

**Poncey-Highland Neighborhood Association  
Monthly Membership Meeting Minutes  
March 17, 2021**

**Welcome – Erika Heller, President**

The Board presented the following change to the Bylaws to account for Virtual Meetings. Ward Binns made a motion to approve the Bylaw change; the motion was seconded by E.L. Taylor. 25 members voted in favor and one member abstained.

***PROPOSED CHANGE TO SECTION 5.1 OF THE BYLAWS OF PONCEY-HIGHLAND NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION, INC.***

***CURRENT LANGUAGE:***

***General meetings will be held on the third Wednesday of each month at 7PM, at such place as shall from time to time be determined by the Board.***

***REVISED LANGUAGE:***

***General meetings will be held on the third Wednesday of each month at 7PM, at such place or via such electronic conferencing platform, as shall from time to time be determined by the Board.***

Erika encouraged everyone to continue visiting the PHNA website for important and helpful information. The Board is working hard to post an informative monthly newsletter. If you have any questions or concerns or would like to get involved with the PHNA, please feel free to reach out to the Board via email. [Board@ponceyhighland.org](mailto:Board@ponceyhighland.org)

**District 2 City Council Update – Councilman Amir Farokhi:**

Amir reported that there has been a definite uptick in crime. He stated 12-14 shootings occurred during the All-star weekend in District 2. Fortunately none of them were in Poncey-Highland and none of them were directly related to All-Star weekend. During the All-star weekend, APD had officers stationed at every main intersection in Midtown in an effort to minimize criminal activity. The Mayor and Atlanta Legal Department are working to shut down businesses that have a history of crime regardless of business type/status (i.e., bar, restaurant, clubs, etc.) Amir is happy to speak with anyone directly if they have questions or concerns related to public safety.

Amir shared that this is a big legislative year with issues spanning the closing the city jail, the rezoning rewrite, the mayoral race, public safety initiatives, and budget decisions and vote. Two legislative bills came before City Council for a vote in March that received a lot of media attention.

- The Beltline Special Services District (a \$2 million increase in property tax for commercial properties and multi-family rental properties along the Beltline) passed with

11 in favor, 2 opposed and 1 abstention. Amir voted in favor. The opposition primarily consisted of small business owners. No small business exemptions were included in this legislation. The tax is effective immediately, meaning it will take effect during the next property tax cycle and the funds will accumulate and the trail will begin to be built out where the path does not yet exist. Single family residential homeowners were excluded from this tax. The decision behind that was that the city did not want to create additional tax burdens for single-family long-time residential homeowners, especially low-income legacy homeowners. The funds are being used purely for the purpose of building out the physical trail; there are no funds currently allocated for public/mass transit.

- The second legislation up for vote was the Short-term Rental Ordinance. 21% of all Air BNB rentals that happen in the city happen in District 2. The Ordinance requires annual registration by property owners and limits the number of parcels on a single property. The allowable is the primary residence and one other ADU. The ordinance requires a \$300 certificate fee, annual renewal and includes penalties for non-compliance. The intention is to allow short-term rentals to continue while providing practical controls around the short-term rental business industry. No exemptions were included in the legislation and the Ordinance will take effect immediately once the Mayor signs it into law.

The citywide rezoning legislation will not impact Poncey-Highland. Anything the city does citywide will not effect Poncey-Highland unless we opt-in. What Poncey-Highland did as a neighborhood in writing and approving the Historic District regulations is proving to be a good, positive effort to protect Poncey-Highland, its land and assets.

Amir followed up with the Department of Transportation regarding the requested hawk signal at Somerset and North Avenue. The DOT expects the signal to be installed some time this summer. The funds are available and approved; it is just a matter of waiting for it to be installed.

For anyone interested in reading the book that Amir referenced during Q & A: Written by LeeAnn Lands "Culture of Property: Race, Class, and Housing Landscapes in Atlanta, 1880-1950" University of GA Press It is a great read on how zoning impacted, for good and not so good, the Atlanta we have today.

### **Fundraising – Ward Binns, Vice President:**

In addition to the current fundraising efforts through the "Black-Tie Gala Non-Event," Ward is currently planning the next fundraiser: a "Poncey-Highland Trivia Smackdown" via Zoom to be held on April 12<sup>th</sup>. Get involved and join the fun! There will be great fun prizes for the winners, including gifts from Plaza Theatre, Manuel's Tavern, Elemental Spirits, Videodrome and more! You can register as an individual or in teams of 4. Watch for communications (via flyers, email and the website) about this fun neighborhood event. Three local real estate agents are sponsoring the event: Carrie Calla, Lynn Dale and Chad Palazzo. We are so thankful for their support of PHNA!

Additionally, Ward shared that the Board is planning more fun in-person events in late summer and fall. Stay tuned!

## **Finances – Nick Pastore, Treasurer:**

As of the end February, the cash balance was \$334.25. Since that time, the Black-tie Gala “Non-Event” fundraiser has kicked-off and we look forward to raising more money for PHNA in the coming weeks. For anyone who has already donated or plans to donate, you will receive a letter of receipt via email or mail within the next couple of weeks. Donations can be made at: [ponceyhighland.org/donate](http://ponceyhighland.org/donate) or checks can be mailed to PHNA at 830 Belgrade Avenue NE, Atlanta 30306. Thank you for your support!

## **Land Use / NPU – Lianne Deren:**

Alcohol License – Lianne presented an alcohol license application for Publix Supermarkets. The application # 0724 is for an Alcohol license—Change of Agent for Publix Supermarkets at 1001 Ponce de Leon Avenue. The City does not require applicants to come before the neighborhood, just the NPU, though PHNA prefers for applicants to present to the Land Use Committee and General Membership, especially if they are new businesses. Because this application was for a Change of Agent and Publix is a known entity to PHNA, the PHNA Land Use Committee and the Board of Directors both voted unanimously to support the application. Lianne made a motion for the PHNA general membership to support the application for the Alcohol License Change of Agent. (All voters must be home owners or renters residing within Poncey-Highland.) Ward Binns seconded the motion. The general membership unanimously approved this application.

Highland Inn and Highland Row – Highland Inn and Highland Row has new owners, Michael Garber ([michael@canvascos.com](mailto:michael@canvascos.com) / 404-667-2922) and Benjamin McLoughlin ([Benjamin@canvascos.com](mailto:Benjamin@canvascos.com) / 914-584-5697) of Canvas Companies. Michael and Benjamin introduced themselves and shared that they are prior Poncey-Highland residents and formed Canvas Companies approximately 1.5 years ago. The Highland Row will primarily remain as is with modest improvements too parking, signage, etc. They are excited about restoring the Highland Inn property with a flexible living concept, offering nightly hotel rentals, medium-term rentals (3-6 month lease) and a longer-term 12-month lease option. The restaurant space vision is a café concept with coffee, sandwiches, salads and other “grab ‘n go” food options. They anticipate the Café will open to the public in 3-6 months. Construction for the hotel component is anticipated to start in the next 6-10 months. Once construction begins, the project is expected to take 10-12 months. They will be working with Jason Moss at Jones Pierce Architectural for this project. If anyone has any additional questions or concerns about the property, please feel free to reach out to Michael and Benjamin via the contact information listed above.

Tree Protection Ordinance – Atlanta City Council has introduced the Tree Protection Ordinance, which was developed in conjunction with the Department of City Planning. This is the first significant policy change since the Atlanta City Design was developed. The primary goal is to prioritize protection of the City of Atlanta’s tree canopy in conjunction with community, stakeholder and expert engagement. This legislation will be presented to NPU-N on March 25<sup>th</sup> for review and public comment only. To help the neighborhood better understand what is being proposed, Greg Levine, Co-Executive Director of Trees Atlanta gave a thorough presentation of the proposed legislation. Trees Atlanta is supporting the legislation with the primary goal to protect Atlanta’s trees and existing tree canopy. For additional information about this initiative, please register for the TPO webinar here:

<https://www.treesatlanta.org/get-involved/events/evaluating-atlantas-proposed-tree-protection->

[ordinance-tpo-a2B5w000001TXR1EAO](#) If you have any comments or questions related to the proposed legislation, please feel free to contact Greg Levine, Trees Atlanta ([Greg@treesatlanta.org](mailto:Greg@treesatlanta.org)) or Judy Yi ([judy@treesatlanta.org](mailto:judy@treesatlanta.org)).

Chase Bank on Ponce – The former Rite Aid property on Ponce de Leon has begun demolition and development for a Chase Bank branch. As a reminder, although this project does not comply with the Poncey-Highland Historic District regulations, this property received City approval prior to the Historic District interim controls taking affect.

1099 North Avenue – This townhome development came before the neighborhood several years ago and also received approval long before the implementation of the Historic District was developed and approved. The developer of this project historically has been very open with their vision and plans for this site and will be attending a PHNA general membership meeting in the near future to share their current plans and timelines for this property.

Buddy's property – A building permit application has been submitted for the small stand-alone building on the Buddy's property, however, it did not follow proper protocol as they did not file for a Certificate of Appropriateness first which is required within a Historic District prior to submitting for a building permit. This application is for development of a Dunkin Donuts drive-thru, which does not comply with the Historic District regulations. The Office of Design/Historic Preservation Studio has been made aware of this application and they, along with the Land Use Committee, will monitor the status and provide any updates as they are available.

### **Additional Poncey-Highland News – Beth McDonald**

The Poncey-Highland Education Committee historically was an informal group of Poncey-Highland residents and parents that tracked and informed about APS Cluster news and events. Beth and others are hoping to re-engage with the mission to follow local APS school updates and keep the neighborhood informed of APS business, developments, events and meetings that affect families and residents in Poncey-Highland. There will be an APS Grady Cluster meeting on March 22<sup>nd</sup> at 5:30. You are encouraged to attend if possible. More information can be found on the APS website. <https://www.atlantapublicschools.us/> If you have any questions or would like to get involved, please email [ponceyhighedcom@gmail.com](mailto:ponceyhighedcom@gmail.com).

Freedom Park Conservancy – The Freedom Park Master Plan has been presented to the Urban Design Commission for review and comment. They agreed to move forward to present the draft plan to the neighborhoods that surround the park; Poncey-Highland is one of those neighborhoods. From there it will move on to NPU-N to proceed through the normal process. Keep in mind this is a work-in-process and public comments and questions are welcome.

\*Please reach out to Andrea Zern (Secretary) regarding any additions, omissions or corrections. [Andrea.zern@yahoo.com](mailto:Andrea.zern@yahoo.com)