



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

OANA minutes

September 26th, 2017

Our September meeting was held at Made in Astoria" (M.I.A.), 27-35 21st , Astoria. Richard Khuzami, President of OANA, thanked the owners of Made in Astoria for providing us with a venue and for providing us with their delicious food!

Richard gave a brief recap of recent events, including expansion of CitiBike into Astoria and the opening of Astoria's new ferry service from Hallets Cove. Members of OANA were on the first boat to leave Hallets Cove and can confirm that it is a great experience and a quick way to get to Manhattan. Richard mentioned that he had participated in New Yorkers for Parks' free annual Daffodil Project bulb giveaway (a program founded to commemorate those who died in the attacks of 9/11). If there is interested in getting bulbs to plant in the community, he can get an increased number of bulbs next year.

Richard then introduced officers from the FDNY Fire Safety Education Unit as well as Engine Captain Jim Burke. The goal of the Fire Safety Education Program is to eliminate residential fire deaths in NYC and to educate the public with vital fire prevention and lifesaving strategies. The officers discussed the legal requirements for smoke detectors and urged the meeting attendees to remember that a working smoke detector is the best fire prevention tool. There should be working smoke detectors on every level of a building. Batteries should be changed twice a year: if you're inclined to forget, do it when you put clocks back or forward for daylight savings time.

Carbon monoxide is a danger that many people overlook, and a CO2 detector can be a life-saver, The danger posed by extension cords/power strips was mentioned: don't run them under rugs and don't use them for appliances that get hot or cold. If you need to get a space heater, make sure it has a thermostat and an auto-shutoff, and don't plug it into a power strip.

9-volt batteries were handed out to attendees as well as literature with additional fire prevention and safety information.



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

The meeting was opened to questions for the FDNY officers. Joe Vaccaro asked if there was a possibility of getting more firefighters in the neighborhood in light of all the new construction taking place, and Richard followed with a question about whether a new firehouse was needed closer to the waterfront. The FDNY officers, though unable to give a definitive answer, said that additional capacity would be appropriate given that response times are up, opioid overdose calls are increasing, and more gas lines are being laid in—all these factors can overstretch the fire houses. Richard asked the meeting to raise hands if they thought there should be more FDNY capacity, and a majority of those present agreed.

A question was asked if the design of new bike lanes has affected the FDNY? Cars illegally parked in bike lanes can negatively affect the FDNY's speed in getting to an incident, we were told. Richard reminded the attendees to tell OANA if you see an access route that is blocked or cut off that might cause a problem for first responders. A question was asked about what to do if you smell gas and we were told that you should call Con Edison first.

Richard thanked the FDNY officers and introduced State Senator Michael Gianaris then updated the meeting on what is happening with Albany and the New York State legislature. Senator Gianaris mentioned that the biggest challenge in general is making sure that, with the increased population, the community has the services it needs in terms of schools, fire departments, affordable housing, crime prevention etc. The vandal who has been leaving anti-Obama and anti-LGBTQ graffiti around the neighborhood has been caught and sentenced to 3 months' imprisonment.

Senator Gianaris addressed transit issues in the neighborhood. The arrival of the CitiBike bike sharing program in Astoria is great news, but the subways are "a disaster." He outlined in some detail about subway problems that have been worsening and spoke about the closures of stations on the N/W line that will result in a mainly cosmetic renovation. The lack of accessibility on the N/W line was mentioned: at the end of the renovation elevators will be installed only in one station, the Astoria Blvd. station. The Senator has been pressuring the MTA to address infrastructure problems, fix signals, buy new cars, etc. His opinion is that the MTA allocates its resources poorly. An attendee asked how citizens can advocate for better subways, and Senator Gianaris advised us to "keep the heat on" Governor Cuomo, keep calling the Senator's office and keep writing to him about subway problems.



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

Asked about bike lanes, the Senator said that though tensions between motorists, pedestrians and cyclists are inevitable, he believes that bike lanes are here to stay, but in some cases the lanes need to be better designed. There was a discussion of Astoria Park, Richard commenting that the park needed more PEP officers and more staff in general. Senator Gianaris said that it was important to make sure that all could enjoy Astoria Park and gave a shout-out to the work of the Astoria Park Alliance. Martha Gilpin, co-chair of the Astoria Park Alliance, told the meeting that APA is now a 501C3 and would be glad to hear about any resources that they could access with their new non-profit status. Neil Herdan gave the meeting a brief update on the work of the Friends of Whitey Ford Field, who would like to raise enough funds to build a restroom.

Richard thanked the presenters and attendees at the meeting, with especial thanks to Made in Astoria for providing the meeting venue and refreshments.