

Crestline Neighborhood Association Minutes
April 23, 2026
6:00 pm Fellowship Hall
Hope Community Church

Call to order by President Todd Russell.
Roll Call- please sign in on sheets at back.
20 people were present.

Todd reported that due to a mix up in communications, Alanah Melton will now be on our May Agenda. A motion was made to accept the Agenda by Florence Renfroe. It was seconded by Irene Lynn. All were in favor. Regarding the acceptance of the minutes, Marion Barnett asked the President to be recognized as Secretary to present the draft minutes of the March 26th meeting and to read a prepared statement to the membership before any corrections are considered. The President granted the request. The statement reads as follows:

Mr. President and neighbors,

I am concerned about the increasing conflict in our recent meetings. To have productive meetings, we all need to follow the rules that govern our Neighborhood Association.

Our association is guided by the **Birmingham Citizen Participation Plan (CPP)**, which was created by the City of Birmingham. We also need to follow **Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised**. Both the President and I have completed the Parliamentary Procedures training course provided by the city. These documents clearly explain the duties of each officer and how meetings should be conducted. When we follow these rules, our meetings remain fair and orderly.

For transparency, although I always remain neutral during the meetings, I want to share several things I feel the Neighborhood Association should know.

As Secretary, I prepared the draft minutes for the March 26 meeting using my handwritten notes and the full audio recording made openly during the meeting. I listened to the recording several times to ensure accuracy.

President Russell did not like the minutes I prepared. He asked me to remove them from Nextdoor, which I declined to do. He posted an AI-generated version on Facebook instead of my minutes. A neighbor noticed the significant differences between the two versions. She created a redline comparison and asked that my original minutes be posted. Here is the redline document if anyone would like to see it. *(The document was held up for the members to see).*

Additionally, the President sent an email to Flora Johnson in the Community Resource Representative office stating that I was not performing my job correctly. Flora Johnson did not respond. The full email can be read here. *(The document was held up for the members to see).* I also have hard copies of text messages from President Russell that contain similar demanding communications. *(The document was held up for the members to see).*

To give the membership a clear picture of the context I have been working under, I would like to share two recent emails. For the sake of time, I am only sharing two emails.

--First, A March 28th email *(The document was held up for the members to see):*

I received an automated email from the "Crestline Neighborhood Association Automation System" on behalf of President Russell, which stated:

"Please find attached the draft minutes for the Crestline Neighborhood Association meeting on Thursday, March 26, 2026. As Secretary, please review and reply with any corrections within 36 hours. If no response is received, the minutes will be forwarded to Todd Russell for approval..."

These draft minutes were generated by President Russell — they were not prepared by me. Prior to this email, I was unaware of any shared Google Drive and had not been given access to it. I immediately replied to President Russell, asking him to disable any automatic publishing feature and explaining that a

36-hour deadline was unrealistic for producing accurate minutes that require listening to the full recording. He never responded to that email.

--**Second, an April 19th email from President Russell to me** (*The document was held up for the members to see*).

President Russell sent me the following email demanding three corrections. With the body's permission, I will read the key portions of President Russell words:

"Before the March 26 minutes go up for approval on April 23, three corrections need to be made...

-First... change 'claimed' to 'stated'...

-Second... the line should be amended to reflect that... no official CNA vote... has taken place.

Third... the tally of 28 in favor and 1 opposed is not accurate... The minutes should be amended to reflect that the recorded tally is disputed...

-The word "claimed" was your choice, and it fits a pattern. You have questioned the legitimacy of advisory committees under my presidency from the start...

-You participated as a member of the advisory committee in the 2024 secret meetings with David Silverstein. Those meetings were closed to the public in violation of the CPP... that history is context for why one word choice in the current minutes is not an isolated editing decision.

Please submit a corrected draft... If they are not made, I will raise them on the floor at that time."

These emails show the pressure I have faced as Secretary to meet very short deadlines, accept AI-generated drafts without sufficient review, and make changes under threat of public challenge. For full transparency, I brought hard copies tonight so anyone who wishes may read the email in full.

To address the three requested corrections:

1. The word "claimed":

The President has asked me to change "Todd claimed..." to "Todd stated...".

Here is why I used the word "claimed":

The President was announcing a new rule — that the Zoning & Land Use Committee must review an item **before** the full neighborhood could vote. This requirement had never been voted on by the membership and had not been applied to other items on the same agenda that night.

According to the **Citizen Participation Plan (CPP)**, these committees are **advisory only**. They are formed by the president in consultation with the vice president and secretary **to help leaders understand residents' views**.

On March 26, the president of the Zoning & Land Use Committee was absent. The body was told that the committee had not heard St. Peter's presentation in the two weeks prior. It was also confirmed that a committee quorum was not present at the March 26th meeting. Yet the lack of committee review was used to attempt to block the full membership from voting on a timely agenda item that was already on the published agenda. This turned an advisory body into a mandatory gatekeeper, which the CPP **does not authorize**. An advisory committee cannot block the membership from voting once a motion has been made and seconded on the floor.

Using the word "claimed" accurately reflected the membership's disagreement and the fact that they twice made proper motions to vote.

2. The vote characterization:

A motion was made and seconded on the agenda item. Despite the chair's ruling, the membership took a vote of 28 in favor and 1 opposed. Under Robert's Rules §48, minutes must record what was actually done at the meeting. The vote was taken on the floor.

3. The vote tally:

The audio recording clearly indicates only one opposing vote. A second call was even made for

additional opposed votes to ensure accuracy. Any conversations after the meeting do not change the record of what occurred that night.

The president cannot unilaterally force the secretary to change the minutes simply because he dislikes how his actions are recorded. Minutes must remain an accurate record of what occurred. Any disagreements about accuracy can only be resolved by the full membership during the official approval process at the meeting — not by the president acting alone.

Four Additional Items for the Neighborhood's Awareness and Transparency:

1. The President referenced a “pattern” and the 2024 Silverstein meetings. Those meetings were closed to the public, which went against the open-meeting spirit of the CPP. As Secretary at the time, I should have ensured they were properly noticed and documented. That was an oversight, and we have previously addressed those issues as a body and moved forward. I do not see a 'pattern' or any direct connection between those 2024 meetings and the March 2026 minutes. However, since the President raised this matter, I am presenting it to the membership for your review and opinions.

2. The President has requested direct access to the neighborhood group email distribution list so he can send ai-generated minutes and newsletters. I support using ai as a tool, but the transcripts have not been accurate for our meetings due to accents, distance from the microphone, and room noise. Preparing accurate minutes requires many hours of careful review. The neighborhood group email distribution list is association property and should be used only for official neighborhood business.

President Russell has made several public comments on Facebook and NextDoor that express strong negative feelings toward St. Peter's Church and Ricky Brooks. Screenshots of these comments can be seen here. *(The document was held up for the members to see).*

My concern about granting the President direct access to the group email list without additional officer oversight is that these public comments demonstrate an inability to separate his personal views from his role as President. The membership should have the opportunity to form its own opinions before being influenced by the President's strong personal narrative.

I have offered to continue distributing approved minutes and newsletters on the group email list myself in order to protect member privacy and ensure accuracy. Any decision to grant the President direct access to the group email list without other officer oversight should be made by the full membership.

3. I was surprised this week by an email from the city regarding an official request to change our name to “Crestline Park” without any prior discussion or vote by the membership. The city denied the request because no procedure exists. The CPP makes clear that important governance actions like this should receive membership approval first. President Russell did not discuss this change with the body or ask for a vote before requesting the name change. *(The document was held up for the members to see).*

4. Finally, due to an error in January that President Russell acknowledged in writing, we began sending agendas in advance to Councilor Hunter Williams' office to ensure the Councilor's compliance with the City Attorney. We had an agreement to do so. The President later called the practice “absurd” and then, on April 16, stated he had “changed his mind” and would no longer follow the schedule. To maintain good communications and relationships with our city council representative, I continue forwarding the agendas myself. The chain of emails can be read here. *(The document was held up for the members to see).*

All of these situations have made performing my duties as Secretary more difficult due to short timelines, added pressure, and surprise communications from the city for me to sort out. I am sharing them tonight in the spirit of transparency so the membership can make informed decisions about how we move forward.

Therefore, I ask the membership to:

1. Approve the March 26 minutes as presented by the Secretary, or with only specific factual corrections approved by majority vote tonight.
2. Affirm that the presiding officer must remain **impartial while in the chair (Robert's Rules §43)** and that advisory committees cannot block the membership from voting on agenda items.
3. In light of recent attempts to change the neighborhood name without membership approval, require that any **formal position, request, or inquiry** to the city that commits the neighborhood to a stance or action receive prior authorization by a vote of the membership.
4. Provide guidance on the use of ai for minutes, access to the group email list, and continued advanced sharing of agendas with Hunter Williams' office.

I remain committed to producing accurate minutes and to following the CPP and Robert's Rules of Order. Thank you.

Amy McMullen made a motion to vote to approve the minutes as presented with no changes. The motion was seconded by Jennifer Fisher. The vote result was 12 in favor, no one opposed and 1 person abstained. The minutes were approved as submitted by the Secretary.

Discussion:

President Russell addressed the St. Peter's sidewalk variance issue noting inaccurate information from the church at the March meeting, a floor vote occurred before the zoning committee review in spite of the fact that a vote was not on the agenda, the hearing date and drainage issues. Todd said he's meeting with Ricky Brooks next week to understand how this happened and he will have a fuller update for us in May. He thanked Zoning Committee member John Trott for his investigation work. He also announced the church's withdrawal of the waiver. The sidewalk will be built. Todd recommended to the Zoning Committee a new 30-day advance submission rule for developers or applicants in order to facilitate the duties of the Committee.

A lengthy discussion by all followed regarding Committee authority (advisory per CPP vs gatekeeping), the March vote, the new submission process, social media issues and concerns about impartiality. Flora Johnson spoke up with a recommendation to terminate the discussions and proceed with the agenda.

Reports:

BPD officers Captain Landon Cochran and Captain Christopher Hayes were present from the East Precinct. They stated that they are experiencing rapid response time. They encouraged camera registration for the Real-Time Crime Center access. They also encourage "See something, say something". Captain Cochran also addressed the homeless situation and the procedures they have to adhere to in handling those situations. Also, be aware of houses that are under construction & notify the police in case of any unauthorized people on site.

Deputy Chief Boackle gave key statistics (citywide):

- Murder down 48%, rapes down 11%, Robbery down 33%
- Aggravated assault down 10%, Total Violent Crime down 15%
- Discharging firearms down 34%, burglary down 11.2%, auto theft down 20%

Q & A on vagrants (e.g. Purple Onion property), traffic enforcement radar on Hagood, officers on bicycles)

City Council:

India Bailey gave an update about the progress of the Shades Creek trail construction. She said that the fencing work is complete. The asphalt work begins on the entirety of the trail next week. She was excited that the trail is really close to completion.

Community Resource Services:

Flora Johnson reviewed officer duties per CPP/Robert's Rules (President as leader/administrator/presiding officer; Secretary for accurate minutes). She emphasized the democratic process, respect, and majority rule and Robert's Rules of Order. She invited all to the free charity baseball game (BPD vs. Fire Department) at Rickwood Stadium on Sunday at 1:30 PM with youth clinic. She also provided copies of neighborhood officer's duties documents.

New Business:

Tree Watering Initiative by Katie Rogers

The following trees were planted in the park on Tree Day: 5 chestnut oaks on west side, 2 live oaks, 1 white oak, 1 scarlet oak on east/playground side.

Katie reminded everyone that there is still a need for people to sign up to help water the new trees in the park. She had a sign-up sheet with her. She explained the watering process and best practices.

Crestline Park Groove Music Festival

Todd Russell reminded everyone about the event. It is on May 9, 2026 from noon to 6:00 PM. New sponsor is Shops on Montevallo. Current bands scheduled are Huck & Lilly, Ken & Andi, Rolling in the Hay, The Slacker Bees & The Undergrounders closing. It is family-friendly and there will be food vendors as well.

Censure Motion by Hallie Gibbs:

Mr. President,

I move that the Crestline Neighborhood Association censure President Todd Russell for publicly disparaging our new neighbors St. Peter's Anglican Church and Ricky Brooks on Facebook and NextDoor.

In those posts, made while identifying himself as "Todd Russell, Crestline Neighborhood Association President," he has repeatedly accused the Church of being dishonest and of intentionally making false or misleading statements to the neighborhood. He has also referred to the Church as "a wealthy developer" trying to "save money by walking back commitments."

He has compared them to David Silverstein and FiveStone's manipulating business practices.

He has stated that St. Peter's and Ricky Brooks are "no more trustworthy" than those previous developers.

I have also received an email from Ricky Brooks that directly refutes several of the claims made by President Russell in his social media posts. The email confirms that President Russell never contacted Ricky Brooks or the church to hear their side before making these negative public statements.

As the elected president, Todd Russell is the official face and representative of our entire neighborhood association. When he posts in that capacity, his words are widely perceived as speaking for the Crestline Neighborhood Association as a whole.

These public comments demonstrate a failure to maintain the impartiality expected of the presiding officer. As president, he has a responsibility to be very careful with his words on social media and should not cause unnecessary neighborhood drama, disparage neighbors, businesses, or churches in our community — especially a church or individual members of that church.

Such statements undermine the neighborhood's goal of being welcoming to new residents and institutions, damage the association's reputation with the city, potential new neighbors, and local businesses, as well as contradicting the spirit of the Citizen Participation Plan, which encourages open, respectful dialogue among all members of the community.

A censure will make it clear, for the official record, that the Crestline Neighborhood Association does not endorse or condone these negative statements about St. Peter's or Ricky Brooks.

Most neighbors are excited about the church moving into our community, and the membership should have the opportunity to form its own opinions based on facts presented at our meetings rather than being influenced by the president's strong personal narrative.

St. Peter's Clarification Emails

During discussion of the motion to censure, Hallie Gibbs read into the record two emails and a text she received from Ricky Brooks of St. Peter's Anglican Church. Hallie Gibbs had reached out to Ricky specifically to ask whether the statements Todd had made about the church on Facebook and Nextdoor were accurate. In response, Ricky provided the following facts:

He stated that the neighborhood meeting was not a requirement to obtain the sidewalk waiver from the city.

Meeting with the neighborhood association was suggested as a courtesy, not required, though strong neighborhood support for no sidewalk might have carried influence. Ricky noted that he had personally called Tad Bailey before the March 26 meeting to give him advance notice.

At the meeting, he began his presentation in good faith by stating, "We said we were going to build a sidewalk, so if the neighborhood wants a sidewalk, we will build a sidewalk." He and Josh Donnell explained they asked the CNA if they wanted to remove the sidewalk due to the neighborhood's desire for more green space and the fact

that six or seven houses immediately to the north had no sidewalks. They did not expect or request an immediate vote while they were still present; they anticipated the neighborhood would discuss the matter and inform them later.

Ricky further explained that Josh Donnell had applied for the variance on March 25. Upon learning that Todd and others were upset about the hearing timing, St. Peter's proactively requested on April 6 that the hearing be moved from May 8 to May 13 to give the neighborhood more time. After the March 26 meeting, Ricky spoke several times with John Trott, who lives on the same block and indicated that he and several neighbors wanted the sidewalk. In light of that feedback, St. Peter's voluntarily withdrew the variance request, with Ricky stating, "If the neighborhood wants the sidewalk, we'll build the sidewalk." He expressed surprise that the issue had become divisive and confirmed that Hoar Construction estimated roughly \$14,000 in savings (net approximately \$10,000 after engineering fees of \$4,000–\$5,000) which is not a large savings for a project of this size.

Ricky explicitly confirmed that Todd never contacted him or the church to inquire about the project or to ask any questions before making public statements on social media. The only communication was a brief text exchange that Ricky initiated regarding the postponement; Todd responded only by providing his email address with no follow-up questions or statements. Todd reached out to Ricky on April 20th to see if he wanted to meet. Ricky told Todd that he had withdrawn the application.

Todd emailed St. Peter's engineering firm on April 8 requesting several technical documents. Ricky said that Todd was informed by the engineering firm that all information and document requests must come directly from St. Peter's. Ricky said no direct outreach from Todd occurred.

These details were shared with the CNA to demonstrate that St. Peter's had acted in good faith, accommodated the neighborhood's concerns, and that Todd had not verified the information with them prior to his public criticisms.

After Hallie completed her motion statement, it was seconded by John Trott. There was discussion by several members who supported the censure (citing impartiality and neighborhood reputation). Another member called out that St. Peter's planned building is not a "mega church" (as Todd claimed) and the drainage comments were inaccurate. Todd and others addressed facts of the variance process and motivations (traffic calming on Hagood). The vote was taken about the censure of Todd Russell. The result was 10 in favor, no one opposed and 3 people abstained. The censure is now part of the official record as strong disapproval of the actions of Todd Russell as stated in the Censure Motion.

Announcements:

Members were reminded of the upcoming Alabama Primary Election on Tuesday, May 19, 2026.

With there being no further business, Todd adjourned the meeting at 7:48 pm.
Our next CNA meeting will be Thursday, May 28, 2026 at 6:00 PM.

Submitted by Marion Barnett, Crestline NA Secretary

The Neighborhood Association is an administrator on the Facebook Page

www.facebook.com/WhatsHappeningInCrestlinePark

Our Crestline Neighborhood website can be found at www.crestlinena.org

Note: Our meeting has been recorded and can be found on our YouTube channel

here: <https://youtu.be/HIAR8MV5m5Q>

To subscribe to our YouTube channel and receive notifications, click the bell icon or the Subscribe button.