



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

**OANA minutes
January 8, 2019**

Richard thanked everyone for coming. The food was furnished by Comptons and Chubbys and Richard thanked them for their generosity.

Clare Doyle informed the meeting that as of January 1, 2019 New York City has a Styrofoam ban in place for all food service businesses. There is a 6-month grace period for restaurant owners to comply with this new ban.

Richard introduced Christine Yearwood and Rika Takashima from UP-Stand who did a presentation. Through a connection with the StopGap foundation they have established a free ramp program. Both Christine and Rika are parents to young children. There are businesses that inaccessible to people in walkers, wheelchairs and parents with strollers. They are looking for single step businesses that has a ½ inch lip with a door width of 36 inches wide. The program offers a free custom-made ramp that will allow all customers to access the business. There is no high cost of purchasing and installing permanent ramps. The project is funded by The Citizens Committee for New York City. The ramps will be made by high school students that are enrolled in afterschool programs. UpStand has partnered with an afterschool woodworking program. The ramp will weigh 30 lbs. and can hold weights up to 400 lbs. They accept monetary donations as well as the time from volunteers.

David Madden inquired “Are you expecting a merchant to place it at the beginning of the morning and leaving it all day or will be it when a customer request it?” Christine replied that the current policy is that there is a number that customers may call to request that it placed. If a business owner chooses to leave it out all day it is up to the owner.

Louis Klineman inquired “Are the ramps slick in the rain?” Christine replied that, No, the paints are a non-slip outdoor paint for this purpose donated by Behr paints.

Christina Sadoti commended them and asked: Have you had a good response from businesses? How large can you grow? What kind of donations do you need from hardware stores? Christine replied, We have not had the best response. There are language barriers. Often the owners are not there and they fear a catch. We hope to start with our neighborhood but grow it to the city. Donation list is on the website

Pali Wheat inquired, “Have you looked along Astoria Blvd?” Christine replied, Yes, we have looked on Astoria and Steinway.



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

Carol Wilkins commented that this is a great idea. “Do you do a ramp for more than one steps?” Christine replied, not currently but we are open to all possibilities and are hoping to expand in the future.

Dori Cocoros inquired “Have you reached out to the business development and merchant?” Christine replied, We have not had much luck.

Richard then introduced Gabriele Miller and Nate Bliss of the NYC Economic Development Corporation, who did a presentation.

Nate Bliss introduced himself as Senior VP of EDC. He told the meeting that the economy of the city has been very favorable recently. It has boasted all time low unemployment in addition to all time high employment. 44% of Tech jobs do not require college degrees. NYC has boot camps and job placement for technical positions. Long Island City was the heart of employment for the borough of Queens. In 2001 there was an area wide rezoning in Queens that did not go into effect. Long Island City added more residential buildings than any other in the nation in the last 10 years. Amazon announced in early November 2018 that it would bring 25,000-40,000 jobs to Queens. They would become the second largest employer in New York City and largest employer in Queens. The positions would include full suite executive to administrative positions as well as tech jobs. Amazon will pay over \$27 billion in taxes over the next 25 years. They received a \$3 billion discount on what would have been \$30 billion dollars. The project will include a 3.5-acre new open space. They will create a storm water system. There will also be a 600-seat middle school. Amazon will be responsible for funding onsite infrastructure. The City will use the proceeds of the deal to create a LIC Infrastructure Fund. Amazon will provide an onsite workforce development employment and training center. The project will go through an environmental impact statement.

Dori Cocoros inquired “What is the approximate time line for the full approval process?” Nate replied, The company is already moving employees into the area over the coming months. The full process will take 12-18 months.

Elton Zhoe inquired, “Are there any requirements with these jobs regarding citizenship and residency?” Nate replied, We don’t know. We believe the company will have to adhere to laws.

Gloria Maloney inquired, “Was this presentation presented to community board 2?” Nate replied Yes, we met with the land use committee. We have not been on the agenda for their general meeting.



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

Gloria also inquired “What kind of jobs will they be having? Administration? What is going to be done in these building? Nate replied, This inquiry should be addressed to the company. This project will be a headquarters with office jobs. The jobs will range from executives to HR. They have several different acquisitions. Some 50% may be in tech but there are different jobs.

Gloria inquired, “Will the jobs be from people inside or from outside?” Nate replied, it is inefficient for them to bring talent in. They will be looking for talent within the city. The incentives were a major motivation that brought Amazon but the potential for talent will what makes them stay.

Rose Fraioli thanked Nate for the outline. She inquired, “Has concerns that four parcels are public land. After 99-year lease what will happen to the land? Does it go back? Nate replied, It provides us to monitor performance. There is a negotiation of terms of the new lease.

Rose asked, “Is there any terms that that public land will come back to the city?” Nate told us that the incentives give the City and State incredible control that the performance is being done properly. There are recapture provisions that can occur and regain the land.

Joe Grill inquired, “what is the city doing to upgrade the mass transit system so that the residents will not want to move out? Nate replied, “Some of those concerns predated the project. There will be a comprehensive travel review that will be taken. It will look at future travel demands, transit capacity and street networks.”

Pali Wheet reminded the attendees that there will be another meeting with the MTA addressing these issues.

Donna Squitieri asked what about Astoria? Are Astoria residents going to get the same opportunities as LIC residents? Nate replied, There will be job opportunities all over for this project. We will prepare residents for these jobs. We plan to be back in the neighborhood and consulting with Richard. We will be developing new programs to hone new talent.

Neil Herdan asked, “What is the relation between the HQ and the facility. Nate replied, That is a question best addressed to the company. We understand it to be a logistics facility.

Dominique Perrot inquired, “How were members of Community Advisory Committee established? What portion represented the residents? Nate replied, The committee was established by the city and state and elected officials. Richard is currently one of the members of the committee.

Maureen McGillicutty inquired, “Will they have a van service for Amazon? Nate replied, Pen has not met paper on the program of the project. There is a long road ahead for future travel arrangements.



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

Clare Doyle inquired, “Who will hold the lease of the 3.5 acre of open space? Will it be Parks Department?” Nate replied, The maintenance will be taken on by Amazon. Publicly opened space was listed as non-negotiable for the city and state. Clare also asked, “Will the environmental review include soil testing? Nate replied, Environment remediation will be done with lots of oversight.

Juliana Son inquired, “Is the city doing anything to protect [housing] affordability?” Nate replied, New York City has built thousands of housing units. Additionally, 300000 housing units is more housing units than Seattle.

Louis Kleinman inquired, “Are you in negotiations considering reopening the [BOQX] streetcar? What is the status of your negotiations with Plaxall?”

Nate replied, That is a long range envisioned to establish the streetcar project. There is an environmental review. It did not factor into this project. The company negotiated directly with Plaxall to secure control a portion of their property.

Claudia Coger commented, the questions at this meeting are being asked because when the news broke, we wanted to know what was going to happen with the rest of Northern Queens. We have placed many questions about transportation and infrastructure with Amazon.

Richard introduced Eleni Bourinaris from the NYC Economic Development Corporation.

Eleni gave an update on the Halletts Cove Kayak Launch. The goals of the kayak launch are to restore the environment in this area, remove the radio tower, remove the shopping carts, restore the railing. EDC hopes to make it accessible and ADA compliant to allow safe recreation. \$5 million was approved for the design and construction for this project. EDC knows that safety is a major concern and they are working with the NYC Ferry team to ensure that everyone will be safe. Eleni told the meeting that the storage containers will be off of the landing site. There will be a landscaped screen on one side and a vinyl wrap in the storage container. They are currently at the completion of the design.

Rose Fraioli inquired, “Is there anything that can be done with the litter?” Eleni replied, She will take it back to their interagency partners.

Richard brought Claudia Coger to the microphone address a concern. Claudia informed everyone that Reality House is a rehab facility that is concerned about an application to allow a liquor store next door. There will be a protest tomorrow January 9th that will take place in 813 Astoria Blvd at 10AM. If anyone would be available, the support would be greatly appreciated.



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

Richard informed everyone that on January 30th we will meet with the MTA at the family church on 18th Street.

Richard thanked everyone to for attending this meeting.