



Old Astoria Neighborhood Association (OANA)  
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## Old Astoria Neighborhood Association - Minutes

May 21, 2016

The meeting began with determining OANA's position on a request from the elementary school P.S 171 to install a stoplight on 30<sup>th</sup> avenue and 14<sup>th</sup> street. However DOT will not initiate a study unless 14<sup>th</sup> street is converted from one way southbound to two-way between 30<sup>th</sup> avenue and Broadway. It was pointed out that the school has a crossing guard, which some argued that sometimes the crossing guard was ineffective and that many drivers did not pay attention to the existing stop signs. Richard Khuzami weighed in with the statement that a two-way street would cause drivers to speed less than a wide-open one-way street, and can add for an alternative route for drivers going northbound on a congested 21<sup>st</sup> st. He also pointed out that this would require a minimal capital investment– so if the two-way doesn't work, it can always be changed back to a one-way (an example of this happened on Shore Blvd, where two years they created **a bike** path which it didn't work and has now been changed). Joe Valcarro weighted against this, saying that a two-way will not alleviate any traffic and would risk more kids down the road. Another person agreed saying it would not make much of a difference. Someone else considered the idea of a speed bump instead. Richard pointed out that DOT would not put a speed bump on a one-way street. He also pointed out that this is still a two-step process, and a study should still be conducted, as it is something important to the school. About 14 people voted 'yes' for the study to proceed in making the one-way intersection to a two-way (making 14<sup>th</sup> street a two way from 30<sup>th</sup> avenue to Broadway) and if that should get approved, to proceed with the study on the stop light near the school.

The next topic was in regards to a request the from Astoria Park Alliance that OANA take a position in opposition to the city council's recent legislation on reducing the penalty for "minor" crimes – which they feel will negatively effect the quality of life at the parks. Many of these "Broken window" violations occur in our Parks. Many crimes are being reduced to "Violations", similar to traffic violations. An example of this is just paying a fine for things like public urination or public drinking. The fine will probably also be very small, at which someone suggested that the fine be higher otherwise it not be a deterrent. Another person disliked the idea, wanting to leave it as the criminal offense. A point was highlighted that the courts are too backed up with criminal cases, which is one reason why the city council is suggesting this idea, but most argued



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that overcrowding was no reason to reduce a sentencing unless the fine was extreme as the crime. The group voted on whether it was a good idea to have the criminal offense reduced, one person voted yes. Most agreed that it should go back to the old system.

Subsequently, Richard mentioned being asked to be on the task force for the new BQX, which is the new street car that the major announced from Brooklyn to Astoria. He mentioned that a few questions that he brought up – 1) not to affect truck traffic on 21<sup>st</sup> street between Queensboro Bridge and Hoyt Avenue – this is a main route for trucks and any disruption would cause issues for delivery. 2) The staging and maintenance – suggesting the area by 19<sup>th</sup> street. 3) How wide the tracks were and how much will it take up of the street. 4) Why end it in Astoria, and not somewhere like LaGuardia? 5) Will eminent domain be applied here? 6) Why not a bus? What is the difference? – Someone mentioning they attended another community meeting in which the LaGuardia question was asked, and at the present time they had no plans to extend it to LaGuardia but possible in the future. Another adding on how this will be built without obstructing the utilities underneath. This will continue to be monitored as more concrete plans are initiated throughout the year(s).

The first presenter of the meeting was Frank Fontana, DEP Community Liaison. He addressed several issues that were of concern, including one in which is the backups of sewers and flushable wipes which not flushable and do not disintegrate by the time it reaches the plant or gets stuck in the sewers. He also spoke about some new projects coming up, which can be viewed on the DCC website (<http://www1.nyc.gov/site/ddc/index.page>). Frank also spoke about a proposed increase in water pricing, i.e.: a 2.1% increase which is the smallest increase they've had so far, and the building of high level storm sewers – increasing the regulators on the ground, set to begin soon and finish by 2018. Regulators are like detention centers in which contains the storm water until it can get processed. He also talked about New York having the cleanest water it has had in the last hundred years, and that constant test sampling are done throughout the five boroughs to insure this. One person commented that the tap color is colored, in which some others from the neighborhood said the same thing – Frank responded that it might be some kind of turbulence or the hydraulics of the systems, but encouraged to call 311 if the problem persists. Someone questioned if we could test our own water, Frank answered that if you call 311 – they can send you a kit which can test for lead, any further testing would require someone else to do it since there are thousands of tests that can be



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applied. Richard mentioned the issues that have been going on in Astoria regarding sewage going into the river in Astoria pool, and what methods are being done to address issues like this – to which Frank commented that 55% of sewage upgrades have been done citywide. Unfortunately there are illegal outflow in which they either know about or don't, and ask the community to notify DEP if they suspect this. Another questioned was asked about the new city water tunnels that are being set in place – Frank adding on that the Manhattan one was recently completed and now the Brooklyn & Queens is to be constructed by 2025. He answered that the diameters on these tunnels vary, and 800 feet below the ground; adding on that tunnels 1 & 2 have never been shut down or inspected, which is why they are constructing this tunnel #3 to be an alternative and allow the inspection to proceed and the tunnel cleaned. Richard also asked about the water treatment plants over on Ricker's Island, is being capped – Frank addressed that they are adding covers to the aeration tanks at the treatment plant which will reduce the odors on hot days. He also stated that a lot of their treatment plants also have covers and other methods to reduce the odors.

The next presenter was Keith Dumanski, from The Durst Organization. A PowerPoint was shown regarding the Halletts Point development and the recent environment minor modification. This included the creation of a water recycling plant on First Street, which had previously been used for a bus turnaround. Also, it included a change in the structure of building 6 & 7 (On the Astoria House NYCHA Campus). . Building 6 and 7 were to be two different buildings. The building height will be uniform, instead only one side being higher than the other. The FAR of the building will not change. The minor modification to the URLURP included this small this revision, which will allow it to remain affordable. Also the first floor will have commercial retail stores. This could include a deli, a laundromat, and coffee shops like Dunkin Donuts or Starbucks, possibly a bank as well. There will also be Green planting included on the grounds around buildings 6 and 7.

He pointed out some of the new bus stop locations on 27<sup>th</sup> avenue that have been approved by the MTA. This allowed creation of the water recycling plant for building one at the site of the former 1<sup>st</sup> street bus stops. This innovative water recycling facility would recycle wastewater from building 1 to be used on site for irrigation, toilet water, etc. This would greatly alleviate the pressure on the city's currently overcapacity sewer and sewage system to treat wastewater.



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He also talked about the floor plan for the FRESH supermarket on the first floor of building 1. (Currently under construction). FRESH is a program in which fresh food is brought into communities where there aren't any.

Keith also explained that when you do ULURP, the community board makes a set of stipulations for Community improvements to gain their approval of the zoning changes, one of which was the sea wall fencing around the Astoria Houses Promenade. Repairing this is included as a community benefit from Durst. However, Keith spoke about the lack of a renewed tax abatement program (421A) holding up a few of their projects, including buildings 7 and 2 (in phase 2), therefore holding up Durst's starting these repairs.

It was questioned if they would allow pets into the building – Keith answered that this has not been determined yet. Someone else asked about parking, which he answered that there is going to be underground parking, but might be with a fee.

The meeting concluded with Richard pointing out some of the events that are coming up for the neighborhood for the summer, including at Astoria Park, The Noguchi Museum, and a press release that talks about the safety measures at Sean's place Playground.