



Old Astoria Neighborhood Association (OANA)
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OANA Minutes September 12, 2018

Richard Khuzami, President of OANA, opened the meeting at 7:05PM. He thanked our new neighbor, Arcadia Bar & Kitchen for providing the food for the meeting. The meeting attendees then introduced themselves.

Richard introduced NCO Officers Joe Esposito & Keith Matthes from 114th Precinct. Officer Matthes thanked Richard for the warm welcome. Officer Esposito explained the scope of their Sector D territory. He stated they were present to meet with the Association and hear any questions, concerns or problems they would have at that time. Lianne Mobini stated that girls had been attacked by a man with a Machete and asked if there has been an arrest. Officer Matthes informed her that an arrest had been made regarding the attacks.

Anthony inquired if there was any way to limit the heavy truck traffic? There is a lot of noise. Officer Esposito stated it depended on the area. They have construction occurring everywhere. Is there a specific time that the traffic is heaviest, he asked. Anthony replied during the day. His intersection where he is has traffic going everywhere. Officer Esposito remarked that he was sure that had to do with the construction. Richard stated that he lived in 18th street. If there is a destination labeled as a drop off, the trucks are allowed on the side streets. After 4 years of trying, OANA succeeded in getting the speed bumps placed on 18th street.

Dionne Jaggon said that she believes that there has been an increase in gun violence. Is there anything being done to collect guns? Officer Esposito confirmed that there has been an uprise in the amount of shootings in and around the housing developments. There is a huge uptake in manpower to cover and prevent this. Officer Matthes stated



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gun violence was more gang related. It is not individual citizens that are being targeted. Officer Esposito mentioned that he and his partner have been working late nights to help prevent the violence and arrests have been made.

Melinda Caudill stated that when they do park clean ups in Astoria Park, needles have been found. Has there been an increase in drug crime? Officer Esposito informed the meeting that there has been a rise in marijuana use. They receive a summons instead of being arrested. The officers have not seen an uprise on crack use.

Rachel Colier said that there were concerts in Socrates Sculpture Park that are very loud. Officer Esposito said that the events that take place in parks require a permit. Rosemary Martinez inquired what the open flame policy in public was in parks. Rainy Park has many BBQ. What is being doing to enforce the no open flame policy? Richard informed the meeting that you can only have open flames at Queensbridge Park and not allowed at Rainy Park. Officer Matthes reminded everyone that every park has signs that indicate the conditions.

Phyllis Parra noticed that there are needles in Astoria Park. What should we do? Officer Esposito asked her to give them the officers her information and they would follow up with the information she requested. Helen Karhan stated on 31st Avenue & Vernon Blvd there are double parked cars in the intersection that requires a sharp turn. We need better traffic signs. Officer Esposito informed her that they have been there and are working on addressing the problems. We are attempting to have a stop light placed there.

Adrienne Pellegrino said that there is a big problem with hookah lounges on Astoria Blvd through Steinway Street. There are fights and violence. How do we take them down or curb them? Officer



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Esposito stated that there are special ops unit that is working on resolving the issue with the hookah lounges. Richard commented the City Council has voted on making hookah illegal.

Richard reminded everyone that a problem we have faced is poor lighting. We should contact NYCHA and the DOT.

Marlene Darmanin stated that there is a major problem with motorcycle noise. It stays on until 4AM. She believes that if there were a police officer posted after 7PM that it would not be occurring in Astoria Park south. Officer Esposito stated that unfortunately the NYPD does not have the resources to place an officer.

Our Board Members Jeff & Bret Harris joined the meeting and were introduced. George Hatzopoulos the owner of the Arcadia Bar and Kitchen was also introduced. He reminded everyone to thank the NYPD for their service.

Lucas Izidoro from the Family Church stated that they had the idea to go and clean the streets so that DOT hears our cries. A flyer and sign up were distributed to the meeting and logistics for the cleanup were discussed.

Richard then introduced Dylan O'Neill the postal inspector for all of Queens. He has a background in law enforcement. Inspector O'Neill stated a big concern in Queens is mail fishing. He himself is a part of a 5-person team that is responsible for all of queens. Fishers use a special device to take the mail from mailboxes and look for checks, money orders, credit cards and personal information. These devices use an adhesive to collect mail. The Postal service is utilizing new mailboxes known as Hollywood boxes that provide better security.

Lisann is a victim of this, she sent 10 money orders and only 4 have been received. Inspector O'Neill stated that USPS postal money orders are protected against fraud. From the beginning to the completion of a



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fraud claim it will take a year. To prevent fishing, he advises placing your mail into the collection box before noon. This minimizes the likelihood of fishing. If you find an open lobby post office, these are the most secure locations.

Anthony inquired if a certain group or individual was doing this. Inspector O'Neil stated that there is an investigation that is ongoing. Fishing is a night crime. If you notice activity near a mailbox please contact NYPD. Inspector O'Neill recommends using a credit monitoring service. He personally uses Credit Karma. He reminds everyone that these people are brazen and they will fish in front of most locations overnight.

Elaine asked how would we be able to get a collection box closer to the building. Inspector O'Neill informed said that the best way would be to contact your local post office.

Richard introduced Perris Straughter representative from NYC Housing Preservation and Development (HPD). The mission of his agency is to build new affordable housing and preserve existing affordable housing and protect tenants. He is the director of Queens and Staten Island planning. He discussed the City's affordable housing program. In 2017 Mayor DeBlasio approved a plan to build affordable 200,000 units. A family/household should not spend more than one third of their income on housing and utilities. The median income for a family of three \$93900. That would be 100% AMI (annual median income). HPD assists households of 60% AMI or less.

Lisann inquired what if you fall in between AMI listed. Perris stated that they are approximate and those between would fall on the lower range.

Dominique stated Astoria is in a boom. How does that affect the rents?



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Perris stated that generally when rent goes up in a neighborhood the price all over rises. We have low income, senior, medium and moderate income.

Perris informed everyone that within the lottery process 50% of the units are allotted to those within the community board who apply for the units. Richard reminded everyone that the lotteries are run by not for profit groups.

Richard thanked everyone for coming and again thanked Arcadia Bar and Kitchen for providing the food for the meeting.

Richard closed the meeting at 8:42PM