

**VILLAGE OF HIGHLAND PARK**

1650 Highland Park Drive North

Wednesday, March 26, 2025, 6:00 p.m.

**Regular Meeting**

**IN ATTENDANCE** Mayor Brandon McWhorter, Commissioner Amanda Updike, Commissioner Derek Camann, City Manager Ric Busbee, Village Clerk Blair Updike, Clerk’s Assistant Lita O’Neill, Treasurer Mary Bradley, City Attorney Andrew Hand (via telephone), Resident Catherine Angel, April Cooper, C.P.A., Auditor

**CALL TO ORDER** Mayor McWhorter called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** led by Mayor McWhorter

**ROLL CALL** taken by the Clerk’s Assistant Lita O’Neill

Commissioners present included Mayor Brandon McWhorter, Commissioner Amanda Updike, and Commissioner Derek Camann. A quorum was present.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

The Mayor opened the floor for public comments. Being none, the floor was closed.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

No items.

**ADOPTION OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES** from January 22, 2025

Commissioner Camann made a motion to adopt the previous meeting minutes from the January 22, 2025, regular meeting of the Village Commission. Commissioner Updike seconded the motion.

All in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

**FY 2023-24 AUDIT PRESENTATION**

April Cooper, C.P.A., Wicks, Brown, Williams & Co., presented the FY 2023-24 audit report for the Village of Highland Park. The audit report was an unmodified opinion, which is a clean opinion. Ms. Cooper reviewed the Statement of Activities from pages 12 and 13 of the audit report, which lists the total net position including assets at $1,262,965. Overall, there was a total positive change of $70,668 for fiscal year ending September 30, 2024.

Ms. Cooper stated that the General Fund had an excess of revenues over expenditures in the amount of $116,476 as shown on page 16 of the audit report. The ad valorem proceeds increased by about $22,700 from the previous year, and the interest income was up by about $30,000.

The Statement of Revenues, Expenditures, and Changes in Fund Balances on page 18 shows that all expenses were within the budget.

Discussion ensued about the interlocal connection with the City of Lake Wales, as it is quite expensive. The City Manager noted that the Village of Highland Park Water Utility is operating at a net loss; however, a water rate study is underway.

Ms. Cooper commented that the Independent Auditors’ Report on Internal Control over Financial Reporting on page 45 shows no findings on internal control. Additionally, the Management Letter on pages 47 and 48 noted that the Enterprise Fund expenditures “exceeded its available budget by $9,493.” The letter notes that the over expenditure was primarily due to “unanticipated water usage and charges from the interlocal water connection.”

Lastly, no findings were noted, and the Village of Highland Park is in compliance with Section 218.415, Florida Statutes, regarding the investment of public funds during the fiscal year ended September 30, 2024.

**NEW BUSINESS**

1. DISCUSSION ITEM, Fencing

The Mayor asked the City Manager to present the analysis. Mr. Busbee referred to the zoning map and provided copies to the Commission. He also provided background information on the zoning designations (R-2T and R-2). The difference is R-2 zoning allows fences, but R-2T does not. The setbacks and lot sizes are the same. The Village Clerk, Blair Updike, provided background on the history of the zoning designations. Mr. Busbee requested direction from the Commission.

The Mayor opened the floor for discussion. There were no questions from the public.

The Commission discussed the timeline for a zoning change. The City Manager will speak with Jeff Schmucker with the Central Florida Regional Planning Council about drafting the necessary documents, and the Clerk’s Office will forward these items to the Village Attorney, Andrew Hand, for review.

**CITY MANAGER REPORT**

The City Manager made the following report:

* 1. Thanks to the O’Neill family for installing the new bulletin board. It looks great.
  2. Lights will be installed at the flagpole landscaping area. This will start on Sunday.
  3. There was a water outage last week, but the interconnect kicked in as it is designed to do. No one detected the issue, and all is good.
  4. City Manager, Ric Busbee, commented that the water rate study is underway with the Florida Rural Water Association. The Mayor confirmed with the City Manager that the water study will be completed prior to budget discussions. Discussion ensued about an interlocal agreement with the city of Lake Wales related to the water interconnect.

Mayor McWhorter thanked the City Manager for taking the lead on the uplighting project. Mayor McWhorter noted that this is a good use of the Beautification Funds from the Highland Park Association.

**TREASURER REPORT**

The Treasurer, Mary Bradley, provided the Commission with two reports. Overall, the Village accounts are doing exceptionally well. Expenses are below what is budgeted for this year.

**QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Commissioner Updike asked when the ordinance related to the fencing was passed by the Commission. It was noted that the Land Development Code was adopted in 2012, and it is posted on the Village website.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Blair Updike

Village Clerk

**Approved: 5/28/2025**

*Minutes of Village Commission meetings may be obtained from the Village Clerk’s Office. The minutes are recorded, but not transcribed verbatim. Persons requiring a verbatim transcript may make arrangements with the Clerk to duplicate the recording. The cost of duplication will be the expense of the requesting party. In accordance with Section 286.26, Florida Statutes, persons with disabilities needing special accommodations to participate in this meeting should contact the Village Clerk’s Office no later than 5:00 p.m. on the day prior to the meeting at 863-455-6518, or via email at* [*clerk@highlandpark-fl.org.*](mailto:clerk@highlandpark-fl.org)