

WEST HARRISON NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

MINUTES OF MEETING: September 18, 2007, West Harrison Fire House

Board members present: Fred Sciliano, Lori Wilson, Gregg Rosenberg, Jeff LaGrotte, Charlie Russo, Mario Gallo, Angela Amodeo.

Board members absent: Gerri Barbagallo, Lisa Faillace-Sciliano.

Vice President (Acting President) Lori Wilson opened meeting and welcomed all.

The **minutes** of the last meeting of June 21, 2007 were approved.

Treasurer's Report: Jeff LaGrotte - Balance of \$18,300.00. Low expenses over the summer. Liability insurance coming due. Budget running ahead at this point.

Building Community & Fundraising: Mario Gallo – Picnic next week, Sept. 29, 12 noon to 5 pm, with magician, bocce tournament, games, West Harrison trivia, free to members, \$25 for guests. We will be present at Harrison/Columbus Day selling desert. Our tree lighting ceremony will be on Friday, December 7th with a rain date of Sunday, Dec. 9th. We sponsored a movie-in-the-park with the recreation department – on the mall – and it was very successful and enjoyable. Grand illuminator will be selected – has the honor of pulling the switch to light the tree and will be honored at our spring dinner dance. That person will be selected by the WHNA board of directors, and members can make nominations in writing to board by the October meeting. This person should have made an impact on West Harrison and does not necessarily have to be a member of WHNA.

Parks & Recreation: Charlie Russo – The DEC approvals are coming soon and then the carp can be put in the lake. A fence will be installed at the mouth of the lake to keep the fish in and no fishing signs will be posted on both sides. The program is based on what was done in the town of Southeast at Lake Toneta. The board of directors of this organization suggested this plan to the mayor. (The mayor determined that Harrison owns the lake.) The heritage trail – the cleanup project around the lake has been delayed due to miscommunication, but the mayor has pledged to work with us to get some of the town work started.

Planning & Zoning: Lori Wilson – Statistics from enforcement on illegal/unsafe housing: 173 addresses in total were reported on, 138 are addresses this organization has submitted, 66 addresses are presently under investigation, 81 summonses have been issued, 4 addresses were researched but no action was needed, and 1 address was a legal 3 family home. We have discovered that the present way the town is addressing this issue is not getting the job done, is ineffective. This committee and our board will be meeting to work on suggesting new strategies to the town. Meeting Sept. 26.

Seniors: Lori – The senior center annex at Mintzer has been approved by the town board and is moving forward. It will be up in the spring, maybe by May. Very much anticipated.

Public Works/Traffic & Safety: Lori – Meeting on Oct. 11 here at the fire house.

Youth Committee: Lori – The town was well represented at our first meeting – recreation, police, town board, youth council. We are targeting two age groups – 14-16's and 17-19's. We will research what other towns are doing. Next meeting is Oct. 3 at the Mintzer Center, 7:30.

Membership & Communications: Angela Amodeo – We now have 202 dues paying members for 2007. Increasing our membership base is important for our voice and for keeping members informed.

New Advisory Committee: Lori – The board has created this new committee for the purpose of being a sounding board about new ideas. Communication will be via email instead of meetings. The following members have been invited and agreed to serve on this committee: Kathy Shallo, Kelley Dolce, JoAnn King, John Vasta, and Kathy Sanchez. We thank them and look forward to their ideas and feedback.

WHNA Board of Directors Elections: Lori – Elections will be held in November for five slots: President, secretary, and 3 trustees. Nominations or requests to run must be submitted to me in writing prior to the October meeting when announcement will be made of those running. There will be no nominations from the floor.

Other Business: The Library board is interested in getting feedback about the services they provide. If you have any ideas or suggestions, they want input from our members.

The **next meeting** will be on **Wednesday, October 17th**, at 7:30, here at the firehouse. Mayor Malfitano will be our guest to update on the streetscape, park and senior annex projects. We hope to have the DOT liaison at our November meeting to update us on the I287 project. Tree Lighting will be December 7th with a rain date of December 9th.

Guest Speakers: David Singer, President of the Harrison Central School Board, and Louis Wool, Superintendent of Schools - with an informational presentation concerning the upcoming school bond to be put before the public for approval that will build additions and make extensive repairs to all school buildings.

Mr. Singer introduced other school officials present who contributed to some of the points in this discussion - – Denis DiLorenzo, Vice President of the School Board; Robert Salerno, Assistant Superintendent for Business; Ed Kear, Director of Facilities; and David Basso, Citizens Advisory Committee. And then introduced Mr. Wool who lead the discussion.. He has been superintendent for five years and he discussed the goals that he has worked on in that time with his team of administrators, board members, and educators. Getting the academic house in order. Harrison schools are now ranked among the top schools in Westchester. Accountability. Harrison now has the best ranked teacher evaluation system which sets high standards that has fixed what was a problem. Financial responsibility. They developed a long range financial plan including a \$9million fund to meet commercial tax challenges that the town is over-burdened with, so that they don't have to borrow to pay these. They also put offsets in place to protect against spikes and have retired some old debt. They have an ongoing closely monitored demographics study to help financial planning.

The BOE understands that \$153 million is a lot of money and are not going to borrow that all at once. It will be spread out over a seven year plan. They have prepared for this for five years and things are in excellent financial condition to do this with excellent Moody's rating and comments. Beside the need for space, all of the buildings are in bad repair – plumbing, heating, masonry, handicap access, etc. They have provided a responsible plan and budget working with outside consultants and have contingencies built in. They went through multiple versions of plans with a lot of analysis and they are now very confident of the scope of the work and the built in cushion with informed risk. They provided printed document that was sent to all residents. They explained the taxpayer impact, borrowing on an as needed basis, 30 year bond period, with an estimated effect of \$33.64 per \$1000 of assessed value. This bond is of course additional money to the general operating budget. The level of detail is concise and they always kept the taxpayer in mind, and reduced outside contractor costs tremendously. They are always looking for efficiency. They have renegotiated the teacher's contract effectively for the district and last year had the second lowest budget increase in the county. This board has been accountable financially and academically. One way or another, we are out of room. *(They gave dramatic examples.)* Every one of the school buildings except the high school are declared historic. The construction management team is experienced in working in schools while children are there. The middle school building was surprisingly declared very foundationally sound, well built, and worthy of restoring. The high school in retrospect was poorly designed and design improvements will be put in place. *(Extensive discussion continued naming individual building improvements and strategies – including new second exit from high school grounds, many other security improvements to all buildings, separating children and buses, etc.)*

Respectfully Submitted,
Angela Amodeo, Secretary