



Old Astoria Neighborhood Association (OANA)
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OANA Minutes

April 10, 2018

Richard Khuzami opened the meeting and thanked our new neighbor, Arcadia Bar & Kitchen, who provided the food for the meeting. The attendees then introduced themselves.

Richard discussed the OANA/NY City Planning Affordable Housing Guide which is now up on the OANA website. OANA felt that this guide filled a need for information in a simple and straightforward format. At this point in time rentals in Astoria are reaching record levels so now is a good time to check out the guide, which can be found here on our website: <http://oana-ny.org/affordable-housing/>

Richard then introduced FDNY Chief Boyd and Le-TisWilliams, Queensborough Manager for Community Affairs at FDNY who is also a liaison with the fire safety department. Le-Tis did a presentation on the work that Community Affairs does (fire safety training, community CPR training) and the resources that are available. You can contact her with any FDNY related questions and she will pass the questions on to the appropriate person. Contact info is 718.999.1508, e-mail address L-tis.williams@fdny.nyc.org

A question was asked by a meeting attendee (also a firefighter) about the use of sirens at night on 27th Avenue when the traffic is light--they are loud and is this really necessary? Latish explained that sirens do need to sometimes be used at night because people aren't expecting FDNY vehicles.

Chief Boyd discussed the fact that FDNY responses are coded by priority: anything coded 1 through 6 must be responded to with lights and sirens. She said she was aware that the use of lights and sirens at night could be frustrating for local residents but response time is crucial in emergencies, including medical emergencies. Chief Boyd said the Practical Response strategy is working with to reduce average response times--probably we have the quickest response times in the city at the moment. Chief Boyd was asked which was the best hospital to go to. If the patient is critical, she replied, protocol is to go to the closest 911 hospital--if the patient is stable there is a 10-minute window where you can ask to be taken to a hospital no more than 10 minutes away.

Richard thanked the fire officers for their presentation and introduced Christine Serdjenian Yearwood and Kim from the group UP-STAND. Christine and Kim discussed UP-STAND's mission. they are an Astoria-based organization that focuses on accessibility. They discussed their history and their mission. Currently, Kim and Christine mentioned, there is a considerable lack



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of accessibility on the N & W lines in Astoria and that is a focus for UP-STAND. Richard added that OANA has a position on the lack of accessibility on the N and W train lines and that OANA has participated in protests against the lack of elevators on our trains.

Christine discussed the recent shift in MTA policy from renovation to an increased focus on accessibility. What can community members do? Suggestions Christine made included call and write your local officials; sign a Transit petition; attend Transit rallies; support local bills that promote accessibility for families and the disabled, fund family-friendly accommodations at local events. You can hire UP-STAND to make your event accessible. Clare Doyle asked whether there any legal requirements to make accommodations pregnant women and the answer was no other than that with businesses to provide--pregnancy is not considered a disability under the ADA.

Richard added that with new generations moving into Astoria, it's important that we all work together to promote change. He thanked the presenters from UP-TAND, and introduced Frank Arcabascio from the 30th Avenue Business Association.

Frank then gave a presentation about the shutdown of the 30th Avenue N/W station and its effect on local businesses. According to Frank, the shutdown has caused multiple problems for local businesses: the shutdown was started at short notice and businesses were told that there was a plan to provide shuttle services that did not happen. Frank said that the MTA will not say when the 30th Avenue Station renovation will be finished. He added that businesses near the Broadway Station and 39th Avenue stations can learn from the experiences of the businesses on 35th Ave and 30th Avenue. Frank's organization will continue to work to get elevators in the stations. Frank believes that state legislators can be more effective than New York City legislators since the MTA gets funding from the state. Frank said that the 30th Avenue Business Association is in regular contact with MTA marketing. The MTA is promoting Astoria stations that are being bypassed and promoting alternative ways of getting to the clothes stations. Clare asked why shuttle service never materialized and Frank said that the MTA will not provide shuttles unless the entire line is closed. Richard asked what if any tax credits are available for the affected businesses? Frank said that his organization is working with the Small Business Administration. A meeting attendee expressed the opinion that although the renovation is necessary the MTA wastes money. A question was asked about why there will be for elevators at the Astoria Boulevard station and the response was from Richard at the Astoria Boulevard station is a hub and elevators can be installed without structural alterations.

Richard thanked Frank for his presentation and welcomed District 22 Council Member Costa Constantinides to the meeting. Costa told the meeting that NY transit chief Joe Lhota had



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“yelled at him” because Costa asked for a breakdown of the costs of renovation at individual stations and that Lhota would not answer questions about why train stations had to be closed completely. Costa discussed the design of the Astoria Boulevard elevators, which will go from the sidewalks at the Columbus triangle and at the Hoyt Avenue playground respectively. He added that the elevators will cost the MTA a "ridiculous" amount of money.

Costa said that the subway system is a vital piece of our community and that the City Council is taking a strong position over budgeting. The Council is willing to put up \$480 million to fix signals, tracks, etc, IF there is accountability from the MTA.

Costa went over some items in the City council's budget response. The City Council wants to give homeowners a \$400 rebate on their taxes. There is inequity in New York state property taxes, he said, especially for one, two and three family homes. The city council is putting forward a plan to fund NYCHA fully and to put \$250 -500 million to take care of NYCHA repairs.

Costa discussed the CSO (combined sewage overflow) problem that affects areas like Halletts Cove and Bowery Bay. The city council will seek to remedy the CSO problem and help reclaim our waterfront and our waterways with funding.

The City Council proposes \$250 million in funding for schools in order to get class sizes down etc.

Custom mentioned that he is part of the City Council budget negotiating team and that 7 members of the team are from Queens. This will ensure that Queens gets its fair share of the budget. Costa said that the 18th Street speed bumps have been approved by DOT, and should be installed when the weather is warm enough.

Costa then discussed the participatory budgeting process. \$20 million dollars has been awarded to projects for Halletts Peninsula: Whitey Ford Field, basketball courts, speed bumps, etc. Richard added that the participatory budgeting success is an example of advocacy working. Costa reminded everyone presents to participate in the participatory budgeting process and thanked OANA for the chance to be at the meeting.

Diane Kantzoglou mentioned that the mosquitoes already a problem in the neighborhood. Costa replied that he is aware of the problem but thinks that spraying is not necessarily the answer because spraying is so toxic.

A meeting attendee mentioned that the Shore Towers gate to Astoria Park is constantly closed:



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he had been told that the gate is supposed to be open to the public. Costa said the Shore Towers gate should be open. He will follow up: he wants the waterfront to be open to everyone. A question was asked about alternate side of the street parking. Costa explained the variances on street cleaning rules. Costa has proposed that sanitation change the system to twice a week street cleaning for the whole of Astoria. He is working with Dept of Sanitation to try to get the situation more uniform.

Kathleen Springer asked whether the Q102 and Q69 buses could be extended over the Queensboro Bridge especially during the renovations at Queensboro Plaza. Costa said that he would ask about whether this can be done. Claudia Coger asked Costa about street cleaning on the Peninsula. They are scheduled to get street cleaning once a week on the peninsula but it doesn't always happen. With the construction going on the parking and dirty Street situation on the peninsula, she said, is out of control. "We need clean decent the road conditions on the peninsula," Ms. Coger added. Costa said that he would look into the situation.

A meeting attendee asked about affordable housing in Astoria and the cost of senior living. Costa agreed that we need more affordable and senior housing in Astoria. The shortage of two and three-bedroom apartments in Astoria was mentioned. Costa was asked what to do when you are a family with kids and landlords won't rent to you. Costas said that you must report that situation to the housing department. Costa wants the current system to be changed so that landlords can be sued if they lie on their affordable housing applications. At present there only sued when they harass affordable housing tenants.

Richard then Costa for and introduced Jack from Chaim Deutsch's office. Council Member Deutsch is the co sponsor of a bill about movie Shoot parking Intro 445. Jack explained that the bill proposes that when there is a movie shoot in your neighborhood alternate side of the street parking should be suspended on the day of the shooting for five blocks around. Richard asked how we should advocate for the bill. Jack suggested reaching out to other council members that you know they haven't signed on to the bill. Let your friends and neighbors know to get the word out. Reach out to the office of Council Member Rodriguez who will hold the hearing on the bill.

Claudia Coger then asked if when film crews come into the neighborhood they are supposed to give funding to nonprofits to make up for the inconvenience. Richard replied that neighborhoods have been promised that in the past but it has never happened. A question was asked about signage during movie shoots. Jack replied that Intro 445 proposes that it will be required to put up signage about suspension of alternate street parking and signs will have to



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go up within a reasonable time to let residents know that alternate side of the street has been suspended according to this proposal. Paul from Astoria Civic Association discussed parking in front of homes and suggested that homeowners should be compensated if film crews are filming in front of your house or at the very least you should get a tax credit.

Richard announced that the Astoria Social event on April 19th at Acadia Bar & Kitchen will be a fundraiser for OANA. He also mentioned the upcoming Astoria Park Alliance Earth Day celebration in Astoria Park on April 22nd.

Richard thanked Arcadia Bar and Kitchen for providing the delicious food to which the meeting responded with hearty applause. He added the future meetings will probably take place during the second week of the month for the sake of consistency in addition Richard St George's Church for providing the space for the meeting and once again thanked all the speakers and presenters.

Clare Doyle