



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

Old Astoria Neighborhood Association

Monthly Meeting

October 8th

Richard welcomed everyone in attendance for being present. He thanked Brooklyn Harvest Market and Costco for providing the refreshments for this evening's meeting.

II. Intro: Updates on Community Issues

Richard informed every one of the FDNY CPR event with 30 attendees hosted by OANA . This is the first of a series of seminars and events that OANA is planning. They are considering starting financial literacy courses. Also, New Yorkers for Parks has donated a bag of daffodil bulbs. If you would like to take bulbs please remember they are for public spaces only.

III. Brief overview of Participatory Budgeting

Richard introduced Mr. Mike Corbett from Congressman Constantinides office. Mr. Corbett is the Director of Special Events and Head of Participatory Budgeting. One million dollars of the capital budget is taken and given to the public to vote on the use of this money. These are capital projects with NYC Schools, Parks and libraries. There are budget delegates that meet directly with city agencies. This eventually turn into a ballot in the spring to utilize a million dollars of the budget toward these projects. The dog run under Triborough Park, in Astoria Park, the Astoria Library as well as the Steinway Library have had projects with the participatory budget. Mr. Corbett is here to inquire if anyone has an idea for the next budget proposals for capital projects. He will remain for the meeting for anyone that has concerns and questions.

IV. Brooke Costanza, Deputy Director NY Parks Department Queens Forestry

Richard introduced Brooke Costanza who is the deputy director of NY Parks Forestry Department. There is a central forestry office that deals with tree planting, trees and sidewalks program and permitting for removals for construction. Her office deals with the maintenance of trees. The office pruned 1936 tree, 229 trees were removed, removed 83 stumps, pruned 60 trees, removed limbs from 120 trees. Additionally, 28 sidewalks were fixed and 12 trees were planted. Repairs have been ramped up for the Fall. They have pledged to fix 5500 sidewalks over the next three years. Trees are pruned on a seven-year cycle. We are currently in year four, they will be in community board one by the end of the



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year. The old policy was to remove the tree within 30 days, now it is based on tree risk. There are 3 levels of inspection, level one is a perusal look. Level two is a 360 examination and use of tools to determine how much decay is in the roots of the tree. Level three is a more in-depth examination including the imaging of the tree. The risk ratings are imminent, probable, possible and impossible. Imminent rating is a tree that will fail within the next 7 days. A probable rating is a tree that will fail within the next year. They consider the location of the tree whether it's near a house or people. They will consider consequence and mark it as negligible, minor, significant, or severe. There are degrees of severity for the parameters.

David Matten inquired, "What happens when the schedule is not sufficient? If a young tree is on a sidewalk where the branches are at chin level and blocking the whole sidewalk."

Ms. Constanza stated that the in-house crew would not get to this tree. They will not over prune trees as per the research and recommendation of the ISA (International society of arboriculture). The trees will be pruned when the block crew gets to it. There is a citizen's pruners program where gardeners and pruners are sent and smaller trees are pruned.

Aisha Mayfield inquired, "How does someone become a citizen pruner?"

Ms. Constanza stated, there are classes offered online. You may google NYC Parks Citizens pruners. Brooklyn Botanical Gardens and Bronx Botanical Gardens are offering classes where you may become certified.

Stacy Andreadakis inquired, "How does a budget get established to ensure that it is properly allocated?"

Ms. Constanza stated, Budget is not the issue, the issue is to get the contractors to bid appropriately on the contracts. Also getting contractors to bid on the contracts of the trees and sidewalks contractors. They have started advertising more and received more appropriate bids.

Vanessa Jones Hall inquired, "What about the community garden, we have branches falling? They have trees that are uprooting. A tree has fallen on 30th Avenue.

Ms. Constanza, community gardens are usually in low traffic areas and receive low risk ratings. The crews may not have access to the garden. She recommends patience as the crews are limited number of workers and the tools.

Stacy inquired, "How do you establish which streets are serviced?"



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Ms. Constanza could not answer the question. Street tree planting use service request to determine tree planting site.

David Matten inquired, "Does the tree planting program coordinate with DEP?"

Ms. Constanza stated, Yes, they have foresters that work in coordination with DEP.

Richard commented the City of NY is repairing sidewalks damaged by trees.

V. Assemblywoman Cathy Nolan, Update on District Issues

Richard introduced Assemblywoman Cathy Nolan. Every 10 years after the census, the lines of all legislative districts are redrawn. The district has grown so much that we have close to 175,000 residents in the district. She urged that everyone to participate in the census.

Her office tries to do partner with City agencies to help constituents deal with quality of life issues.

Updates on NY State issues : educational funding for schools. \$25 billion go to schools. They received an additional \$300 million for education to remove all classrooms in trailers. They offer more choices for high school students.

They work with Reality House as well as Goodwill. There are programs to help provide housing and rehabilitate veterans and the Homeless.

The MTA is a regional authority where tax dollars go to funding. The assembly voted for a congestion pricing system in Manhattan. Bridges and roads also fall under the process

The state park system is under the purview of the State.

There are Adult education classes offered through the state system.

Rent regulation has been rebalanced. They have a newsletter on the new rent regs their website. They have strengthened rent stabilization.

Ian Snow discussed what he considered to be illegal conversion of apartments into storage units in Shore Towers. He thanked her for the assistance that she offered to him and his neighbor. There were no smoke detectors and sprinklers. Assemblywoman Nolan wrote to the NYC Department of Buildings



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commissioner, who stated that this conversion occurred 15 years ago and the building has been fined that are routed to the residents. He inquired, "What might happen next?"

Assemblywoman Nolan said they have written letters but there is no resolution. Ian will follow up with the Assemblywoman's office.

Stacy inquired, "Is the state creating programs for technical schools in computer science skills for older residents?"

Assemblywoman Nolan stated, we tend to focus on GED rather than IT training. LaGuardia Community College has certificate programs. She took a computer for beginner's program and she felt it assisted her and her classmates. She will advocate for more training through the Astoria library. She met with representatives from Goodwill and had plans that they not shared. She would be happy to meet to discuss the program.

Vanesa Jones Hall commented that she worked with Access a Ride in the appeals and complaint department. There were complaints of the private contractors that were hired. How they scheduled the rides were questionable. They would schedule early pickups so that they would be able to pick up additional riders. They would receive complaints over the time a passenger's ride would last hours until arriving at their destination.

Justin Potter inquired, "Do you have any thoughts on what can be done on the housing affordability?"

Assemblywoman Nolan stated, she wants to create a task force. Let us know if there are any ideas that might be able to assist the progress of the stabilization.

Stacy commented using AMI the granularity of the central radius should be handled differently that other data is being accessed.

Assemblywoman Nolan stated there are many things occurring with twitter We wanted to reopen a firehouse that closed. She has asked for our patience with these issues. If they would like to have a meeting, she will accommodate the group. She suggests that everyone share with the information.

David Matten inquired, "What part will be played by the State with the Army Core's Storm surge program?"

Assemblywoman Nolan stated, she currently does not have the information. She believes that this has not been successful in establishing. If people would like more information the assemblywoman would



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be willing to attain that information for the residents. In January and February, the Legislature has hearings that will take place and broadcast in real-time.

VI. Xanthines Café LLC/Camp Wakanda: New Business

Richard introduced Tamika Anthony the CEO of Xanthines Café LLC on the corner of 12th street and Astoria Blvd., of Xanthines Café is an immersive STEAM program. She is a forensic toxicologist. Tamika created an environment where STEAM will be focused on the development of the program for children. She was featured on the Doctor Oz show. The company has been featured by John Jay College. She formed Camp Wakanda as a forum for children of color to showcase their superpowers in STEAM. There is a Seeds program where Homeschooling is offered. She has developed an afterschool program. There is a after school program as well a camp Wakanda that runs during the spring break and the summer. The program features Yoga and meditation for the students in the program. There is an affirmation circle that is utilized by the program. Their music program has featured professionals to teach the students. Martial arts is offered to students. They have the students visit local business and patron the local business. They have a black & brown program where authors come visit the students and read to them. There is a partnership with the Queens Public Library and Queens Bridge Tech Lab. There is composting that takes place daily. They offer vegan meals as well as meal preparation. There is a financial literacy class that is being offered to introduce the students to finances. They baked vegan cookies and sold them to the community and raise funds. They are located at 12-02 Astoria Blvd. Camp Wakanda offers free workshops and low-cost classes. They have Health and wellness workshops. She is grateful to the community that have supported her business.

Stacy inquired, “How big is your current space?”

Tamika stated, it is 720 sf and 420 sf on the patio.

Ana found about Tamika’s business through voice charter school parent association. Her daughters attended Camp Wakanda as well as attending some the of the events. She appreciates that everything she does is affordable. As a mom and Astoria resident, she recommends that they support Camp Wakanda.

Vanessa Jones Hall commented While walking by the space she noticed the space and assisted for the event. She recommends supporting her.

Tami congratulated Tamika as a woman of color. She inquired, “what can we do to help?”



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Tamika stated, she does not know. There are so many children that have participated and them looking forward.

Claudia Coger commented there will not be many places that you will go where you will not experience opposition. You are being carried where the person has to stand up to positions where they will stand. They can make the transition into the technological fields.

Joe inquired, "Is there a way to volunteer for the programs?"

Tamika stated, there is something occurring all the time. She is looking to fill slots for workshops.

Richard thanked everyone for coming and Brooklyn Harvest Market and Costco for providing the food for tonight's meeting. The next meeting will take place next month on November 12th.