

**Oakdale Civic Association  
General Monthly Meeting  
April 13, 2009**

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**2009 Officers**

|                         |                  |          |
|-------------------------|------------------|----------|
| President:              | Ray Carta        | 560-4650 |
| Vice President:         | Stan Feldman     | 523-8835 |
| 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*

**[www.OakdaleCivicAssociation.org](http://www.OakdaleCivicAssociation.org)**

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President Ray Carta called the meeting to order at 7:40pm and led the Pledge of Allegiance. The meeting was held in St. John's library, as there was a leak in the ceiling of the meeting room in the Bourne Mansion.

Minutes were presented from last month's meeting. These have been posted on the website and hard copies were made available up front. President Carta requested a motion to accept minutes as posted and presented. A motion was made by the membership, this was seconded.

**Treasurer's report: Pat Kassten**

130 paid members to date, with income from dues of \$140. Disbursements this month were limited.

**President's report: Ray Carta**

President Carta stated that there is lots of news, and a lot to talk about this month.

Oakdale Easter Egg Hunt: This was very successful. Children and parents were very happy to be there, there were over 2000 Easter eggs put out on the lawn. Prizes were given, and there was a jelly bean contest with the winner receiving a giant chocolate Easter bunny. 200+ children participated. Member Denise Conte suggested that if we continue to do this event in future years, it may be nice to do a food drive for those less fortunate and have everybody bring a can of food to instill this idea of giving in the children.

The survey: President Carta received a nice amount back – about 20 or so, and shared a range of responses:

What do you like most about the civic association?

*"We are considered a watch dog for the community."*

*"The Civic brings people together to discuss local issues"*

What do you dislike?

*"Always the same small group of people."*

*"It's the same hot room every week."*

Who would you like to see come in as guest speakers?

*Suggestions included speakers on elder care, Senator Chuck Schumer, the Fire Dept, Business Managers, and Wild Birds Unlimited – among others.*

What should be the Goals of the Civic?

*"Organize community"*

*"Protect property"*

*"Be the voice of the community"*

Community goals:

*"Projects such as remulching the labyrinth or painting the fence at St. John's Church"*

To suggest attracting more members:

*"Have more community events."*

*"Bring a neighbor!"*

Drug awareness meeting sponsored by the Bohemia Civic.

The Bohemia Civic Association recently sponsored a meeting on Drug Awareness. The use of drugs in our community is on the rise, they are easy to get and cheap. Heroin is available at 80% pure. Kids use it once, they get hooked, it's that simple. Dealers are not your typical drug dealer. Kids try things, and dealers let them try for free. Then, they have to pay for it if they want to try it again. The dealer will give them 10 packages, and tell them to sell 8 and keep 2 - so they are using drugs for free as "sub-dealers." Parents of honor student Natalie Ciappa attended. She was a very talented, beautiful and successful student. Her parents found out she was using and took action, making arrangements to get her checked in to a facility. It is not that easy to get somebody checked in – but they had managed to make arrangements to get her into one. Ten days before her check in date, Natalie overdosed and died. The message here is to be aware. No one expects it to happen to them, but it could happen to your child.

### **Budget Advisory Committee Report: Carol Schwasnick**

Secretary Schwasnick read the list of recommendations to the membership. The recommendations were to be presented to the Board of Education on the following evening, April 14, at the regularly scheduled BOE meeting. Once BOE responses are received the recommendations will be posted to the website for the information of the membership. Member John Eder voiced concern over the recommendation to extend the retirement incentive window because of the pending retirement of a large number of baby-boomer teachers we do not want to overdo early retirement and be short teachers. Secretary Schwasnick responded that this recommendation is for a very short window and just for this year, being extended only until June 30, 2009. Considerations for this recommendation will be made on an annual basis.

### **Scholarship essays**

**Barbara Schermerhorn and Rita Kushner** are reviewing the current essay entries. Five entries were received, which is on par with last year. The winner will receive a \$500 scholarship award from the Oakdale Civic Association.

### **Islip Gardens Program**

President Carta stated that he received a letter from the Town about properties through the Town that they own that are overgrown with weeds and not maintained. The Town is looking to enter into agreements with organizations like a Civic to do something with these lots. This means that if we are interested, the OCA would be responsible for improving and maintaining a lot. Nancy Flynn noted many parcels along Montauk Hwy are private, and cautioned that any investment in work done to eyesore properties may be lost if the parcel sells. Also, to clarify, the LIRR Station property is a Town of Islip Park. There are several garden plots on the train station property already. President Carta asked if we should

request a list of available properties from the Town, the consensus of the membership was to request the list and see what is on there and evaluate this idea with the information in hand.

St. John's Historical Landmark.

Pam Burner stated that lots of tours are scheduled to come through in the next month, and she would like this property on the OCA's list of properties that needs to be looked after. They are currently working on re-opening the cemetery for cremational burial. The land is cleared but needs a lot of work. This can only enhance the surrounding area. The organized tour of the area with Pat Hogeboom tour is this weekend. President Carta noted that St. John's is absolutely on the list for OCA project considerations.

Member Bob Irwin, also of the Town of Islip DPW noted that the Town has worked this way for many years with various organizations. They have done this with the West Islip Soccer Club - the Town cleared out brush on a parcel and the club took over maintenance for it. Similarly this can be done for another group.

In line with the "Clean up" theme Nancy Flynn has provided fliers for and Oakdale Cleanup on Saturday May 30. Interested residents should meet at the train station at 10am and pitch in to contribute to cleaning up trash and beautifying Oakdale.

On a personal note, Ray Carta announced that he has entered the race to run for a seat on the Board of Education. He is in the process of filing the paperwork, and is looking for the support of the community as he embarks on this endeavor. President Carta expressed his intent to remain fully involved in his capacity as President of the OCA.

### **Hamlet Exploratory Committee**

President Carta spoke about the definitions of "Hamlet." Some research has indicated that this is an outdated term - meaning an area "not big enough to have its own church." As an example of what other Civics are doing, President Carta mentioned that the Bohemia Civic Association President has indicated that they are open to anyone in the Connetquot School District. John Eder explained that he has checked out several routes looking for information to nail down the boundaries of Oakdale. The Post Office has some information; Mr. Eder also went to the 8<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Assembly Districts for maps, as well as finding the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congressional District boundaries. Senator Brian Foley's district boundaries are unbelievable and somewhat illogical. Buddy Cohen has been doing research also on the definition of Hamlet and what boundaries we are using to define Oakdale. This is something that needs more work.

### **Town Report**

Delta gas station at Oakdale-Bohemia Road and Montauk Hwy.:

There is an active change of zone on file that addresses building location, and site design, there are variances they might need.

### **Green Cactus Restaurant:**

It appears work has stopped; the backhoe started work but has been sitting in the same spot for weeks. This could be due to the economy or health dept. requirements, but has nothing to do with Town.

### **Chase Bank:**

The Town has approved a site plan, but they need approval of the Commercial Plans Examiner. They also need approval from the health dept. The Town commented this project looks like it is going to happen.

### **Bronco Charlie's:**

Dowling in the process of renewing a demolition permit. The Town commented that the demolition must be completed before further applications are considered from Dowling. Mr.

Eder foiled a transcript of the Dec 17, 2008 Planning meeting regarding Bronco Charlie's which we will keep for our files so we can refer back to it in the future, as the Town's direction to Dowling on this property is clearly noted.

Eli laminates:

This business is located right by the sump, which was recently cleared and is now full of water. There are applications for two special permits for vehicle repair which are scheduled for a Wed. April 29 Planning hearing.

Sump on Montauk Hwy: used to have reeds in it so was rather inconspicuous. That is county property, and has a backhoe in place. John Eder has contacted the County and Jim Anthony will get back to him on this. Mr. Anthony will also get back to us on the "sunken" bus stop in front of Best Yet.

Waterford Rd. and Oakdale-Bohemia Road: John wrote a letter to the Commissioner of public works voicing concern about the intersection needing a traffic light.

Oakdale Hamlet Vision Plan: Copies are available up front. This will be posted to the OCA website. It's also on the OakdaleNY website.

Fire Hydrants: Mr. Eder spoke to the Fire Marshall at the Town, who advised that the Suffolk County Water Authority is responsible for all hydrants on non-private land, including annual maintenance and flow tests. Every 5 years pressure tests are supposed to be done. The County and Town are now working on passing a law to correct for this because of recent questions attached to low water pressure at an apartment complex where fatalities occurred due to this impediment. A Water Authority rep confirmed the responsibility for hydrant maintenance and that flow tests are done every 10 months. They do not do water pressure tests every 5 years, and do not schedule these unless they are asked to. There is currently no requirement to do this; hopefully the new legislation will require it. If the Water Authority is asked to maintain hydrants on private property there is a \$5500 one time fee to the Water Authority for each hydrant. The membership mentioned that there are private companies that will do this testing do it for \$90 per hydrant. This is an issue to keep an eye on.

Mr. Eder also mentioned he will also be writing a letter to the DPW about Apian Way and the holes in it, as well as on the condition of Oakdale-Bohemia Rd. just north of the railroad tracks.

Secretary Schwasnick mentioned that in line with the Town discussion that the Town Board will be voting to increase fines on illegal rentals at the scheduled Board meeting tomorrow 4/14 at 2pm. Secretary Schwasnick mentioned that higher fines are a step in the right direction but the point to be made is that without enforcement these penalties are meaningless. Anyone wishing to be heard on this topic should appear at the meeting at Town Hall.

**Guest Speaker: Marvin Smith from Senator Brian Foley's office**

Mr. Smith attended the meeting, stopping by to let us know that if we have any questions or concerns we can call the office and they will respond. Marvin said to make sure we know he spoke to Vice President Stan Feldman who advised him to come in and address the membership. Mr. Smith invited the membership to call anytime. He also brought a few brochures about services offered to the community. Mr. Smith noted that Senator Foley will be coming to Oakdale to see us in the near future, and that he has been hard at work up in Albany with the budget issues we are facing. Mr. Smith mentioned that Mr. Foley's message to us is that he shares our concerns

**Guest Speaker: Congressman Steve Israel**

Congressman Israel stated that his visit with us on this date was a priority for him, and that he would speak for a few minutes and would then like to listen to us and answer any questions we have.

Congressman Israel stated that we are witnessing the most challenging economy since the great depression. It's the "great recession," about as bad as it can get before you get into a full scale recession. There have been lots of solutions bandied about in Washington DC. If you are a company needing a bailout or a family in poverty – there are federal aid programs for you. But Washington responds to bottom of the pyramid and top. President Obama is all for giving middle class Americans a tax cut, but also in taxing the rich to be fair. The problem is that some of the definitions of rich are a household income of \$250K. You may be rich – in Boise Idaho, but on LI with the highest cost of living in the US, with highest energy, food costs and property taxes: You're not poor but certainly not rich. There is a statistic: if you are making \$150K in Islip that is the equivalent of \$94K in Iowa or Idaho. The difference is an entire salary, but you get taxed the same by the federal government. Congressman Israel stated that he has introduced legislation that would equalize this. It would direct the IRS to index taxes to consider cost of living in any region. \$150K here is in the 28% tax bracket, same as Iowa. The bill says a cost of living multiplier would need to be used. This is fairness that we need to see, but it is going to be very difficult to pass this bill. It is going to cost a lot of money, and there is no reason why those from lower cost areas should vote for it. We are trying to make the point in Washington and there is lots of work ahead.

Member Mario Politi noted that seniors are not making this \$250K. Congressman Israel stated that this bill would not help this group because they are already in a low tax bracket. For seniors, one of the smartest things we can do is to make prescription drugs more affordable. We have higher prices here than anywhere else in the world. The same medicine is sold around the world at a fraction of the cost that it is here. The Medicare Part D Program is one of the biggest consumers of medicine in the world, but there are no volume discounts. The US Government does not negotiate with the big drug companies for buying in bulk. This is because the big drug companies wrote the Medicare Part D bill. We must demand the secretary of health and human services negotiate volume discounts, and allow for safe reimportation of drugs back into the US. Congressman Israel noted that his parents live in the southwest and every three months they drive to Mexico and buy their prescriptions. Health care is a big problem.

School taxes: A member presented the view that anybody over 70 should not have to pay school taxes any more. To this, Congressman Israel cited respectful disagreement. Our schools let us become the strongest economy for a 100 year period. If you lose tax payments from seniors without children in the schools, why not exempt people in their twenties or thirties that do not have children? The schools would have to cut and cut and cut – or raise taxes to make up the difference. Mr. Israel stated he respected this view but there are other ways to control school costs.

For example, the Congressman stated the smartest thing we can do to reduce school taxes is convert from petroleum fuels to renewable sources of energy. One reason taxes are so high is because the schools were built at a time when no one cared how high oil prices were. It cost 25 cents for a gallon of oil in 1964. Our school buildings look like factories. In the Babylon School District energy costs have gone up 100%. Taxpayers pay for this. Saudi Arabia jacks up price of oil, money goes to Saudi Arabia to pay for the oil. . What if we put wind turbines on the athletic fields and solar panels on the roof and stopped sending so much money to oil producing countries?

Member Bob Mirro stated that according to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act we have a 3 year window – then a cliff – one thing we can do is compel our leaders to generate more revenue in the state. Mr. Mirro asked the Congressman if he would be willing to come

meet with our District's Budget Advisory Committee so we can talk about ways to correct these problems. Tons of surface area all over these schools are ripe for solar. Mr. Israel committed to meet with this group whenever they'd like to do it.

Mr. Israel stated that Senator Foley is better to address on State funding issues. Members of Congress are getting bad press on earmarks, so they are standing back and letting States determine where that money goes. 660,000 jobs have been lost in our economy in the last month alone. Many industries are hemorrhaging. Auto parts is a dying industry. Mr. Israel proposed that NY become the new leading battery producer and make component for plug-in hybrids. The Congressman stated that he is very interested in working with the citizens in identifying new-energy jobs.

Dr. Chu is the secretary of energy. \$90B in that recovery bill is just for clean energy and job creation. The entire federal budget for renewable energy was \$1.2B and some dollars have been directed to Brookhaven National Lab. The goal in DC is to make sure we are making clean energy investments to CREATE JOBS. We have too many jobs invested in archaic technology. On October 4, 1957 the Soviets launched the Sputnik, beating us into space. A few years later John Kennedy went to Rice University and announced that we were committed to putting a man on the moon by the end of the decade. This was accomplished and this was done through applicable job creation.

The Huntington Rte 110 corridor became the backbone of our defense economy at one point. Grumman landed a man on the moon, NASA just provided the funding. We can put a man on the moon, but we still need to figure out how to engineer an electric car that can drive me from here to my house.

The membership asked a question about what can be done about the quality of life deteriorating in our communities. The Congressman responded that it is his belief that the Federal Government needs to help the Towns and local governments and must be a partner with code and zoning enforcement, and to battle litter and poor maintenance.

The Congressman noted that Brett in his office is in charge of grants if you have a special project. Go online to grants.gov. Brett joined staff fairly recently and will prioritize grant research as a community partner.

Member Bob Irwin noted that President Obama may look to cut back on federal funding for veteran services. He questioned how he can do this – and not cover veterans? Congressman Israel stated that he prides himself on what he has done for vets, fighting to awarded \$3M in retroactive benefits – and this is just catching up to the Vietnam era. In 25 years vets of Iraq and Afghanistan might be properly compensated. The Congressman stated that leaders need to be willing to meet with service men and women in harm's way. You can oppose the war, but people have no right to forget 160,000 people in harm's way over in the Middle East, and no one should vote against veterans' benefits.

Member Helen Maloney stated that NY State School boards cannot even get upstate NY to understand what we pay down here, let alone trying to get the federal government to understand it. Title 1 funding is the question. Congressman Israel's response: The Current "No Child Left Behind" act is like saying we are going to hold the schools to a higher standard, but we won't pay the bills for it. The federal government gave an exorbitant menu to school districts and refused to pay for it. This was a huge mistake and the Government has agreed not to reauthorize it for another 5 years unless the Federal Government pays the tab. With IDEA funds, the Federal Government never paid more than 14%, but is trending up.

## **Open Forum**

Carol Schwasnick took a moment to step away from the table to speak, not as OCA Secretary, but strictly as a member and Oakdale resident. She spoke about a parcel of land adjacent to hers that is coming up for public hearing at the Zoning Board of Appeals where the owners seek to legalize occupancy of three separate structures on one parcel of land. The concern is that this is a condition that is incongruent with the single family residential zoning in the area, and sets a negative precedent for our neighborhoods. Ms. Schwasnick encouraged the membership to voice their opinions to the Town on cases such as this and attend the hearing when the date is published.

Denise Conte spoke about the car show. The rumor is that the landlord of the shopping center has reversed his decisions about the car show and will allow it to resume this spring – and in fact it has been in place for the past few Thursday evenings. Ms. Conte continued that we understand the landlord has the right to use his property, but this car show is not maintained or managed, and pollutes the air. The noise is unbearable, and cars tear out of the parking lot and destroy property. After sundown there is usually someone idling there and revving their engine.

The community requests that the landlord require the car show organizers maintain fire lanes and a residential buffer. They should also provide restrooms, enforce traffic safety laws, enforce health laws, and move loiterers along when the show is over. The car show participants are mostly not from Oakdale. They are not part of the community and must be respectful of it. Ms. Conte noted there is a 3-minute idle law in NY State. Member Bob Irwin suggested that Ms. Conte appear at the Town Board meeting on 4/14 at 2pm and address this issue with the Board.

President Carta posed some additional questions on the car show: if the participants pulled in, shut the cars off and left at a reasonable hour? He suggested getting the name of the club. Mr. Dalto is the owner of the shopping center. Ms. Conte stated they called the police the first night, and then called Bill Lindsay's office and got a message back the next day – had heard the LL had rescinded his decision. President Carta suggested that a compromise could be reached, the membership agreed.

Member Bob Irwin spoke on the local pothole problem – which is not uncommon for the spring following winter wear and tear on roads. Mr. Irwin stated that the DPW goes out in the spring and there are three area coordinators. There is a fleet of people out there doing repairs, but it is hard to keep up with that. If you have a particular problem you can call 224-5601. If you call the number, a truck is immediately sent out. Mr. Nolan would love to put more people on, but it is hard to raise taxes to accommodate. The DPW used straight salt this year rather than a salt and sand mix. This keeps the streets a lot cleaner, but Salt eats away asphalt a lot quicker. Extremely damaged road areas are cut out and filled.

The membership had no further commentary. President Carta asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:45pm. Motion was made and seconded.

The next Oakdale Civic Association meeting will be Monday May 10, 2009.