

# West Harrison Neighborhood Association holds last meeting before summer

## *Assemblyman Bradley in attendance*

By Matt Kerner

The West Harrison Neighborhood Association held its last monthly meeting on June 27 at the St. Anthony's School in West Harrison before going on hiatus for the summer months.

The group, which has been in existence for a little over a year, heard presentations from many of its different committees including parks and recreation, public works and a senior citizens committee. The latter of which was represented by Rosemarie Verano, who secured a lunch program for West Harrison seniors to be held each week at the senior center.

The meeting featured New York State Assemblyman Adam Bradley as its guest speaker. Bradley discussed his efforts in dealing with the New York State Department of Transportation to make sure the West Harrison community was not blocked off by the proposals to reconstruct Interstate 287.

"I was happy to be able to report positive news to the WHNA at their

meeting," said Bradley. "The DOT has agreed not to do some projects that many residents felt would have disrupted West Harrison."

After a noise analysis of the area determined a noise level of 66 decibels, which was considered to high according to a Regional Structures Engineer, the DOT was called upon to construct a 15-20-foot noise barrier alongside the interstate. However, once residents became aware of the plans and learned that the wall would have encroached upon the property of several West Harrison residents, Bradley lobbied the DOT to allow the residents who would be most affected by the wall to vote on the proposal.

The majority of residents voted against the wall being built, which caused the DOT to put those plans on hold until the reconstruction of 287 is revisited in three to five years, according to Bradley. Instead, a 12 to 14 foot-high wooden fence will be built alongside the interstate instead of the noise barrier.

"Everyone's very happy, and we feel we've accomplished something," said WHNA President Fred Sciliano about stopping the construction of

the noise barrier. "We're still nervous about what's going to happen in five years so we're going to stay on top of it and be cautious. When they (DOT) polled the residents to see what they wanted, that's what put the icing on the cake. They didn't want to seem as if they didn't pay attention to resident's opinions.

Another issue of concern to West Harrison residents regarding the reconstruction of the interstate by the DOT was the possibility that one of the exit ramps would be closed off. If the exit ramp were closed, it would have blocked access to the town at the intersection of Underhill Avenue, Columbus Avenue, Locust Avenue and Westchester Avenue, while making White Plains Avenue the only access in and out of the town on the south end.

"A lot of hard work went into numerous meetings with the DOT to ensure they wouldn't close intersections or build the wall," said Bradley. "It's clear to me that a large number of residents were against the DOT's plans that would impact the community. I wanted the DOT to reconsider and not do things that would upset the residents, and convince the DOT there

were better things they could be doing with no negative impacts for the West Harrison community."

Residents were also concerned that their property values would plummet due to the presence and proximity of the wall. The cost of the barrier would have been no more than \$50,000 per protected property. The vote amongst the residents took place in February, and the results were enough to convince the DOT not to proceed.

"I think the DOT deserves praise for listening and reevaluating their plans based on the opinions of the assemblyman who represents the district and the community at large," said Bradley. "The organization is a wonderful thing for the community to have. It's a vehicle for them to express concerns and advocate for the things they care about."

Another major issue that has united West Harrison residents is the prevalence of illegal housing in the town. Absentee landlords are renting apartments to illegal immigrants, and the Town's Code Enforcement Officer, Ed DiBuono, is currently trying to collect proof of where the illegal apartments are and then see what can be done about it.