



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

## **Old Astoria Neighborhood Association - Minutes**

September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015

The meeting was initiated by Richard Khuzami, with special guests Ignazio Terranova from NYC department of Sanitation, Detective Edwin Negrón and Lt. Nicholas Morales from the 114 precinct on security and crime issues in Astoria. The first announcement was a handout notice including the OANA positions to traffic flow and pedestrian/bicycle safety on roads surround Astoria Park, followed by a press release on the hit and run at Ditmars Blvd and 19<sup>th</sup> street, killing a pedestrian. The request was added for a 'slow zone' or speed bumps along the area to prevent any future incidents.

Ignazio Terranova began by talking about the e-waste program that includes not throwing away any electronics in the garbage and instead bringing them to a facility like Best Buy or Staples to be disposed of properly. He also brought in information about the new Styrofoam ban that was placed in NYC and the 'adopt a basket', which can help with the overflow of trash on city streets. Diane Konzoglou mentioned how there wasn't a trash receptacle anywhere on her street to which Ignazio said that they are only placed on high pedestrian traffic or commercial strips, very rarely on residential areas. Someone else questioned how is it possible to have more garbage cans throughout the area in which Ignazio emphasized that having more trash receptacles would not solve any issues if there was no sanitation worker available to collect it on an average basis. The budget cuts done to the department have affected greatly the number of workers available to complete such a lengthy task. He mentioned that the department does review all of their routes on a monthly basis and they make adjustments accordingly.

Diane questioned the lack of street cleaning on days with alternative side of the street no parking on 9<sup>th</sup> street, which Ignazio acknowledged that sometimes they do fail to come due to a parked car or any other incidents which prevent them from continuing down the street. The street cleaning time is now an hour and a half, in which a 5 to 7 mile radius must be completed within this time frame. It was also questioned on what process could be taken to increase the street cleaning on other areas, to which Ignazio replied that the law requires that the community board review the request first before any further action is implemented on the requested street(s). The process normally takes 1 to 2 years, because of the public hearings and other factors.



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

Another question was asked about how to go about dog owners who fail to pick up after their dogs, to which Ignazio encouraged 311 and having a description of the owner and a time frame in which the incident seems to occur. This will allow an uncover police officer to watch the area and hand a ticket if necessary. In addition, a question regarding long term parking on a street with no alternate side of the street cleaning was asked and what could be done about cars that are not moved past a week? To which Lt. Morrales answered that a car can only park for 96 hours otherwise 311 needs to be called for the car to be marked and towed away.

Assemblywoman, Aravella Simotas, announced that if anyone should have an issue reporting to an agency whether its city or state, to give her a call (718) 545-3889 and speak to Alexia or Megan and they will follow up with it. If a large amount of people are complaining about a certain issue they will pressure the agency to get it done.

Richard mentioned that they had agreed to the street cleaning on 25<sup>th</sup> road but sanitation wanted it to be done 4 days of the week, which caused the residents to oppose the idea. He wanted to know what measures could be done to reduce the amount from four to only two times a week. Ignazio responded that they needed to have it in such way because this particular street consists of two sides parked cars that need to be cleaned rather than just one; unless they can prove otherwise that they should reduce the number of times. To go about this process would mean having a 90% or better on the scorecard, that is given to every street & sidewalk based on cleanliness, for two years straight. Aravella made aware that she would speak to the council members about the alternative side of the street cleaning and request for a new review due to the increase of residents over the past few years.

Detective Edwin Negron and Lt. Morales addressed that crime overall for the year was down 10% compared to last year. They talked about the most recent crimes that happened the last 28 days for the 114 precinct, including 4 gun fire incidents, one of which was a homicide involving a domestic issue. The suspect involved was arrested. Edwin also mentioned that the 114 may be taking over Astoria Houses, meaning additional officers, 41 to be exact and having a total of 80 officers, which will be monitoring the area NYCHA developments. (Astoria Houses, Ravenswood, Queensbridge) The process involves more officers patrolling the area by foot rather than by car to have a more community feel and interaction to it.

Vanessa Jones-Hall, a resident in Astoria Housing, noted it was about time that an increase in surveillance was being taken. Being a long time resident, she mentioned that her grandparents



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

were one of the first people to live in one of those establishments and recalled that officers back then were almost like a part of the family to the community and hope that returns once again. She noted that the Astoria Housing has had a bad reputation the last couple of years due to outside elements that didn't belong in the residences. She stated that a shooting happened not too long ago while she was sitting on a bench at one of the developments in broad daylight and no police officers were able to see or catch the suspect, who shot someone in the stomach. Another incident she said happened a few years ago when someone broke into her window on the sixth floor and even with cameras surrounding the area; no police officers seemed to have noticed the intruder on any of the monitors. She also spoke of a young mother who was shot while holding her infant. Most, if not all, residents in the Astoria Housing are afraid to even walk home because of the amount of crimes that seem to constantly occur, usually involving people that do not live there. She emphasized how neglected she and her neighbors felt by the police officers and was tired of how they were being treated. The help is desperately needed in the area and much change needs to happen. Edwin acknowledged Vanessa's heartfelt speech and supports her in everything she said, hoping that if the process does go through that they may work together, along with her organization, to help these changes come about.

The next topic discussed was about the residence on 9<sup>th</sup> street and the retired port authority police officer that was assaulted after trying to stop a drag racing incident. Diane stated that she lived here for almost 20 years and never having any issues before until recently, questioning why there are no security cameras (CCTV) in the area. Richard mentioned that it was something that they initially brought up when the group was formed (During the URLURP for Astoria Cove) and is a much better option than the body cameras on police officers where you only get one view facing forward. Detective Edwin stated that there was some security cameras on 8<sup>th</sup> street & Astoria Blvd, and another on 30<sup>th</sup> Ave & 14<sup>th</sup> street; and even though more is probably needed in the area, it is most likely any new camera security system is to be placed in midtown/lower Manhattan or in that general area for counter terrorism reasons. Richard questioned what these new constructions on 9<sup>th</sup> street will mean for the residence in terms of security. Edwin replied that it will mean more people in the area, more crime victim and elements that can either increase. In terms of outside elements, he addressed that they can't just ask someone for their ID to check if they do in fact live in the area.

Richard mentioned doing a resolution as a group saying 'we support the fact that we want community policing' that will help enforce security and among other things in the



Old Astoria Neighborhood Association (OANA)  
[www.OANA-NY.org](http://www.OANA-NY.org)

neighborhood. Edwin suggested for future reference to not leave any valuable substances in cars which can be easily stolen from, including GPS, phones etc.; and installing private camera systems which is inexpensive to have installed throughout your property. This will discourage people who can see the camera on view or help law enforcement if an incident does occur. He highlighted that the 114 precinct does care about the community and anything that should come up, they will take care of it. Richard also brought up the website for Old Astoria that is currently in the works that will include a mailing list, among other things, about the neighborhood, including any upcoming events.

No further questions were asked and Richard thanked everyone for coming out.