

Oakdale Civic Association

General Monthly Meeting

March 10, 2008

2008 Officers

President:	Stan Feldman	523-8835
Vice President:	Ray Carta	218-0041
Treasurer:	Pat Kassten	589-8222
Recording Secretary	Carol Schwasnick	589-7455
Corresponding Secretary	Marilyn Triolo	589-5981

Board Members

Cathy Cohen
John Eder

Minutes Recorded by: Carol Schwasnick

President Stan Feldman called the meeting to order at 7:35 pm, opening with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Corrections to minutes were taken. Corrected minutes were voted as approved. Modified copy will be retained as record.

Treasurer's report

Treasurer Pat Kassten reported that this month's income from dues was \$806. Liability insurance has been paid for the year.

President's report

President Stan Feldman reported that he has been elected chairman for 2008-2009 for the Maritime Museum. He is excited about this new position, and the strength of the team there.

Mr. Feldman recently received a letter from Town Councilman Chris Bodkin regarding the sign at the Arthur Premm School looking a bit worn. Mr. Bodkin wrote a letter to Connetquot Superintendent Dr. Alan Groveman. Mr. Premm was one of the founders of the school district, and it is not appropriate to allow the sign to be neglected. The letter requested the sign be redone or replaced. Mr. Groveman responded that plans to refurbish the sign are already in place and will proceed this year.

This morning Mr. Feldman attended a Eucharist mass for former Oakdale resident Jim McCartney. Mr. McCartney was 90 years old, and still active with the OCA at 80 years old. 40+ people were there at the mass.

Mr. Feldman reported that he will be away for the next 2 months, leaving 16 days from now. He is traveling to Australia for 3 weeks, then to Sarasota for 2 weeks. Ray will take the helm in his absence.

Town Report

OCA Director John Eder reported the following:

Rollstone Estates:

The property owners and Suffolk County are still talking. Stan Feldman noted that soil tests are holding up appraisals.

Oakdale Shopping Center – West (Post Office) side Gordon brothers, owners: Town will be contacting this landlord again regarding interior alterations. Violations exist and are not that critical but the Town wants them changed.

Oakdale Shopping Center, East - Proposed bank needs plan review

Billboards on Town property on Montauk Highway:

See Roundtable report from Jamie Flynn

Coan's Property on Vanderbilt:

Town stated if the property isn't cleaned the zoning would be revoked. Recently this was approved to be rezoned to residential, 2-family and Coan's proposed to build a home on the lot. Currently Coan is still using the lot for storage of work vehicles. The lot is adjacent to Tai Show East restaurant.

Bronco Charlie's:

Trapani, the potential buyer, made a proposal to the Town for two commercial buildings on the entire parcel, instead of using the southern portion for houses. The Town told Trapani "no." Stan Feldman noted that since Cynthia Trapani is a guest this evening that she could explain further later on.

Roundtable Report

Jamie Flynn reported that although it was reported that there was a deal with the LIRR leasing space on the billboard, it is not true. Jessica Joyce at planning advised owners of the billboard they wanted it down in 30 days if there was not a new arrangement with the Town. Town cannot give us information other than it slipped by them. Town does not have ownership of the sign on the property.

Oakdale Vision Hamlet Plan:

Jessica Joyce (Planning Department) wrote a note recently and the plan is very close to being done. Once ready, she will meet with the Roundtable to present it, and it will then hopefully be adopted by the Town Council as a formal document of record of the wants and desires of Oakdale residents. Mr. Flynn reported that they were hoping the plan would be completed by January, but the government change with the elections cost some time. What has kept it reasonably on track is that it has been the only project of its kind planning has been working on at this time. Jamie will look to schedule a Roundtable meeting for an update before Mr. Feldman leaves on his trip.

Budget Action Committee

John Krut gave an update. The last meeting was about a month ago. John put together a packet with samples of letters that we can use to write our own communications to the Governor's office. John advised that we all should write letters, as the Committee is looking to get as much mail out as possible to increase awareness of the lack of funding for Long Island schools. Out of 124 total

Long Island districts, 60 will receive less aid. Our district will receive \$1.6M less aid. The committee has 19 people on it from PTA's, Civic Associations and other community groups – so it has gotten pretty large. John presented a schedule/timeline of actions by the committee. He noted that anyone is welcome to attend the School Board meetings and see what is going on. This also gives an opportunity to see the interaction between the Budget Advisory Committee and the School Board, and that our fellow residents are looking after our pocketbooks.

Chuck Triolo then mentioned the recent news coverage of the issues with law firms and lawyers hired by school districts and noted that there is no district that will be out of the spotlight. Connetquot has Gurcio & Gurcio representing them, a big educational law firm. Educational Law is very specialized, not too many private attorneys get involved in it. The district hires attorneys to represent them on negotiations. Many districts also have doctors and architects on the payroll, and it will be interesting to see how the State will view them. What we have seen is the tip of the iceberg. Newsday's goal is to stir the pot. They want to present in a way to get readers. 5 districts hired the attorney, these districts showed him as a full time employee, and showed him as a pension earning member of the system. The five districts are being investigated. At this point, every district has been required to provide State Attorney General Andrew Cuomo with a list of their consultants.

President Feldman noted that our guest speaker for May will be Dr. Groveman, who will appear just ahead of the school budget vote.

Mr. Triolo then reported on a meeting that was held in Hauppauge of a State appointed committee to research ways to change the method of determining State school aide last week. One negative is that Suffolk County has only one person representing us: Shirley Strum Kenney, president of Stonybrook University who is not a Long Island resident or native. As a county we do not have representation on the commission. The entire commission also has no representative that is an expert on K-12 taxes. With a May 15 deadline this is a major decision that seems rushed. Bill Lindsay was one speaker; he mentioned that more young people are leaving Suffolk County than any other county in the state, and that he wants the state to pay 50%. The district Superintendent for Bay Shore spoke about the concept for developing a "circuit breaker." Many people bought houses years ago, and salaries have not kept pace with housing appreciation. There is no correlation between homeowner wealth and the cost of a house. Using an income tax based was mentioned, as an alternative. Also mentioned was the concept of paying teachers on a regional basis, so on Long Island negotiations would be done once for all districts and significantly save on costs. This is something we are unlikely to see, because of the salary discrepancies between districts. Also of note on LI: Special Ed is costing districts a lot of money to set it up with expensive special ed teachers; the requirement to now offer pre-K to children with special needs. This used to be paid for by county, now they want the school districts to pay. Thought is being given to repealing the Triboro Amendment. This is designed to stop strikes, but it limits salary negotiation – this is a negative.

Dr. Ellen Halzman also spoke. She noted that on Long Island we have 17% of the state's children but receive only 11% of the aid. We only get 8% of the budget increase. The educational effort is so much greater here than rest of the state. Median disposable income is higher in other parts of the state than it is on Long Island. Hudson Valley, at -17.5K; and Long Island, at -45K, were the only two negatives. Once you take out of consideration housing and taxes, Long Island is not wealthy. 45,000 Long Island children go to bed hungry every night. We are not wealthy. We are not the wealthy county that has been presented. We are also educating large portions of the rest of the state through our tax dollars. Where is the equity for our districts?

Mr. Triolo read more of the notes from the meeting. The high property taxes on Long Island are directly attributable to insufficient school spending here, by the state. The result is Long Islanders use 20% more of their income on taxes. Both budget advisory committee and the board are very aware of times we are in. Economics in Albany area a disaster, we are looking at \$4/gallon gas, and we must be as economical as we can. Education is our number one priority, and this will be a difficult argument in Albany.

St. John's Episcopal Church

Pamela Burner reported that St. John's is still moving into the architectural drawing, then bidding process, and then finally the work to get the East Wall of the Church restored. Ms. Burner graciously offered to open the church at any time, if we would like to visit. She noted that Ginny Fields promised a \$50K grant, she is still going back and forth with Albany on this. The building is a national landmark. It is still listed as a religious institution, and Ms. Burner is still working on other grants. Stan asked if they can form a foundation to take title and get grants. Ms. Burner reported that NY State can give grants for the outside of the building, because it is a religious institution, for the inside work they must fundraise. Ms. Burner mentioned the many activities that St. John's is offering, including scones and tea, and pot luck BBQs in the summer. She asked that we consider participating, to meet some local folks and support the church. These events have received very positive feedback. Joan Lingell O'Sullivan is an artist from Sayville who will now be giving art classes at the parish. President Feldman mentioned that we will look to include information on St. Johns and the activities on the OCA website.

Oakdale Improvement Society

Linda Hart reported that folks are annoyed by the fence on Montauk Hwy across from Oakdale Commons. Wayside Fence found damage, so looking for another contract and more money. President Feldman noted he would work on this issue.

State Assembly Report

Patty Ryan, aide to Ginny Fields, reported.

Ginny Fields' office is moving to Bayport, on Montauk Hwy. to a new building near the fish store and 7- Eleven. Construction is currently underway, intended date of April 1 has been delayed. Ms. Ryan noted that the Assemblywoman recently attended a Planning Board hearing for change of zone for the Great River Development Agency. She outlined Ms. Fields objections: traffic congestion, over saturation with first responders trying to get volunteers; the developer misleads on tax gains, the development will actually cost us more; also concerns with roads, water, parks, garbage, police mediations, dumb growth vs. smart growth. Ms. Ryan noted that Ms. Fields is an author of the smart growth plan for Suffolk County. This development is not near mass transit, and a 4 story building not consistent with the area. President Feldman noted he would love it for Assemblywoman Fields to become an advocate of finding money from the parks department, to have them make an offer to the developer to preserve as park land forever. He noted that the owner, Mr. Gargano, can turn around and put in industrial buildings there instead of residential. A property owner has a right to build something at some point. Mr. Feldman noted that it will take 4-5 years to do all this work and there has to be compromise. Jamie Flynn noted that it's amazing how low the ground is over there. Ms. Fields also brought up the fish hatchery. If you raise the water table through development and the water becomes warmer, the hatchery will probably be jeopardized.

Bronco Bill's Property

Cynthia Trapani appeared as a guest speaker, with her business partner. She is not a resident of Oakdale, but is familiar with the area and has family here. The Trapanis are interested in purchasing this parcel from Dowling. The intent is to make the Bronco Charlie's parcel the first green parcel in Oakdale. Last week The Trapanis had a meeting with Town Planning Board. This would be Ms. Trapani's first commercial property and she is very excited about it. She showed the sketch to Planning, and they rejected it. The reason is that currently the whole parcel is considered residential. Even though part of the parcel is zoned commercial, the entire though defaults to the stronger zoning – in this case to match the residential status of the southern two lots. However, the use and current structure of the parcel is currently commercial. The Trapanis have not gone to contract yet. Stan advises that she should speak to folks on Biltmore, whose homes would face the back of the Trapani's planned project. From the Town's perspective, it is not desirable to downzone. Ms. Trapani emphasized that her intent is to make the project extremely presentable with a great buffer along the adjacent residential street. She noted that they are still very invested in it, and want to do right by us, and requested that we write to the Town and tell them we want this project to be approve. Both proposed structures are one story buildings. After talking to an engineer, talking about sewer loads etc., one story is recommended. Need to apply for re-zoning.. John Eder asked for clarification on why the houses cannot be built, in addition to commercial structures. Ms. Trapani explained that the reason is the commercially zoned piece is so narrow, once the building is placed and the parking ratio is achieved, the narrow commercially zoned lot is not buildable. Stan Feldman and Vice President Ray Carta advised that Ms. Trapani visit directly with the Biltmore Ave. residents sooner than later. They will need the concurrence of these residents, or this could be a dead project. They also stated it would help to have a rendering of what it looks like from Biltmore to show how it will look like from the perspective of the residents.

President Feldman noted that we have chased away everyone who wants to do something with this property. Jamie Flynn noted that last year there was a meeting on this site, where two people from Biltmore noted they would take almost anything over what is there now. Mr. Flynn wrote to Jessica Joyce that feeling was that most of Oakdale would be in favor of this project, as would anyone who lives on Biltmore. Mr. Flynn also believes that Councilman Flotteron would be in favor. One issue is precedent. There is not much downzoning in the Town of Islip, which could create an issue for them down the road. President Feldman conducted a vote once the Trapanis departed on support for the plan. A majority was in favor, one nay was recorded. The OCA will support the Trapanis by going to the planning board and support their plan be pursued in an acceptable way, with covenants on the property. Stan will follow up with phone calls to the Town.

Pamela Burner brought up trees that were removed from the residential property adjacent to the St. John's graveyard where they are supposed to have a 50'buffer. They removed these and put in a pool, the house still does not have a C of O. President Feldman advised her to address the Town Board on it and talk to three new people – Councilmen Parrington, and Edwards and Supervisor Nolan.

Linda Hart motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:35pm. Vice President Ray Carta seconded.