

WEST HARRISON NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

Minutes of Meeting: February 15, 2006 at the Mintzer Recreation Center

Attendance: Total - 94. Board members present: Jeff LaGrotte, Lisa Faillace-Sciliano, Mario Gallo, Fred Sciliano, Charlie Russo, Angela Amodeo, Geri Barbagallo.

Board members absent: Lori Wilson, Gregg Rosenberg.

Fred Sciliano opened the meeting with a welcome to our members and also to the numerous guests present.

The **minutes of the last meeting of January 19, 2006** were approved.

Treasurer's Report: Jeff LaGrotte – Presented his year end report. We have a balance of \$3461.00 as of Feb. 17, 2006. He mentioned that donations beyond dues by the board and by certain members have mainly funded us for the first year. Tax exempt status paperwork is taking much longer than anticipated so we do not yet have that designation. 2006 dues will be billed in March and will be increased by \$5.00 to \$20.00 each, \$15.00 for senior citizen.

Post Office: Fred – this issue will now be a new committee that we need members to work on. He met with the owner of Aquario, Mr. Cabral about renovating a space that he has. The Gizzo building is now rented and therefore unavailable.

Fund Raising: Mario Gallo – his committee is hard at work on plans for the first annual dinner dance with silent auction and journal. 150 tickets will be sold at \$60 each. There will be an open bar. The date is Saturday, April 1st, at Antonees on South Broadway in White Plains.

Public Works, Utilities & Beautification: Lisa Sciliano – There will be a committee meeting in a few weeks. Focus will be on area eyesores, street sweeping schedules, curb issues, the good work of the arborists program, tree plantings, etc. A guide was made available on recycling from the Department of Public Works.

Seniors: Rosemarie Verano – They will be working on grants for our senior centers and she reviewed some that are available. Reviewed the senior lunch program that the committee is responsible for establishing.

Parks and Recreation: Charlie Russo – the committee needs new members and new ideas. The laying of the turf on the field is awaiting the weather. That will complete it. Phase 2 of the project, which is the pool complex could begin mid summer. The streetscape project is awaiting the decision about the wires. There are determinations being done on cost for locating wires underground with all concerned parties.

Membership Report: We now have 248 dues paying members.

Planning and Zoning: Fred said that people have been upset with the conditions at the Lake St. Quarry and we will be talking to the town about it. He spoke of the issue of the zoning board granting the first requests for variances against the newly enacted 30% lot coverage by a 2 lot

subdivision downtown. It is very disappointing that this is being done and that this new law is not being followed. It is basically “a slap in the face”.

A petition prepared by member Rose Grosskopf opposing the DOT noise barrier project was available for signing.

Fred thanked Linda Levine at Adam Bradley’s office for working with us to get information on the DOT project for which information is being presented by a DOT team at this meeting. He took a hand vote and it indicated that the attendance (which was about half member, half guest) was overwhelmingly against this project. He also thanked Mayor Steve Malfitano and Councilman Joe Cannella for being present, as well as Town Engineer Hugh Gretchen. (The Mayor also thanked State Sen. Suzi Oppenheimers office for their assistance.)

The next meeting will be March 15 at the fire house.

Presentation by the New York State Department of Transportation representatives George Santana, project engineer, and Nick Choubah, project design manager:

They did a power point presentation, the same that was given at the last town board meeting. The project explained is part of the I287 corridor ongoing renovations. They are replacing all bridges with newly designed safer piers over 287 and making various improvements as they proceed east. Some ramps and acceleration lanes will be altered or improved. They build a half bridge at a time to keep the traffic moving. They will be eliminating the Hall Ave. bridge, replacing the White Plains Ave. bridge, etc.

The part of the work that greatly concerns the residents of West Harrison is their plan to construct a concrete aggregate sound barrier (or noise wall) at the north edge of Westchester Ave. behind the houses on Locust Ave. continuing along the entrance ramp to westbound 287, connecting to the wall already further down on the entrance ramp. In doing this they also will be eliminating the access to Underhill Ave. from Westchester Ave. and reconfiguring that intersection at Columbus Ave. so that there also will be no more access to White Plains at that point. Westbound traffic will have to access Locust to get to Underhill.

Slides were used to show what the wall will look like at the actual site. In doing the work 10 feet of land on either side will be need to be cleared of trees. Bids are set to be taken on April 6th. Construction would start in June. The wall would be of uniform height its whole length. The noise reduction benefits would apply to 40 homes. They will be doing a new usage recount at the intersection in question at the request of residents. A clear majority of affected residents will determine whether the wall will be built or not. This is a clarification to previous information that one resident wanting the wall would necessitate it being built. Town board and impacted residents will factor into the final decision. Councilman Cannella and Mayor Malfitano requested the procedure for this decision process be put in writing.

Residents voiced numerous objections. Many feel the wall will be an eyesore. And not beneficial to enough to warrant such. The loss of the trees will be a further eyesore.

The Assistant Chief of the West Harrison Fire Department, Sal Gentile, issued a statement while showing a picture of their ladder-rigged truck. That truck and others will not be able to make the turn from White Plains Ave. unto Locust St., a small local street.

Many objected to the overuse and inappropriate use to which Locust Ave. will be subjected. Emergency vehicles of all types will have to use it. Rush hours at that intersection will be a nightmare for both drivers and residents. Also adding to that problem will be closing the White

Plains access from the Columbus Ave./Locust Ave./Underhill Ave. intersection. The Harrison Fire Inspector has also condemned the closing of that intersection.

Mayor Malfitano said that he would request that the state identify each property involved and survey them through this association. He said there will be a legal fight if plans weren't satisfactory to the town concerning the 2 issues - being the construction of the sound barrier and the intersection restructuring.

In response to the question as to why this barrier was even planned, the project manager stated that they are "obligated to mitigate impacts when planning construction" for major reconstruction projects. They are obligated to consider the noise problem at the sites that they are working. Also in response to a question, they agreed that there are no other neighborhoods that have had walls built off the highway and enclosing it at their gateway.

Linda Levine of Assemblyman Adam Bradley's office stated that this report concerns him and he has contacted the DOT. They were the ones that found that the law did not demand a unanimous veto but a consensus vote.

The managers will send the Mayor a list of houses impacted, and will find out how the process of surveying the impacted properties will be done. If the majority of them don't want it, then it will be dropped. They stated that the resolution on the sound barrier will be prior to opening the bids on the project.

Respectfully Submitted,
Angela Amodeo, Secretary
West Harrison Neighborhood Association