

**Oakdale Civic Association  
General Monthly Meeting  
May 11, 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 7:35pm, and initiated the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Carta requested a motion to waive the reading of April's meeting minutes and accept them as printed. Secretary Schwasnick noted that a member had identified a correction and that the correction should read that Barbara Schermerhorn and Rita Kushner are working on the scholarship applications. This correction will be made and posted to the website.

**Treasurer's report: Pat Kassten**

No disbursements were made this month. Total income from dues to date is \$140, with 137 paid members to date. President Carta asked the question on how many paid members we had at this time last year. Answer: There were 185 total paid members in 2008.

President Carta asked that the rules be waived to allow the evening's guest speaker to begin. The membership made a motion, the motion was seconded.

**Guest Speaker: Dr. Alan B. Groveman, Connetquot District Superintendent**

Dr. Groveman spoke about the proposed budget. The budget vote is Tuesday, May 19. Dr. Groveman stated that although the Oakdale community is a small part of the larger district, it's a vibrant part of the community. This year the budget is a little different than it has been in the past and the Board of Education directed us to do things a little differently than what we have done in the past in light of the current economic situation. Generally over the last 2-3 years the tax increase was under 7%, then under 4% - in this range. The BOE said we can't do that this year. This year people are having trouble paying, and the district needs to do something different. It has become very difficult to plan financials. The State and Federal governments have both cut money for education out of their plans. Initially the tax increase was to be about 3.9%. We have exceeded 30-40 positions, these were retirements etc., this reduces the budget (because the positions are those taking leaves, etc) but did not put more on the payroll, with stimulus funds this brought the increase down to 1.98%. Proposition 2 is the same we had 2 years ago to establish a capital reserve. Dr. Groveman gave an example: If we pay 500K for a roof, we have to tax you for it and get paid back from the state 15% per year for the next 15 years. When we take it out of the reserve through a bond vote, we pay only 1/15 per year and the state reimburses us at 1/15 per year so the tax impact is negligible. 0% tax increase in \$18M worth of projects recently completed. We can borrow \$18M, use 4M to offset the interest rate, tax impact is zero.

We did all this by trimming staff positions, but did it all without cutting more than .10% from program budgets. In response to a member question, Dr. Groveman stated that to get to a zero % tax increase, additional program cuts would have been required – and not advisable. Academically the district is doing well. Our success rate over the last 3 years in the state tests, especially ELA, is very good. The STAR rebate for this year is still at issue in the State legislature. Then there is the MTA tax, which could also cost the district a lot of money. Dr. Groveman wanted everyone to realize that the city legislators control the legislature due to their numbers. The state claims they are reimbursing districts for this tax so there is no effect on school districts. Next year we will pay 300K for this tax up front, but the state's intent is to pay us back the following June. The Governor does not think there is enough revenue to pay, which might mean mid-year cuts will be necessary for the district to cover this. We never expect to see this money. Flanagan up on the North shore said "if you believe in the tooth fairy" you will get the money back. Ginny Fields voted against the MTA tax, Dr. Groveman wanted us to know how our representative voted. Our budget program and process is a long term budget cycle and requires capital reserves and keeping budgets even. 10-15 years ago it was 2% then 15% then 3% then 12%. No more of that, the plan is to keep it even.

Last year state audited several districts, instead of having shortage in the EBAL reserve, we are now over – because state determined these funds could not be used for retirement. EBAL reserve is strictly for payment of accrued sick leave time. One option is to transfer the excess into another reserve at the advice of the district's auditor. We would rather use our money effectively than let it sit unused. We are on year 24 for most of our roofs. Ceilings are starting to go because of roof leaks and this becomes a health and safety issue. We must keep the buildings up and running. Blacktop, fencing: there is a lot of it and it costs a lot to repair. The district has something in the neighborhood of 150 miles of fencing.

#### Contingency Budget:

The dollar amount for the tax increase for an average house in the district is \$112/year on a \$50K assessment. The expenditure budget is \$158M, the contingency budget is also \$158M. Taxes actually will be higher, if we fail the budget. The reason is that we are allowed to apply a certain amount from reserve funds to the budget. If budgets fail we need more out of reserves. In Shoreham they kept taxes down for years, and blew out their reserves. Now their tax increase is 26%.

Member question: 1.7M from reserve funds will be applied to the budget from reserves if the budget passes. It cannot be applied if budget fails. Couldn't we use the reserves whether the budget fails or passes at least for now?

Answer: This budget would have included a 2.98% increase without the reserves. We will make a deal with the public by taking money out of the reserves and reduce that increase to 1.98%. The reserve funds can only be applied if the budget passes.

Q: We heard that summer school is cut?

A: Yes. There are other programs in other districts kids can go to. Or, those requiring classes can work out supervised projects over the summer and get credit for summer school.

Q: Do you fuel the buses yourselves or is that outsourced?

A: We get barge pricing: which is very effective, and do not pay taxes on it. We are also looking at alternate fuel vehicles. The deal was the vendor would put in the fuel plant, and we would run it. This deal fell through with the economy.

Q: Was it discussed if the money could be put in if the budget failed?

A: It was considered, but putting it back is harder than taking it out. We started with a tax rate of 3.9%, went down to 1.98%. The further bad news: if this state budget does not change, and the economy does not change, it will be even tougher next year.

Q: The senior exemption – can you explain?

A: Board votes every year to approve an exemption for senior citizens. The Board has approved it, but there are requirements. If you qualify, 50% of your assessed valuation is disregarded. Individuals have to apply through the Town Assessor's Office.

Q: Have the administrators taken a pay cut.

A: This is in negotiations right now for a freeze (zero increase). Under the Taylor law, we cannot ask a bargaining group to cut. The best outcome along these lines is that there would be a zero increase. There are still step increases for teachers etc.

Q: Is the enrollment declining?

A: It is down from its all time high, but is stable. At one time enrollment was up to 12,000. It has been down to 5,000. Currently it is at 7,000+, with a decrease primarily at the elementary level. Houses are still selling well here; it is not a glutted community – which is a big problem in other districts:

Member comment: I know so often that as we sit here and hammer you with the tough questions we want you to know you are doing a great job.

A: Thank you – I would love to come back and talk about the good things one day.

If anyone has further question or did not get a flyer, Dr. Groveman suggested you call his office directly.

#### **President's Report: Ray Carta**

We have received a check for \$1200 from a combined account with Idle Hour Civic, The Oakdale Chamber of Commerce and the Oakdale Improvement Society. President Carta asked for a motion to reserve \$200 for a Civic Planting event this spring where neighborhood folks will be invited to come plant. Motion to approve was made, and the motion was seconded.

#### **Town Report: John Eder**

Jennifer from the Town stated there is talk of putting a 4 way stop at Idle Hour and Beverly. They wanted some feedback on this. They said they are entertaining it but it's not for Dowling. The membership stated if it is the street we are talking about is where we think it is, it will be a nightmare. The paper road portion of Beverly is the entrance to Dowling's parking. You'd get a stop sign there but not at the "5 corners." From a show of hands, the membership's response is a unanimous no, and we would like those intersections addressed that have been brought up before by the membership and not addressed after extensive periods of time. There is a Town Board Meeting tomorrow at 2:00 at Connetquot Park. If it comes up, an attendee offered to put in a card to state the Civic's position.

A 3-way stop is recommended at Waterford and Oakdale Bohemia Roads. This is the intersection that we wanted the Town to look at putting a traffic light in. They sent a follow-up letter stating that they would let us know anything new. President Carta stated he got a call from a member in opposition. The Town will let us know whether or not something will be happening at that corner. Members noted from 2pm to 6pm, it's impossible to turn out off of Waterford. The first thing they must do is a traffic study. When you are coming off Sunrise Hwy it might back up, which will lead to problems.

Member Jamie Flynn stated that he does not think it should be a light, but something is needed there. Where is the study and the results from that study? President Carta noted he will follow up.

OCA Website:

President Carta stated that we have added a tab on the website for Oakdale Round Table, and have uploaded the PDF version of the Oakdale Vision Plan.

Oakdale Auto Show

The membership brought up the issue of the Auto Show, which happens on Thursday evenings in front of Best Yet supermarket.

John Eder noted that he had a thought, and it is this, especially if you are against this - It seems that the landlord is allowing this to happen, whereas last year they did not allow it. Chase/Wamu will move to the new pad site. While the food establishments in the shopping center like the Auto Show happening, there will be a bank right in the middle of that area that will likely prevent it.

An audience member stated: the kids on the skateboards are the ones urinating in the back of the stores, not the participants in the Auto Show.

One 38-year resident stated that he participates in the auto show. Most people are 40-65 years old. We are only talking about 20 Thursday nights during the year that they are there. If they move the bank to that center, the show is out. He stated that the cops never came for an incident in the past 7 years. On their own, the car show folks have cleaned up the perimeter of the shopping center, and the food stores managers agreed to send someone out to clean up for 30 min per week. Its parents and children, everybody cleans up. Nobody is drinking. Over the winter Suffolk County News sent a reporter around to the stores, and all but two supported the car show. If the owner of the property does not get bothered, he is fine with it. If anyone says that people defecate or get obnoxious - this does not happen.

An attendee introduced herself as Trish Bergin and stated she has some insight because she knows the landlord and she brings her 6, 5 and 3 year-olds to the show on a regular basis. She stated that it is a clean operation.

When the landlord was spoken to, he noted there was one tenant that complained to him about the cars. One particular tenant had complained and he asked the cars not to come back any more, and many felt it was a great loss. The one vendor has since left the center.

President Carta stated that he has not heard anything bad in the last couple of weeks, even though the car show has returned this year. He asked if anyone else had, and no one raised further issues. The car show will remain on the radar; we will keep an eye on it.

**Town Report: John Eder**

Bronco Charlie's

The buildings have been demolished, but no applications have been filed to do something with the property. What finally got them to demo it? The Town said they would not consider any further applications until the structure was demolished.

Concern from member: what was done in terms of asbestos abatement? I have seen people in protective gear and a lot of dust and am rather concerned.

Member Jamie Flynn: A couple of weeks before the demo they had trucks there to remove the asbestos.

Town Councilman Steve Flotteron stated that what they will have is a clean slate, which will be easier to market. Dowling is required to have the property safe and clean of debris. If this is not done, residents could put in a complaint for lack of maintenance etc. The property is split zone - one partial is commercial, but the two along Biltmore are zoned residential. The more restrictive of the zonings will always prevail. Councilman Flotteron stated that the

split zoning is to our advantage, the way the Town looks at it – the entire parcel is all residential. Town got a unified voice of what we would like to see done in the future via the Oakdale Vision Plan - which is good. We have been very active in terms of pushing for things to happen in the community.

Chuck Triolo stated that he is very concerned about Maninno's using the lot for parking - with kids and guest running back and forth to get the cars.

Jamie Flynn stated that unfortunately that piece of property is owned by Dowling. We cannot tell them what they are allowed or not allowed to do. Not much we can do except to pressure them to keep the property clean.

Delta gas station:

Still working on that. Having a meeting at Planning on May 13.

Chase Bank:

Suffolk County Board of health is the hold up, not a Town hold up.

Green Cactus:

The backhoe moved, but no visible progress on construction. Mr. Eder noted he may have to contact Green Cactus directly.

Town of Islip planning board hearing: Eli Laminates:

Next to it is Ronnie P's collision. They were scheduled to be heard, and were adjourned. Town only allows one adjournment. They are now on June 4<sup>th</sup> Town Board hearing.

Oakdale Boundary committee:

Exchange of ideas: Boundaries will be what the Town defines it as, except for the section north of Bourne and south of Sunrise Hwy. Background: the Oakdale Civic has never defined Oakdale's boundaries. A map for the website may result once the boundary identification is completed.

Oakdale resident Trish Bergin took a few moments to introduce herself to the membership and stated that she has taken leave of absence from News12 to run for the Town Board with Steve Flotteron and will be turning her attentions on public service. Ms. Bergin is meeting with Vision Long Island on Friday and will bring up the needs of the community.

### **Steve Flotteron: Islip Town Councilman**

Mr Flotteron spoke to address recent reports in the papers about his conflicts with the Town Board, and wanted to explain in person. One reason he wanted to get involved with Town government is that the Town's code enforcement has historically been weak, and he hoped to see that addressed. The 10 inspectors on staff are not enough for a town of 330,000 people. He stated that we are down on the number of violations and summonses being written, year over year. Last year the Town lost close to 700K in revenue due to the low numbers of violations and summonses. Recently the Town Board voted to hire a new position that equates to another commissioner – rather than hiring additional inspectors. Revenue from code enforcement was down approximately \$800K in 2008.

Secretary Schwasnick noted that she attended the Town Board Meeting on April 14, and was surprised at the indifferent response of the Board to the code enforcement revenue data that Mr. Flotteron presented.

Mr. Flotteron wanted the membership to know that he cares about issues that are important to us, and that he is the one that is at all the meetings, and he works very hard on our behalf and will continue to do so.

Member Jamie Flynn stated that he had a comment where code enforcement is concerned. Signs are an issue in Oakdale and it came down to documenting and getting it over to code enforcement when it came to declaring ourselves a sign free community. The community got together to make the call for how we were going to have a code enforcement effort in Oakdale, and residents continue to "enforce" the signage ban on their own by pulling down signs and calling repeat offenders.

Chuck Triolo stated that he has spent the past two years working with code enforcement on Fire Island. There are frequent cases of 3 bedroom ranches with 20 beds in them, and there is no regulation or enforcement.

One final announcement:

An Oakdale Cleanup will be held on May 30. Bring your brooms and meet at 10am at the train station.

President Carta requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion was made and seconded. Meeting adjourned at 9:05pm.