was simply an oversight and we will get that resolved at the next council meeting. There was already a kickoff meeting about the beginning of the school year a few weeks back we are counting on everybody to come out on Thursday to their post so I think we cleared some of the air out in terms of where this all fits. We did reassured them that this really is just exploratory at this point and we want to explore what the options are and we haven't even made a recommendation from a staff level to public safety so we're nowhere near that stage just to reaffirm basically there was a discussion.

Chief of Police Abrams said that the problem they are having is the same problem that every small town in the State is we can't find enough crossing guards to fill all positions. We have 14 crossing guard positions we have 10 guards and we have three that are in training if they make training will be better but still for the next 20 hours they do their training. Some towns have solved this problem by privatization, we are still learning so there's no plans right now to do anything. Our crossing guards keep training and keep hiring until we fill our spots. We're trying to see if this is a solution that's going to work for Highland Park and get all of our crossing position filled for the whole year so the kids can cross safely.

Regular Meeting – September 3, 2024

There being no further business, on motion made by Councilwoman Kim-Chohan, seconded by Councilman Hale, and carried by affirmative voice vote of all Councilpersons present, the meeting adjourned at 7:57 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Santiago Borough Clerk