

**Highland Park High School Advisory Group  
September 21, 2016 Status Report To  
The City of Highland Park &  
Township High School District #113**

Pursuant to Section 5(D)(4) of the City of Highland Park Ordinance 53-15 (the “Ordinance”), the Highland Park High School Advisory Group (the “Advisory Group”) met at 7:00 p.m. on September 21, 2016 at the District 113 Administration Building. This status report is being delivered to the City and the District pursuant to the requirement set forth in Section 5(D)(6) of the Ordinance.

Overview:

This was the first meeting of the 2016 – 2017 school year. The Advisory Group welcomed Joey Spathis as our new HPHS student representative and Debbie Hymen as our new District 113 Board representative.

The Advisory Group spent much of the meeting reviewing the status of various topics that were addressed last year, including (i) Communications (with the neighborhood and with parents/students), (ii) Bus Policies, (iii) Parking Policies, (iv) Traffic Patterns, Compliance & Safety, (v) the Vine parking lot (both landscaping and lighting) and (vi) the Woodpath crosswalk.

The Chair also led a discussion about what he would like to see the Group accomplish this year.

Communications:

- The District has been proactively trying to communicate to the neighbors about dates and events that would cause large parking situations, like open houses, sporting events and theater programs.
- The District has created a schedule of announcements for the year based on last year’s list. Some of the announcements are from the District (Communications Director) to neighbors and some by HPHS (Patrick Sassen) to parents and students. The District will be sending out a master list of events at HPHS this year in the very near future to the neighbors.
- 25% of the parents and students at HPHS are new each year and the goal is to clearly communicate policies such as pick-up and drop-off times and locations, parking locations, traffic enforcement and the location of street parking for special events.
- The first major event of the year, Open House, went off well without a hitch from the District’s perspective – parents and students complied with parking requirements (no complaints heard) and carpool suggestions.

### Busing:

- A new Early Bird bus route was launched this year – a 6:45 a.m. loop down Green Bay Road – notice was provided to the student body through the bus schedule. The route went through the second week of September, not a single HPHS student rode this bus during the pilot period and the District is considering terminating this route.
- District adjusted the late bus 6:15 route to 5:45 to better accommodate 5:30 p.m. practice end – with the reduction in waiting time for the bus, ridership has increased. Routes changes occur based on feedback and sport seasons, heavy routes are identified.
- HPHS sent out a transportation survey to students last year, asking how they get to school and their attitudes towards the bus – the biggest detriment to taking the bus is the duration of the route. And to that end, the District tries to balance the length of the walk to each bus stop with the speed of each route. Spathis remarked that changing the culture to get more people to ride the bus would be very difficult (there is a negative stigma) and that the District would be better served focusing on walking, biking and carpooling as a means to reduce traffic.
- A short survey is ready to go out to those who live within 1.5 miles about whether they would take the bus if it were available and how they are getting to school right now.

### Parking:

- HPHS now has roughly 265 spots available for student parking, close to the 283 capacity prior to the start of construction. Of those available spots, 240 have been sold and Sassen believes that more parking passes than last year (well over 260) will eventually be sold. All the spots are purchased by seniors, although a handful are allocated to in-season varsity Junior athletes.
- Of the 20 designated carpool slots, 12 have been sold (versus 18 last year). Spathis commented that he and other students were confused about the requirements for getting a carpool spot. Sassen promised to send out a clarifying e-mail.
- Sassen also noted that during good weather the 60+ bike rack spots at HPHS have been full each day.

### Traffic Safety:

- Along the front of HPHS on Vine, there are now cones separating the drop-off lane from the rest of Vine Avenue – this prevents left turns directly into the Vine parking lot from the drop-off lane. Despite the long drop-off lane on Vine, parents don't pull forward despite encouragement from HPHS staff and most drop-offs occur by the front door.
- The challenges from last year – pedestrians interacting with vehicles and vehicles not following the rules – continue. But Bill Tellone believes that the traffic situation has improved over last year.
- The completion of the C building – allowing for students to easily go from Vine Avenue to the back of HPHS – hasn't really changed traffic patterns – in particular, traffic around the North lot continues to be very heavy and within the North lot two lines of cars are in the lot during pick-up (which creates a hazard for pedestrians walking between cars).
- There were some positive observations made - the crosswalk at Woodpath is anecdotally seeing greater usage, the intersection of Vine and St. Johns seems to be seeing fewer back-ups during pick-up and drop-off and there are more drop-offs in the Vine lot.
- While the Advisory Group isn't formally considering a change in the number of CSOs and traffic monitors for this year, Tellone believes that (i) parents are more knowledgeable about drop-off/pick-up rules and (ii) monitors stationed inside the West lot and inside the Vine lot may not be necessary.
- Currently, the Ordinance requires 7 monitors but some days the District has been able to field 8 monitors given the extra personnel to manage construction. Tellone believes that 6 or even potentially 5 monitors would be sufficient (West lot entrance, Vine crosswalk, Vine fire lane, Woodpath crosswalk/bus entrance and North lot entrance). It was noted by Judy Bramson that the weather has been extraordinarily good so far and any decision on the number of monitors should be made based on winter conditions.

### Police Update:

- Like last year, there were a number of warnings (for the first 2 weeks of the year) and tickets issued during the first month of the year. However, Chief Shafer believes that there is better overall compliance than last year but illegal behavior has not been totally eliminated (Bramson and Shafer observe more illegal behavior east of Sheridan on Vine).

- As well, the number of enforcement actions at HPHS year-over-year has fallen by roughly 25%, which arguably reflects greater knowledge among HPHS parents and students about the regulations covering stopping, standing and parking on and around the HPHS campus.
- Shafer suggested that both congestion and safety could be improved if HPHS could go to a staggered start (i.e., some classes or grades starting later than other ones) – this approach has worked well at Sherwood and Red Oak in District 112 – although Shafer realizes that there are costs as well as significant logistical issues (bus schedules, class scheduling, etc.) associated with this approach.

#### Vine Lot:

- Plantings have been completed around the Vine lot, the District is awaiting final inspection from the City which will occur at the same time as the City inspects the landscaping around the new gym and pool. Dan Mortensen notes that (i) the District is actively trying to revive several plants that are not doing well along the lot and (ii) if any of the new plantings die, they will be replaced at no cost to the District.
- At the end of last year, the Group asked the District to install additional landscaping in the southwest portion of the lot to address neighborhood concerns and the District said it would be amenable to this work if community members paid for it and if P.E. space wasn't negatively impacted. Following up on the District's suggestion, the Chair noted that (i) someone needs to create an incremental landscaping plan and (ii) a plan for soliciting donations would need to be developed and launched.
- Sassen volunteered to take a leadership role in this effort and noted that there are multiple spaces in and around HPHS that need additional resources. Sassen is putting together a committee of stakeholders to come up with a master list of projects and suggested including the Vine lot landscaping in this effort. Bramson suggested getting students involved in this effort, particularly in landscaping.
- With regard to the lighting on the Vine lot, the District has a temporary permit to keep two center lights on from dusk until 11:00 p.m. Comed has replaced 2 older bulbs between the lot and HPHS and teachers and administrators feel the lighting is much better. The District will need a permanent administrative amendment to the Ordinance to address the changes in lighting policy. The City would like all of the requested modifications to the Ordinance incorporated into a single amendment.
- Lastly, Monica Kornberg asked about a hand railing on the steps leading to the Vine lot – Dan Mortensen said that a railing wasn't required (lot meets City Code) and the District doesn't want to put any more money into the lot.

### Woodpath Crosswalk:

- The Woodpath Crosswalk work has been completed and signed off by the City. Scott Weissman, who lives next to the crosswalk, noted that a lot of attention has gone into landscaping in the front of HPHS and asked that consideration be also given for the rear of the property. As well, the issue of the unusually large crosswalk sign across St. Johns remains.

### Discussion and Review of Potential Objectives for Year

The Chair would like to put the following items on the Agenda for this year and will work with Sassen, Mortensen and others to that end. These items include:

- Traffic Re-measurement Plan
- Modifications to Bus Policies to Reduce Traffic
- Modifications to Parking Policies to Reduce Traffic
- Vine Lot – Adding Incremental Landscaping
- Review of CSO/Traffic Monitor Numbers
- Resolution of Vine Lighting and Woodpath Sign Issue.
- St. Johns Sidewalk.
- Extending Sidewalk from North Lot entrance to new Gym and/or extending sidewalk from the North lot to the Woodpath crosswalk.