



City of Highland Park

1707 St. Johns Avenue
Highland Park, Illinois 60035
www.cityhpil.com

Media Release

Staff Contact

Amanda Civitello
Communications Manager
Email: acivitello@cityhpil.com
Tel: 847.926.1043

Not For Immediate Release

Publication Date: July 25, 2022, 5:30 PM

Community Vigil Remarks by Mayor Nancy R. Roterling

Highland Park, Illinois – Less than a month ago, on July 4th, our community gathered to celebrate Independence Day where we experienced the violent attack of a shooter with an assault weapon opening fire on our community’s families, friends, and neighbors. So many difficult days have unfolded since that tragedy. Tonight, marks another milestone in our journey forward. This is the first time since that horrific day that the City Council is meeting in-person at City Hall.

Seven precious lives were taken too soon, with more than 50 others shot and injured. Words cannot take away the grief or heal their wounds, but on behalf of the City of Highland Park, we send our deepest sympathies and love to the families of the victims. We will continue to mourn for:

Katherine Goldstein

Irina McCarthy

Kevin McCarthy

Jacquelyn Sundheim

Stephen Straus

Nicolas Toledo-Zaragoza

Eduardo Uvaldo

I ask that we take a moment of silence to remember and honor these individuals and keep all those who were injured and their families in our thoughts.

Moment of Silence

We will forever remember these innocent victims murdered by gun violence. May their memory be a blessing.

All of us at the City are united in grief, but also feeling a tremendous amount of appreciation. Thank you to our brave police and fire personnel, our Community

Emergency Response Team volunteers, and so many community members who ran into danger to save lives. They did not hesitate and responded with courage as they sacrificed their own safety to help others. I am so appreciative of our entire City team and all who have joined together to support our community. They have lifted us up with special care and attention and we are united in the face of trauma.

Collectively, we experienced a violent event that will impact each of us in different ways and at different times. Understandably, many of us are feeling a range of emotions. None of us are alone in this process. We will encourage and lean on each other, finding the strength to move forward together as one community. Connections to each other and making use of the many programs and services available will carry us through our darkest hours. At this difficult time, it is imperative that we respect and care for one another and recognize that some of us will need more time and extra support.

There is no clear roadmap to tell us what to do next, but we will thoughtfully and respectfully make our decisions in a way that illustrates who we are, what matters to us as a community, and what we hope for in the aftermath.

If there is a single step or many steps that we can take to save another human life and keep another town from enduring this pain, this agony, we have an obligation to try. No community is immune to gun violence. Action against this country's gun violence epidemic is needed now. We as a community are ready to meet this moment of national urgency. As your mayor, as your neighbor, as a parent, as a child of this city, as a human being - I will not stop trying. We will not stop trying.

In the wake of the massacre, President Joe Biden called to share his absolute grief at what had happened to our community. At that time, he invited me to join him and others impacted by gun violence in Washington. On Monday, July 11th, I traveled to the White House for an event to mark the historic achievement of the signing of the [Bipartisan Safer Communities Act](#). The Act is a commonsense, bipartisan proposal to protect America's children, keep our schools safe, and reduce the threat of violence across our country.

Governor JB Pritzker and City of Highland Park Police Commander Chris O'Neill and I had the opportunity to speak one-on-one with President Biden before the event. President Biden agreed with us that the Act is a *first step* to reducing the carnage, diminishing the fear, and alleviating the suffering of the American public -- but we need to do more. Last week he unveiled his Safer America Plan that, among other things, includes steps to keep dangerous firearms out of dangerous hands. He stands with us in our effort to federally ban assault weapons and large capacity magazines. He too believes that these "*weapons of war have no place in our communities*".

I returned to Washington, DC last week when Senator Dick Durbin invited me to testify on behalf of Highland Park in front of the United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary. They held a full committee hearing entitled “After the Highland Park Attack: Protecting Our Communities from Mass Shootings.” This hearing, the Judiciary Committee’s tenth hearing focused on gun violence held during the 117th Congress, focused on the dangers of widespread civilian access to military-style assault weapons designed to kill large numbers of people in seconds.

I provided written testimony, and I shared our story about what happened on the Fourth of July. Most importantly, I stated that no city, no state can do enough to protect its residents from mass shootings. The federal government must ban assault weapons and large capacity magazines. Thank you to those who joined me, including my City Council colleagues past and present.

Senator Durbin offered this sentiment following the hearing, *“In America, you can no longer go to the grocery store, a movie theater, a Fourth of July parade, or send your kids to school without fear of falling victim to another senseless mass shooting. I want those who have lost so much to gun violence to know that I hear you, I see you, and I stand with you in this fight for real change that goes beyond thoughts and prayers.”* I extend my sincerest thanks to Senator Durbin for his leadership and support as we do everything we can to stop these horrific attacks.

During the days that followed, I debriefed with federal officials, continuing to ask for resources to help our community recover, and pushing for a nationwide ban on assault weapons. I met with Attorney General Merrick Garland and his team. Attorney General Garland offered these words to our community, *“I grew up just 20 minutes away from Highland Park, so I know that this is an extraordinary community. I also know that you have had to show enormous strength over the past several weeks. The horrific mass shooting that occurred here devastated this community and our country. While nothing can undo this tragedy, the Justice Department is committed to doing everything we can alongside our state and local partners to provide this community with the support and resources it needs as we work together to end the plague of gun violence.”*

I also returned to the White House to meet with Senior Advisor to the President of the United States Julie Rodriguez and her team. They expressed their deepest condolences. We continued to discuss the need to pass vital legislation to end the every level of government to end the carnage. They pledged to continue to help us access resources as we cope and work towards taking our next steps together as a community.

It is important to note that in 2013, in the wake of Sandy Hook, we sat on this dais and banned assault weapons and large capacity magazines. We knew that a federal ban would be the most effective, but a local ban, reflecting the values of this community, was the only option available to us under the law. Nothing has changed and we need help from all levels of government. We need to pursue all options. We need to save lives now.

In the days and weeks ahead, I will continue conversations with survivors, community support agencies, elected leaders, and our business community. I will be meeting with area clergy, representatives from our sister governments, Lake County Board Member Paul Frank, IL State Representative Bob Morgan, IL State Senator Julie Morrison, IL Human Rights General Counsel Betsey Madden, IL Attorney General Kwame Raoul, and staying in touch with Governor Pritzker, and our federal representatives and agencies. These leaders share our values, recognize that protecting the safety and well-being of every human life is paramount, and understand that we as a community are scarred. They stand with us, and they are already helping us as we navigate a path forward.

I have said it before, and it needs to be repeated - this shooting may have attacked our most basic and collective sense of humanity, but *it will not define us*. Our coming together in the wake of this vicious attack, our outpouring of support for one another, and our heeding the call to action will make a tangible difference and speak volumes about each of us and our community now and for years to come.

We are one. We are Highland Park.

At this time, City Manager Neukirch will say a few words about our actions over these past few weeks. She will also outline the important resources and other information available to the public.

Before I turn it over, I want to offer special thanks to City Manager Ghida Neukirch, Police Chief Lou Jogmen, Fire Chief Joe Schrage, Assistant City Manager Erin Jason, Assistant City Manager/Director of Public Works Ramesh Kanapareddy, Communications Manager Amanda Civitello, and Human Resources Manager Emily Taub. We are so fortunate to have these professionals leading us through this crisis. They and their teams lead with grace, humility, and dedication while they simultaneously manage their own trauma and adversity. On behalf of all of us, thank you.

###