



Old Astoria Neighborhood Association (OANA)
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**Old Astoria Neighborhood Association
Monthly Meeting
November 12th, 2020**

Richard welcomed everyone in attendance for being present. He thanked for providing the refreshments for this evening's meeting

II. Introductions: Updates

Richard mentioned if anyone had a question of a personal nature for any presenter, they should discuss that with him after the general presentation to ensure the continuity of the meeting.

Richard mentioned that OANA had taken [a position in favor of the Bike Lanes](#) in NYC as long as they included traffic controls specific to bicycles.

Richard reminded everyone that small businesses are important. He introduced Urban Exploration. They are planting 20K bulbs. They have been in business for 27 years. If there are any gardening needs they may be able to facilitate. They do tree pits and have a license to plant and remove trees. There are a lot a tulip buds. They remove garbage, prune trees.

III. New Business Intro: Toms Pet Supply

Richard introduced Tom from Toms Pet Supply. Tom thanked for the opportunity to address the meeting. He had worked for Petland and is attempting to fill the void that was created when Petland left the neighborhood. There is free delivery to all Astoria residents. They offer 10% for Senior Sundays. There will be an adoption event on small business Saturday.

They will be offering free programs to offer more training for the youths on Saturdays with animal training courses.

Pat Olmstead recommended that he mentioned that Tom has baby squirrels and is licensed to rescue animals as an animal rehabilitator.

Tex commented, the problems with the pet stores is that they run out of the in demand items and the customer will leave without making a purchase. At Tom's shop they have everything in stock.

IV. NYC Department of Design and Construction: Jessica Douglas

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Richard introduced Jessica Douglas from the NYC Department of Design and Construction. Jessica is the assistant director of the NYC DDC. She presented an overview of the DDC. The DDC was created in 1996 to centralize the city's capital construction process. DDC is broken into infrastructure and public buildings. Infrastructure is underground work in coordination with DEP & DOT water mains, sewers and streets. It covers manholes, hydrants, water mains and sewers. Public buildings are the libraries to fire houses to City Hall. City agencies sponsors projects and provide capital funding. The Astoria Library is currently in design. They will have accessible bathrooms and elevators. The initiatives at DDC are the STEM Initiative in educating students in science, technology, engineering, architecture and mathematics through internships at the school programs. The MWBE initiative help Minority and women owned business to be competitive for city contracts. They will be mentored in the process of obtaining a contract.

Tom Ryan inquired, "Are they only involved with new work? who's handles the maintenance with the current projects?"

Ms. Douglas stated, DDC is only responsible for construction, that would fall under the purview of the Department of Transportation.

Pat Almstead inquired, "When Con Ed is involved, is the DDC involved?"

Ms. Douglas stated, no but there are times were there is a joint venture.

Mark Goldberg inquired, "Does DDC had anything to do with step streets? The step streets are all over the city?"

Ms. Douglas stated, this may fall under Dept of City Planning. DDC does not handle this project.

Tony Rodriguez inquired, "Does DDC organize the construction? Are you part of the master planning?"

Ms. Douglas stated, no, DOT is involved with that aspect.

Richard inquired, "If the agencies prefer they may handle it in house?"

Ms. Douglas stated, yes, they do have a choice.



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Tom Ryan inquired, “What is the age for the STEM program?”

Ms. Douglas stated, yes, it is for middle school, high school and college participants.

Tex inquired, “If they can handle things in house, why do they come to DDC?”

Ms. Douglas stated, it depends on the size of the projects.

Richard inquired, “What can be done to expedite the Astoria library projects? What can be done on Shore Blvd regarding the flooding?”

Nick Roloson commented, they spoke with DEP and they are beginning construction. The project needed approval by the state DEP. The work should be completed this month.

V. Revel Scooter: John White

Richard introduced John White, community affairs manager, and Lauren Green, general manager, from Revel Scooter. Mr. White stated that it is a shared moped program. It is a class B motor vehicle. A person would have to download the application and then they would have to upload their driving information and once they pass a back ground check. Their service area is Brooklyn and Queens. It goes from Astoria to Sunset Park, From the east River to crown heights. It began in 2018 in Brooklyn with three service areas and 68 mopeds. They currently have a thousand mopeds with 20 communities. The revels are being used over 7 times a day with weekend usage being 10-15. The average ride is 3-5 miles. They are here to help cut down on the commute time. It allows people to get time back into their lives. Since starting in 2018, they met with local officials. They current serve Astoria to downtown Brooklyn. They offer an affordable access program for those that receive public assistance where they receive a 40% discount. Revel started with 10 employees and currently has 200 employees. They wanted to ensure their employees were not part of the gig economy. Every moped has 2 DOT certified helmets. They offer lessons 7 days a week at the headquarter. Their mopeds are throttled at 30 mph. They screen every user. They serve fines and suspensions to those that violate their rules. There is 3rd party liability that comes with every rental.

Vanessa Jones Wall inquired, “Are these vehicles are able to go on the highway?”

Mr. White stated, because they are Class B vehicles and they are not allowed to go on the highway and are throttled at 30 miles per hour.



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Liz Chen commented, she witnessed two wipeout accidents and inquired if these accidents are reported back to revel.

Mr. White stated, the statistics are reported and they prompt that over 99.9% of the million rides end incident free.

Karen Oschechey raised these issues: they must put the vehicle in a legal spot that will be legal for 24 hours. She has noticed they are leaving them in driveways. They are parking in spots where it is not legal. She inquired, "Is the training mandated?"

Ms. Green stated, there are lessons that are offered at their headquarters. When a rider confirms that parking is simpler to park a revel. There is a revel rangers program where they move so that the mopeds are parked legally. They would like to hear from members of the community.

Karen commented that they are doing what bicycles are doing. She inquired, "Should riders follow the rules that motorist do?"

Ms. Green stated, Yes, they are supposed to. We are creating a culture of responsibility.

Mark Goldberg inquired, "How do you get the moped out of the zone?"

Ms. Green stated, yes, there is a zone from Astoria to sunset park. If you wanted to drive outside the zone you would have to pause the ride.

Adam Guest inquired, "Can you carry groceries on the revel?" "Can you park it like a bicycle?"

Ms. Green stated, the moped must be parked as a vehicle would be. You could fit a bag in the helmet case. It is not designed to carry many bags.

Grace Lauder commented, there was scooter that was perfectly legally parked but it was knocked down. She inquired, "What if you followed the rules and certain things take place?"

Ms. Green stated, if the revel is on the ground they know that the user did not do it. The user would not be held accountable. Their customer support is available from 5AM-1AM.



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Josh Vedder commented if there is a lot of people doing illegal things. There should be a camera option to document that.

Ms. Green stated, yes, the vast majority are good riders. They will look into including them into the app.

Mr. Vedder commented, “Do you have plans to roll it out to more communities?”

Mr. Rodriguez inquired, “Are they looking to eliminate city bike? Are you getting push back from the city agencies?”

Ms. Green stated, no, we view ourselves as one good transit option. No, we want to be responsible actors.

Richard inquired, “Is there a thought to making florescent helmets?”

Ms. Green stated, yes they are looking to improve.

VI. Transportation Outreach Unit NYPD: Traffic and Parking Issues: Sgt. Jamie Gifkin

Richard introduced Sgt. Gifkin of the Transportation Outreach Unit. Sgt. Gifkin stated they understand the impact of the collisions. They are trying to educate the public. If there is an investigation where the family feels that it is not getting the proper response, they assist. They want to understand the needs and concerns. Under the Dust to Darkness campaign there is an influx of cyclists. We currently have 191 fatal collisions versus 170 last year which is up 21. Last year we had 202 fatal collisions, this is less than when the model T rolled out. We are down 30% from fatal collisions. Queens North is at 28 fatal collisions as opposed to 31 from last year. Queens south is at 3 fatal collisions down from 8. Northern Blvd is the newest coordinators. All vehicles should have their turn signal on. Queens North averaged 112 collisions a month last year. Drivers be more aware. They asked pedestrians to wear something reflective or brighter clothing. Physical left turns are made at a wider angle. DOT is rapidly increasing the bike lanes in NYC. In November 2018 there were 76 pedestrian injuries, 45% occurred during 4PM-7PM. We must protect our seniors from collision injuries.

Richard reminded that we shouldn't have to worry about blame. We should have to focus on creating solutions.



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Gale commented she had an incident where she was dropping a child off at day care. She fears that drivers do not respect the stop sign. She inquired, "What do I do to prevent this?"

Sgt Gifkin stated, if it continues to happen at a specific locate the precinct and contact their highway safety team. Sometimes the presence of the safety team. We can make sure the youth officer. You want to get the precinct involved. The second in commands will be at the meeting.

Sgt. Gifkin state he saw a blog were Governor Cuomo may be pushing for more strict enforcement of school bus stop signs.

VII. PS 171 Principal Mrs. Lisa Stone: Getting to school safely.

Richard introduced Mrs. Lisa Stone the principal at PS 171. She has been principal for the last 3 years. There was an incident where the crossing guard was burned by thrown coffee by a motorist that sped by her. These motorists do not stop on 14th street for children. These hazards are being dealt with the students on a daily basis. A petition was signed by the school with many pages of signatures and nothing was done. We need to create a safe corridor so that our children are able to cross without worry of being hit. She has asked that everyone to hear it and act to proactively secure the safety of the students at her school.

Officer Chacon has the ability to make the officers aware of this is still an ongoing problem at 14th street. He believes it warrants a traffic light. He has vowed to get there a presence of officers with the crossing guards.

Richard commented that he has spoken with DOT to initiate a study of speed cameras on 14th street. They approved to change 14th street into a two-way street to prevent speeding.

Richard presented an acknowledgment to Ms. Stone as a community leader within the community.

Tom Ryan commented when you step onto the side walk you are dodging the cars. In New England if a pedestrian is in the cross walk a motorist will receive a ticket. He inquired, "can there be anything done to enforce this in the city?"

Sgt. Gifkin stated, it is now a Class D misdemeanor for striking a pedestrian. They have targeted those that are failing to yield and speed.



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Richard mentioned they attempted to get the vertical signs. The DOT rejected because they not approved by the city.

Phyllis inquired, “Can you get a five-gallon bucket and put the sign? “

St. Gifkin stated, no, you may not. The right of way for pedestrians has become the number one mantra that they are working on.

David Matten commented that he sees at the drop of time where there is a sea of double parking during the time periods and then motorists get frustrated and attempt to go over the spots.

St Gifkin stated, fatalities in NYC were less that when the Model T came off the line.

Richard reminded that street sweeping has been established and that the parking is going well under the new alternate street sweeping signs. The cars are ignoring the posted signs and leaving their cars there.

Tony Rodriguez commented we all have to share the roads. Regarding the right of way, how long does the pedestrian have to clear the curb.

Sgt. Gifkin stated, as long as the light is not a steady red the pedestrian may take as long as they need. A motorist may take as long as they need to clear as long as they are not blocking the box.

Karen Oshesky inquired, “Is the delay going to be rolled city wide?”

Sgt. Gifkin stated, they are attempting to shorten the amount of time to get around the intersection.

Tim Ryan inquired, “If there is a bike lane during a red light with a solid white lane?”

Sgt. Gifkin stated, cyclist always have the right of the lane.

Dori Cocoros commented she left flyers for the Astoria park alliance leaf rest and sponsoring a sock drive. Their holiday fundraiser party will take place on December 10th.



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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 December 10th.