

WEST HARRISON NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

Minutes of Meeting: March 15, 2006 at the West Harrison Fire House

Attendance: Total - 41. Board members present: Jeff LaGrotte, Lisa Faillace-Sciliano, Mario Gallo, Fred Sciliano, Angela Amodio, Geri Barbagallo. Board member absent: Charles Russo

Fred Sciliano opened the meeting with a welcome to all for coming.

The **minutes of the last meeting of February 15, 2006** were approved.

Treasurer's Report: Jeff LaGrotte – Balance of \$4700.00. Higher than usual because of dinner dance ticket sales. Dues for 2006 will be raised to \$20, \$15 for seniors.

Fund Raising: Mario Gallo – 2 weeks left for dinner dance tickets. Great evening ahead and an opportunity for community building. April 1st at Antonee's. Great food, silent auction.

DOT Update: Fred – they took the new traffic count. The Mayor and Linda Levine in Adam Bradley's office is monitoring and working on the situation.. They raised all the objections that we had to the issues of the concrete noise barrier wall and the closing of the intersection. Thanks went out to Adam Bradley and his assistant Linda Levine.

Post Office: Fred – Working with Manny on the Aquarios site. Doing measurements. He read Kathy Shallo's letter to Nita Lowey about the lack of a Post Office here. He thanked Kathy – informative and helpful to our cause - and urged others to write and call. Process has been frustrating.

There will be a **Planning, Zoning, Architecture** meeting on the 20th at 7:30.

Lisa is setting up meeting with Bob Wasp for **Public Works, Utilities, Beautification**. Let her know of any issues. (Short discussion on issue of the White Plains mill property being used as a rooming house, and men hanging around in neighborhood rummaging for recyclables.) Public Works Dept. has just started process of straightening and cleaning street signs.

Parks & Recreation: Fred - Field almost done – looks great. There will be a dedication ceremony. Streetscape startup has been held up because of the ongoing negotiations with Con Ed concerning the possibility of putting the wires underground.

Seniors: Ro Verano – lunch program ongoing. Need to work on turmoil caused by multiple closures. Working on volunteer cleanup team or part time help. Spoke to Stephanie Donworth of the children's center about starting a grandparent program and she was very receptive. Seniors would have to have physicals with TB test. Looking into instructor for a ceramics program. Looking to discuss the future of the senior facilities with the town board for sooner rather than later improvement. Looking to work on small cities program grant for 2007.

Floor Discussions:

- They should put parking on the side of the new field for little league games.
- Need handicap parking on Columbus – a lot of cars.
- Condition of property of the apartments at lower end a jungle of woods and a fire hazard. Eyesore between Underhill and Columbus. The management is not cleaning it up. Property is cluttered, dead trees, wood, accumulating debris.
- What is happening with code enforcement of illegal apartments? (Fred – Ed DiBuono has been ill. Meeting will be set up to find out what is going to be done.
- Coffee shop going in to old bakery site.

Guest Presentation:

David Singer, President of the Harrison Central School District Board of Education

He gave a brief overview and update of the schools as they are and the potential bond referendum being prepared. He is a native of Harrison, a real estate lawyer with 2 girls in the school district. He ran for the board because of frustration with the board at that time and was elected in 2002. A leadership change came about in the superintendent's office then. He is now working on trying to create a school district that this community deserves.

The elementary system is now equally run, not disparate as it was – performances have equalized because of the efforts to make it all work. Preston is now one of the top elementary schools in Westchester. The disparity has been eliminated over the past 5 or 6 years, not easily, but with hard work and attention building an infrastructure that created accountability which is still a work in progress. They are raising expectations and helping those that need it.

All schools need renovations or upgrading. They need to start a process to phase in renovations soon. The high school was built in 1974 and has had little work since. It needs a sensible renovation and expansion. Dramatic renovations are needed at the middle school. The 1996 bond was basically a fixer-upper. The core of the building has not changed much since 1939. The cost of renovation will be dramatically high – that versus a new school must be determined. Working now with architects. Preston is in relatively good shape (1930's) – some work needed. Purchase also. Harrison Ave. School (1930's) is running out of space – critical. Parson's School (1800's) is a disaster. Serious renovations needed right away.

Process for renovation or building approvals is time consuming. They have enlisted help of citizens bond committee with experienced people in different fields. Taking time to come to conclusions. They changed course on previous ideas and are being very careful to do things right. The board (of education) welcomes your input. They don't know yet if they will be putting up one bond or multiple. The board has directed the Superintendent of schools to update the Strategic Plan, a broad picture of the school district. They are working on the cultural piece, trying to create a school district that is acceptable to children, parents, and the tax payers who pay for it. He will come back with more specifics.

He says it is difficult to communicate in this town. People who come to the school board meetings come for their individual causes, and there is not good local press coverage.

The schools are in a state of "long term obsolescence". Repair and maintenance has been bonded at other times. A new high school would cost 85 to 95 million dollars. Average tax increase could be about \$1000.00. If a bond is approved by voters it will take 1 ½ years before ground is broken. The goal for the board is to get the best options and study before decisions are made. School facilities need to reflect the community – not over the top, but good functional, flexible space that would be good for the next 50 years. He knows that there is tremendous pressure on the tax base. The state contributes relatively little. We need to be competitive to attract the best teachers. That is the biggest chunk of the budget. The HAT contract expires in June. We have 1600 employees.

A private fund raising entity has been established that is working on raising money for a state of the art stadium/football field at the high school.

The next meeting will be **Wednesday, April 19th at the Fire House**

Respectfully Submitted,
Angela Amodeo, Secretary
West Harrison Neighborhood Association