

## WEST HARRISON NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

### MINUTES OF MEETING: April 16, 2008 West Harrison Fire House

**Board members all present:** Lori Wilson, Gregg Rosenberg, Jeff LaGrotte, Mario Gallo, Angela Amodeo, Gerri Barbagallo, Lisa Faillace-Sciliano, Charlie Russo.

**President Lori Wilson** opened the meeting and welcomed all.

The **minutes** of March **26, 2008** were approved.

**Treasury Report: Jeff LaGrotte:** Balance is \$23,459.00. We had a successful fundraising dinner dance and will report the totals on that at the next meeting.

**Lori Wilson** - Our money is earmarked with lots of plans in the works.

She read an email from a new neighborhood association, HMRA, formed by the Cantor family that doesn't want the Sherman Ave. housing development because of the impact on the Mamaroneck River. If anyone is interested they can email them at nmcantor@optonline.net.

She read a letter from our County Legislator John Nonna, supporting our organization, and giving his regrets for not being able to attend our dinner dance fund raiser.

The streetscape project will be on the agenda of the town board on May 1<sup>st</sup>.

We were asked to write a letter in support of Frattelli's Café establishment concerning their benefit to our business district as opposed to any discontent and supporting them in their plight to stay in their building. After a discussion with the board and the floor it was determined that no one here has any problems with them and most think they are a good neighbor and positive business establishment. We will send a letter to them in support.

**Linda Levine, Representing Assemblyman Adam Bradley** - They spoke to DOT about calls from disturbed neighbors with the night pile driving, asking it be done no later than 11:30 pm. Received calls from some residents that were not receiving their STAR benefits and advised Albany. Don't loose out on those benefits. Keep an eye out for those rebate letters in October. Our office is working directly with the DOT regional director along with our County Legislator John Nonna on the I287 project impact on North Broadway. Adam will be very available after session and the office is always here.

**Membership & Communications: Angela Amodeo** – 152 dues paid members plus a few that have signed up tonight. All 2008 dues paid members present will be entered into the drawing for tonight's Member of the Month gift.

**Building Community and Fundraising: Mario Gallo** –. Our recent dinner dance fund raiser was a huge success. He thanked businesses and people in the community for their donations, and thanked his committee for their hard work.

**Public Works & Beautification/Traffic Safety: Gerri Barbagallo** – Announced the first West Harrison business beautification award was presented at the dinner by Maryann DiSimone to Monica Chimes Florist.

**Senior Committee: Ro Verano** – CPR training was put on hold because of the physical stress entailed to seniors. The new senior center building is coming soon. We will be planning for furniture and accessories. (Mayor Joan Walsh said that plans are moving forward. The HVAC and plumbing are being rebid because the originals were too high, but the will not delay the start of construction.

**Next general meeting** is **Wednesday, May 21<sup>st</sup>** here at the firehouse. Our guest will be West Harrison Fire Chief Pat Galluzzo.

**Member of the Month for March** was chosen – Rocco Compitello – and he was awarded a battery powered lantern purchased at Silver Lake Hardware Store, owned by member Bert Ricci.

**Topic for Discussion: Unsafe / Illegal Housing in West Harrison:**

**Lori Wilson** read a letter from Code Enforcement Officer Ed DiBouno in which he gave list of summoned premises and results of sweeps since March. She stated that this meeting is turned over to the ideas and comments of the floor on this issue. One thing we know we want is to have the violation fines greatly increased. We will communicate this and the membership's other recommendations to the Town Board. Lengthy discussion followed, including:

Living supplies and clutter seen in woods and not removed.

Change zoning and have the landowners pay proper taxes, a comment that was immediately and overwhelmingly objected to and discounted by most of those in attendance.

The issue of safety to families and emergency personnel is of utmost importance. Fire Chief Pat Galluzzo stated that he is very pleased that we are pressing this issue because of the great concern for the safety of firemen fighting basement fires. He described some dangers they have encountered and those that are feared. Their efforts are hampered and their lives are put in danger. He does not want this to happen. They report when they find violations and will continue to do so.

New York City fines are astronomical. In Peekskill, the building inspector always goes in and checks when a house is being sold.

Mayor Walsh stated that she directed the town lawyers to rewrite the laws to raise the fines to \$1,000.00 per week. (Board wants to know when this will happen.) The task force that was set up by the previous administration consists of Ed DiBouno and a police officer going door to door, sometimes accompanied by the building inspector. They do not have to be admitted. Reported residents are now picked randomly to include element of surprise, but this also takes more time.

Hiring more building inspectors is of extreme importance. The resulting fines will help pay for this. The Mayor says she is trying to hire one additional code enforcement officer but it is being held up for technical reasons with the civil service list. Many think this needs to be done immediately.

Mayor Walsh – A lot of these cases are in the very busy courts. Judges are now working in concert and are not letting people off. There have to be multiple return inspections by code enforcement. (Many think this is more reason to hire more than one code officer.) The town's income is down for various reasons. In-law apartments are not legal. Accessory apartment use was denied by the town board a few years ago. A stove makes it illegal.

Years ago, this was one person in a basement, now there are many more. This of course is affecting schools, parking, garbage collection, etc., therefore taxes. It takes a lot of tax money to put an illegal resident child through school, never mind causing the need for more school space.

We need increased manpower to be effective. Police should be reporting. They should be checking license plates at night. Put offenders on police blotter. Publish illegals in newspapers. Report them to IRS. School district should be involved to find illegals. Look at mailboxes. Suggestion for an apartment database. We need "boots on the ground". Word has to get out and needs to be backed up. We have to keep pushing. Hiring must be done now. We need to publicize this initiative.

Westchester County board of realtors should be notified of realtors that are marketing accessory apartments.

This association needs to communicate our feelings to the Town Board. What you are going to save is going to totally outweigh the cost of more enforcers. Keeping this pressure on now will move this thing along and once the public is behind you, the money will not be a problem.

Don't let up. Put illegal housing on the town board agenda and we will show up. Tell them to increase the fines stiffly. Hire the people and the fines will pay for them. The force of this organization will make a dent and start something that will really work. Urge the mayor to hire provisionally until new list is ready.

President Lori Wilson – this board will write a letter to the Town Board with our recommendations and forward it to our members.

Respectfully submitted,  
Angela Amodeo, Secretary