



Old Astoria Neighborhood Association (OANA)
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OANA Minutes
January 31, 2018

Richard Khuzami, President of OANA, opened the meeting, thanking Historic St. George's Episcopal Church for allowing us to use their community space for the meeting and thanking Astoria Provisions for providing us with refreshments. Richard mentioned that OANA is happy to welcome Astoria Provisions as another new business in the neighborhood.

Richard introduced the officers from the 114th Precinct and a Lieutenant Nicholas Morales from the Special Operations Unit and Crime Prevention Officer Gabriel Tovar. Lt Morales gave a recap of crime in 2017 in our community: there was a drop of 235 crimes overall from the previous year, with shootings being markedly down and burglaries having decreased significantly. He mentioned that a main focus is on violence and on monitoring licensed premises (Nightlife) that are problematic, and they thanked Florence Koulouris, District Manager of Community Board 1, who has been very helpful in this process.

Gabe Tovar, who is the 114 Precinct Crime Prevention Officer, was introduced and described his work: he is happy to conduct a crime prevention survey for any local home or business. A question was asked about whether community members should report seeing drug transactions and Gabe advised that if you witness an “active transaction,” you should call 911 and report it.

Richard asked about complaints that people not from the community are parking their cars on streets in Astoria and leaving them long-term. We were told that if a car hasn't been moved after 96 hours (technology can now track if a car has been moved), it can be towed.

Richard then introduced Ignacio (Iggy) Terranova, the DSNY Community Affairs Officer for Queens. Iggy broke the welcome news that Astoria will be getting organics collections, starting in June, with bins due to be distributed in May. In general Iggy said that the garbage situation is good, with collections running smoothly. Clare Doyle asked whether the street recycling cans (such as those on the corner of 30th Avenue and 31st St) were being successful. Iggy said that unfortunately the street recycling cans are not working well, as people are not following the correct procedures and therefore there is too much



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contamination. Street recycling cans are an expensive program and DSNY is therefore reevaluating its viability.

Diane asked if it would be possible to get garbage cans on 27th Avenue, and Iggy told us that is told us that If your street is considered to be residential and is not a business area, you are not going to get a garbage can on your street. Another attendee asked about whether summons are being issued for dog poop: Iggy said yes, but the offence has to be observed. You should call 311 if you know of a persistent offender and DSNY will try to catch them in the act. A question was asked about hazardous waste, which should be brought to the College Point facility on the appointed day of the month. Kathleen Springer asked about whether TVs put out on the sidewalk will be collected. Iggy said that according to NY state law you can't leave electronics on the street. You can bring many kinds of electronics back to the store but TVs are a problem because not all stores sell them and therefore are not obliged to take them back for recycling. However, a test program of DSNY picking up TVs is currently in operation on Staten Island and is likely to be extended to all the boroughs in due course.

Iggy was asked about a new sanitation garage to replace the current garage in Ravenswood: every effort is being made to move out of the 21st St location. A possible location has been identified and is in negotiation. Iggy mentioned that the DSNY website has been re-worked and helpful information is now available in many languages.

Richard thanked Iggy for his informative presentation and introduced Richard Rhodes from St. George's Church, which is celebrating its 190th anniversary. Richard gave the meeting a great summary of the history of the church and its pastors over the years. The original church building was destroyed by fire; the current building was constructed from the same stone that was used to build the Queensboro Bridge.

Richard thanked Mr. Rhodes and then introduced Blake Monteith from the Department of City Planning, the new City Planner for Community Board 1. Blake is in charge of any applications to change zoning, and has contributed to the affordable housing guide on which OANA is working. Blake discussed the resources that are available to help answer any questions community members might have, such as a flood zone map, a zoning map (ZOLA) and a new capital planning platform.



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Richard thanked Blake and introduced Neil Herdan, co-chair of Whitey Ford Field, who gave the meeting an update on the renovation that the Friends are planning (they would like to include comfort stations, scoreboards and memorial plaques in their plans) and mentioned that the Friends have started an ioby online fundraiser. Richard mentioned that both he and Brett Harris are on the Friends of Whitey Ford Field Advisory board and that they are doing a great job.

Richard then introduced Stacy Eliuk, the Queens Outreach Coordinator for the Office of NYC Public Advocate Letitia James. Stacy summarized the work that the Public Advocate's Office does and some of their accomplishments of the past 4 years, such as a law that bans potential employers from asking about a job applicant's salary history. The Public Advocate's Office is always happy to take your calls on any topic (lack of heat in NYCHA houses was one example mentioned) and their number is 212-669-4576. Stacy gave a shout-out to District 22 Council Member Costa Constantinides, State Senator Michael Gianaris and the other great elected officials that represent Astoria.

Richard thanked Stacy and introduced the next speaker, Hersh Parekh from Governor Cuomo's office. Hersh thanked OANA for the chance to share the Governor's State of the State message and budget proposals. He then shared a presentation with the meeting, going over some accomplishments of the past several years and stating that New York has made remarkable social and economic progress while increases in state spending have been held to less than 2% over the past several years. Today, Hersh said, New Yorkers pay less in state taxes than they did seven years ago. The renovation of La Guardia Airport is on time and on budget; LIRR transformation projects are planned; cashless tolling is a great new program that reduces smog and traffic congestion. The state REDC program has created more than 6,000 jobs across the state since 2011; the unemployment rate is down across New York State, and New York State was the first in the nation to raise the minimum wage to \$15. It is planned to invest \$175 million in an office of workforce development. New York State was the first big state to pass a Marriage Equality Act; a Paid Family Leave program is currently being launched that won't cost the employer anything.

The Excelsior scholarship program that provides tuition at SUNY and CUNY schools is a great program that will be continued with \$118 million in funding and the raising of the income cap to \$110,000. The



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Governor will advance a comprehensive plan to reduce student debt. In other education areas, the Budget includes an additional \$15 million investment in prekindergarten to expand pre-K instruction for 3,000 three- and four-year-old children in high-need school districts. The Budget provides \$10 million to fund a second round of Empire State After School awards. These funds will provide an additional 6,250 students with public after school care in high-need communities. Through the No Student Goes Hungry program, the State will ban "lunch shaming," support breakfast after the bell, expand the Farm to School Program, and increase the use of farm-fresh, locally grown foods at school.

The US Climate Alliance is another important program—it was launched by Governor Cuomo, Governor Jerry Brown of California, and former Secretary of State John Kerry as an alliance of states that are committed to the goals of the Paris Climate Accord. The passing of a \$2.5 billion Clean Water Infrastructure Act was another signature piece of legislation.

What are New York State goals for 2018? Hersh said that New York State will work to protect New York's from the negative effects of the recent federal tax act, including challenging the constitutionality of the act. The Department of Taxation and Finance is exploring restructuring options and issuing a preliminary report to outline options for State tax reform in response to the Federal legislation. The preliminary report will lay out proposals such as creating additional opportunities for charitable contributions to New York State, the possibility of reducing income taxes by shifting income tax from an employee paid system to an employer paid system, and the option to add tax deductibility through a new statewide unincorporated business tax.

As regards women's rights, the Governor is taking action to stamp out sexual harassment in the workplace. Governor Cuomo will work to codify Roe v. Wade into state law to protect women's access to reproductive health options. In 2017 Governor Cuomo established the New York State Council on Women and Girls to recognize and advance women's rights within our State.

In other areas, the budget will include \$1 billion for a NY state broadband system. Almost all New Yorkers will have access to high-speed. \$20 billion will be invested to combat homelessness. opioid epidemic. The Budget imposes a new surcharge on prescription drugs, with all the surcharge to go to an Opioid Prevention and Rehabilitation Fund.



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Regarding the MTA, Hersh explained that the budget includes 254 million that will fund half of an MTA Action Plan that will aim to improve and modernize the subways. The MTA is investing nearly \$30 billion in a transit capital program, including \$8.6 billion in funding from New York State. Richard asked about the N train line renovations and Hersh said that a proposal to make the Astoria Blvd station accessible will be brought before Community Board 1 shortly. Astoria Houses Tenants Association Vice President Vanessa Jones-Hall said cosmetic renovations are a waste of money when stations are not being made accessible, since so many people in the community use walkers and other assistive devices; she believes that all stations should be accessible. Hersh replied that the MTA is working to make as many stations as possible accessible but that the structural nature of some stations may limit the fixes that can be made. In response to a question from Neil Herdan about what the MTA's top renovation priorities were, Hersh said that track maintenance and fixing signals were among the top renovation priorities.

Richard asked how New York State intends to protect taxpayers from changes in SALT deductions? Hersh said that there will be a full proposal shortly and mentioned the possibility of an employer paying your payroll taxes because they can still deduct the full amount from their business taxes.

The Rev. Karen Davis-Lawson, Rector of the church, said a few words in closing and said all were welcome to attend any church events. Richard again thanked St George's Church for hosting OANA, Astoria Provisions for providing refreshments and all the presenters, and the meeting adjourned.