



Old Astoria Neighborhood Association (OANA)  
www.OANA-NY.org

## Old Astoria Neighborhood Association - Minutes September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016

Richard Khuzami, chairman of OANA, opened the meeting and welcomed those attending. He explained that a representative from the 114<sup>th</sup> St Precinct and Council Member Consta Constanides were originally scheduled to present at the meeting but were unable to be there due to a conflict with an 114<sup>th</sup> community meeting at the Astoria Houses scheduled in response to the arrests there on 9/13. During a roll call, those present introduced themselves.

Chris Villari from Skanska Walsh then made a presentation about the renovation project at La Guardia Airport, and about how his company would like to be involved in and give back to the community. Chris opened by mentioning that those present were probably aware of the recent traffic problems resulting from the renovations at La Guardia but that he hoped to put the project into context. He discussed his own background at the DEP and his current position at Skanska Walsh. Chris gave us background on Skanska Walsh and their commitment to safety and ethics. He explained the structure of the project: La Guardia Airport is owned by the Port Authority, which has contracted with an entity known as the LaGuardia Gateway Partnership which runs the operations and which has hired Skanska Walsh to run the renovations.

Chris showed the meeting some renderings of the development plan and discussed its scope. None of the buildings currently on site at La Guardia will still exist at the conclusion of the development. By moving the “headhouse” closer to the Grand Central Parkway, hundreds of feet of additional space will be available for taxiing, takeoff and landing. The existing runways will stay unchanged. (Chris mentioned that a plan that involved changing or extending the runways would have required an extensive review process by the FAA, which has been avoided by leaving the runways untouched). Although it is outside the scope of Skanska Walsh’s development, Chris told the meeting that there are proposals to restore the Marine Air Terminal so that the airport can once again be accessed by ferry, and to have the Q70 bus run from Woodside (at the LIRR) to the airport; the bus will be renamed the “La Guardia Shuttle.”

Chris showed a video about the development of La Guardia and the vision for the future of the airport. All check in and security will take place in a single building that will have sight lines out to the planes, and improved amenities for passengers. Chris then answered questions from the meeting. Asked why solar panels had not been included in the design, Chris said that the amount of light included in the design was intended to reduce the amount of power used in the operation of the terminal. Richard asked if there were plans for pull-out seats that could be used as overnight accommodation for passengers stranded at the airport. Chris said that there was a possibility of a hotel that would actually



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be part of the airport buildings complex. Dominique Perrot mentioned that in the current incarnation of La Guardia there is very little seating accommodation for members of the public who are picking up passengers and that that is an area that needs improvement.

Chris discussed the employment/projects that will be available as part of the redevelopment of the airport, for which over \$600 million will be available. Businesses that are hoping to become part of the project, such as masons, HVAC contractors, security firms, etc. would be advised to register with the Port Authority as well as with the Empire State Development folks.

Chris addressed Skanska Walsh's intentions to give back to the community, both in terms of volunteer projects and, where appropriately, financially. He mentioned that he himself lives in the neighborhood and he is committed to making sure that there is genuine participation in the community. Chris mentioned Lyster Creek was close to the development and that he had looked at Green Shores NYC's Waterfront Visioning Plan and thought that was an avenue worth exploring.

Florence Koulouris suggested that planting bulbs on the medians on Ditmars Boulevard would be a good service project, and that the medians were also in need of stewardship. Richard said that the Hellgate Bridge Centenary Committee would be a suitable group to contact. The baseball field that is close to the airport was mentioned by Kevin Springer as a good candidate for a possible community project. Florence additionally suggested that Variety Boys and Girls Club and Hour Children were two non-profits that could be suitable community partners. Clare Doyle said she thought that Big ReUse would take deconstructed building materials, if Skanska wanted to donate them. Habitat for Humanity was also mentioned as a non-profit to which building materials could be donated. Jessica Bathist from APAC (Astoria Performing Arts Center) gave the meeting a little background about APAC's community programming, and said in addition to donations, the group could benefit from the volunteer efforts of carpenters, builders, etc. Dominique said that she is involved with the Miracles Academy, a group that would be happy to have people from skilled trades come and speak to young people.

Chris thanked the meeting for all their suggestions and asked that they should be funneled to him via Richard and/or Florence.

Richard then gave the meeting updates on some updates from and OANA correspondence with the DOT.

New bike lanes on 31<sup>st</sup> Avenue: in September DOT will install bike lane markings along 31<sup>st</sup> Avenue from Vernon Blvd to the BQE. On-street parking will remain the same. High-visibility crosswalks are also planned.



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Speed bumps. In response to OANA's May 2015 requests for speed bumps on 27<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and on 18<sup>th</sup> Street, DOT will approve and recommend speed bumps to Community Board 1 (see attached).

Angle Parking: In response to OANA's request, City Planning's Transportation Division has investigated the feasibility of angle parking. They conclude that two streets

- a) Hoyt Avenue from 21<sup>st</sup> Street eastbound
- b) 14<sup>th</sup> Street from 30<sup>th</sup> Avenue to Broadway, are good candidates for angle parking (see attached).

Richard mentioned that LIC Flea, the proprietors of the Flea & Food markets at Hunters Point and at the Kaufman Astoria Studios, wanted to open another Flea at Chappetto Square. Richard noted that there were potential issues surrounding that scenario: Chappetto Square, unlike the other two locations, is City Parks property and is heavily used.

Richard told the meeting that the DOT was considering removing the turning lane from Hoyt Avenue into Astoria Park during rush hour and removing parking there in rush hour (for a period of 2 hours). This is a result of the heavier traffic on 21<sup>st</sup> Street following the implementation of one-way traffic on Shore Boulevard. Florence said that she was conscious of a steady attrition of parking spaces in the neighborhood; Richard reminded the meeting that the proposed removal of parking spaces would only be for 2 hours during the rush hours.

Richard passed around copies of the DOT correspondence and mentioned that although it has taken time for DOT to respond to OANA's requests (more than a year), these are wins for us. Dominique mentioned what she considers to be a dangerous traffic situation near the Neptune Diner as cars come off the Grand Central Parkway; Richard clarified that this location is outside OANA's geographical boundaries and therefore not something about which we could approach the DOT.

Richard thanked Chris for his very interesting presentation, and Nick for providing food for the meeting. The meeting was then adjourned.