

**Oakdale Civic Association
General Monthly Meeting
May 12, 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

Vice President Ray Carta called the meeting to order at 7:35 pm, opening with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Guest Speaker: Dr. Alan Groveman, Connetquot Superintendent of Schools

Dr. Groveman discussed details of the upcoming budget vote, scheduled for May 20. He cited that the district has a 4 year plan to hold costs down and keep taxes as level as possible. A record amount of state aid was given this year. This is true but misleading. The state is providing record aid, but it is still millions less than they should be giving us. State originally said they were working towards a 2% increase for this year, and then gave us 3%. In the past the state has given "foundation" and "lottery" aid, they basically still give us the same amount, but slice it up differently. Newsday says schools spend too much money. Connetquot did an 18 year analysis of school budget vs. cost of living. The report can be found in the budget book at the public library. The study found that on average, Connetquot's spending was .039% above cost of living over 18 years – a negligible sum. Other things are driving up costs for districts. Up until 6 years ago the state sent a trainer down from Albany. Now the state does not send one person down, instead the districts have to send 170 people to Albany. In the past, tests were shipped down, now they are emailed. This saves money for the state, but they cost schools more because the districts must now do their own printing. Districts also have to pay the state to score certain tests. Connetquot does their best to keep it level. This year that resulted in strange situation. Over the past three years since Dr. Groveman has been in office, we have been building up the district and starting to correct facilities that had been neglected. This year, we are using reserve dollars to supplement the budget to keep the tax increase as low as possible, and still maintain the ability to do necessary work. If the district does not increase the budget at a workable level, next year's increase would be 8-9%. If you eliminate programs now and need to replace them later it will be expensive, etc. The state is talking about having a budget forecast, to make it easier for districts to plan. The current increase is the lowest expenditure increase we have had in years at 5.1%. Home values are maintaining in Connetquot, the area is doing well. The community is willing to support the district and the district supports the community.

John Eder asked about the reserve fund and what comprises this. Dr. Groveman explained that there are several categories including but not limited to compensation, retirement, legal reserve, and that there is \$24M in there between all of them. Mr. Eder made the point that it's getting harder and harder to get by. Dr. Groveman stated that the school district, unlike the town and the state, relies on a static tax; that even when home values go up, we don't receive additional income unless we raise taxes. When the costs of goods and services

increase, there is automatic additional revenue to the towns, villages, county and state. The County is allowed to share sales tax increases proceeds with school districts, but doesn't. State aid and property taxes are the only two means of income for the district. Dr. Groveman says we are right to be angry, but it is not the district's fault because there are no other means for income.

This year, interestingly, if the budget fails we will actually be paying more. Why? On the revenue side we get state aid and tax dollars. In a contingent budget the expenditures are capped and you have to take program items out. There is some discussion at the state level as to whether to cap property taxes. An example is proposition 13 in California. They went from #1 in the country to #6 because they put in a tax cap. In Massachusetts they passed something similar but put in a way to override. 2/3 of the districts can afford to override and are good, the other 1/3 who cannot afford to do so are not doing very well.

The Constitution of the state of NY says it is the State's responsibility to educate children of this state. They are not doing it, yet the Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE) lost a suit against the state. The judge ruled that there is no constitutional loss of service because the districts are providing it anyway! IN NYC there is a constitutional challenge now, because the system is poor. Basically districts like ours are being punished because they are run well because we have compensated for the state's weaknesses.

Someone asked if bussing is the problem, because Connetquot owns and operates their own buses. Dr. Groveman said that no, this is not the case. An outside agency came in to do a study on transportation. Costs are 30%, below average. Bus companies pay taxes on fuel – the district doesn't. Bus companies have to earn a profit, the district doesn't. By running the bussing, Connetquot has better service and are responsible for it. The catch is that the state is not providing their share of the budget – and that is why there are problems.

Dr. Groveman stated that reserve funds are like a dam on a river. I can't take out more from my reserve than I am spending in my budget. There are limits for how much may be taken out. It is a balancing act to maintain a consistent rate of taxes. In 1992 the state came in and told us they were not giving you the \$2m we said we'd give you, which created a really big problem.

Guest Speaker: Noel Ruiz, Founder and Owner of Creative Ministries Performing Arts Center

Mr. Ruiz was kind enough to arrange for three of the leads from CMC's current shows to come in and perform for us. They were:

Denise Antonelle, who plays the role of Anna in the current production of "The King and I."
Dylan Bustamonte, who appears in the role of Pippin, in the teen production of "Pippin."
Chakira Illiana, who plays Mary Magdalene in "Jesus Christ, Superstar."

All three gave phenomenal performances and were a great indicator of the wide range of professional productions offered by Creative Ministries. You can find a complete schedule of shows, ticket information, as well as information on children's after school and summer programs at the Creative Ministries website: www.cmpac.com. The link to their website can also be found via the OCA website: www.OakdaleCivicAssociation.org. Look under the tab "useful links."

Mr. Ruiz noted that in addition to children's theater and teen productions, CM offers programs for children from preschool age on up, including summer camp programs. They also offer children's birthday parties, and fund-raiser events for local organizations. 95% of the people who work with CM are volunteers. Prior to 2 years ago, all of the musicians were volunteers too. CM just recently started hiring a few musicians, choreographers, and the directors. CM is the only community theater on Long Island with an orchestra pit, so the musical accompaniment for the shows is live. Besides educational programs and main stage

CM does children's theater. They have a heavy show schedule, with new product - new shows - opening every three to four weeks. The theater seats 394 people. It had 600 seats as a movie theater, and when CM took it over they renovated the furnace area behind the old main screen. The theater is totally handicapped accessible, even the orchestra pit. The budget at that theater is \$60K per month to keep the doors open. CM is not connected to any other organization and is a not-for-profit organization. Mr. Ruiz said they are there to serve the community and are owned by the community. Two sides of the theater - business and artistic - vision and hiring. In the past Mr. Ruiz has been doing both roles, but recently hired an artistic director. So he will have more time now to participate at a greater level in the community. CM has been in their Oakdale home for 11 years now. Noel has reached out to the local PTAs. Bosti teaches some aspect of character every month and they work this in to supplemental programs at CM.

A member asked the question, "Do productions require royalties?" Mr. Ruiz noted that \$6-\$8K is the up front cost just to do the production. Does not include sets, or salaries or costumes. CM does educational programs with a touring company going to schools and camps. They have historically had a lot of support from the schools. Right after 9/11, the schools pulled out of all trips. CM was close to closing down about 4 months ago, until the landlord came in and favorably renegotiated their lease. CM has had highs and lows. As Oakdale Civic Association members, please do what you can to support this wonderful community resource. CM Performing Arts would like us all to make a point of attending upcoming shows. Their phone number is (631) 218-2810. Email: cmexecdir@aol.com. Or, the website once again: www.cmpac.com.

Treasurer's report: Pat Kassten

Ms. Kassten gave a summary of recent income and expenditures. Paid members to date: 180.

Guest Speaker: Councilman Steve Flotteron

Mr. Flotteron was on hand to report on an Energy Star event taking place on May 19. He also reported that since he got on the board, the Town has been backwards on getting information out to people. The Town has a website but it hadn't been communicated clearly what the Town Board was meeting on. Mr. Flotteron proposed a resolution which will start on June 1: All public notices must be published on the Town website 5 days before the meeting date. Currently only people within 200' of a topic area are notified. This is now a law, and is required to allow the information to be published, and for the public to go online and check for what is coming up for 4 different boards: Zoning Board, Board of Appeals, Town Board, Planning Board.

Town report

John Eder had a meeting with Town Planner Gene Murphy on Friday, May 9.

Burrito place (either called "California Cactus" or "The Green Cactus") - planned for across from RR station in former "Giving Tree Academy" space. Parking is an issue, but Gene is supposed to get back to John on progress.

Coan's landscaping - Gene is supposed to get back to John, no email yet.

Bank at old KFC - plans are in, no update.

Rollstone estates: County working on buying property and would deed the land to the Town. Town's big thing is who would maintain it. They are trying to work with the Sayville Lacrosse Club. The land is actually within the borders of Sayville. The lacrosse club would be responsible for maintaining the property. Idea is to keep the property from being developed.

Alessi's restaurant: notice posted recently about Applebutter's bar and restaurant. No further update.

Dowling College: headline in the Dowling student newspaper about Bronco Charlie's being sold. Gene Murphy didn't know anything about it, and we think the article is wrong. Gene Murphy stated that the Town did issue a permit to Dowling to demo Bronco Charlie's. They have it, but are likely not doing it until they have a buyer. The Town is getting fed up and may start to issue violations.

Mannino's: owned by two brothers, opening planned for July. Old Fire Island Grill building.

Article in Newsday in April on St. John's.: Brian Brown of St. John's was mentioned. He's back at the Jamaica campus. John called him. St. John's has hired Cushman and Wakefield to assess the property. Looking at somebody to come in and buy the campus with St. John's remaining in residence, but if the right price came along they would sell and get out. Would like to stay in area – meaning Suffolk County. Estimates we will hear something on this property in the next year. Comment from the membership that we would hate to lose it.

Sidewalks on Locust: Local State Assemblyperson would have to write a letter to get the funds switched. Fields send out letter two weeks ago.

Appian Way: This was asked about last time – and a request was put in to have the place cleaned up and the road re-paved. The clean up happened, which is great – but it needs to be done regularly as it is already looking cluttered with new litter. John called the Town about the paving, and was told that there is a schedule for paving through July already. Maybe end of this year beginning of next year. Town did listen. Town did come and fill some potholes about two weeks ago.

Sump on Locust: Property in front of the sump needs cleanup. Gene is pretty certain the property in front of sump is responsibility of the County. This is the one in front of Windmill Gate. However, Ray called Dept of Public Works who said it was on their schedule for cleanup. Some clarification over responsibility is required.

Still working on RH turning lane for Oakdale Bohemia Rd. Study is not yet complete. Surveyors have been witnessed in the area of that intersection over the past couple of weeks.

Question raised by membership: Do we want to ask for a light at the end of Bayview? Concern because of the additional traffic issue created by Dunkin Donuts. No consensus. Dangerous intersection noted. Will monitor.

Mr. Eder said he thanked Gene Murphy for the removal of the billboards, which are now gone from Montauk Hwy.

Mr. Eder stopped by dept of Senior Citizen's Services, and asked if we'd like them to come in as a speaker in the future. Interest is there in support of this idea.

Request from the membership for Gene Murphy to come speak in the near future.

Steve Flotteron offered up his phone number to call him if we ever need assistance. It is 224-5565. If we are getting the run around, call Steve and he will do what he can to help out. If we need guest speakers Steve mentioned to call him and he can round somebody up.

Mr. Eder recently spoke to Ginny Fields, who expressed interest in coming to speak at an upcoming meeting. Mr. Eder mentioned that since it is an election year, do we want to have her come before the elections since there probably will be a candidate's night - which will hopefully be coordinated with Bohemia. Mr. Flotteron recommended that we have an open door policy for any of the local politicians who would like to come and speak.

Mr. Eder noted that he spoke to Ginny Fields and that several people had expressed their anger to her over the cops coming in to disband the car show that has been occurring on Thursday nights in the parking lot of Oakdale Shopping Center East (in front of Best Yet). Some of the membership stated that it's not just the car show that is the problem, but after the car show because of noise and lack of proper facilities adjacent to a residential area.

The membership asked who is in charge of deciding what happens in that parking lot in regards to the car show. John Eder said that he asked Ginny Fields and apparently the car show is word-of-mouth. The landlord has said that that it has to stop, and afterwards there is a lot of noise and racket. It is the landlord's private property and apparently he called the police for enforcement.

Joanne Festa stated that the owner of the property has been informed of inappropriate use of the parking lot, and that local residents have a right to walk around in their own neighborhood. Engine fumes and public urination behind the shopping center are unacceptable. Ginny Fields reportedly went door-to-door to the shop owners asking them if they minded the car show, but the membership stated that it is not Ginny's place to support this. The adjacent neighbors stated that the air quality is so bad from car exhaust that children cannot go outside to play in adjacent yards during the show, which starts at 3:30 in the afternoon. The property owner had been unaware that the car show folks were using the property. Membership suggested that there are rules about public assembly, and required permits. Neighbors do not feel it is good for Oakdale. Membership stated they heard the show location was moved to a Home Depot parking lot off Sunrise Hwy. Noted that we will keep an eye on what happens in the parking lot in regards to the car show on Thursday nights, and see if the issue is resolved due to police enforcement.

Vice President Carta extended thanks to John Eder for the great information that he brings to us.

Roundtable Update: John Krut

The members of the Roundtable recently met with the Town Planning Dept. Planning is finishing up on final draft of the hamlet plan, which will be brought to Board for acceptance. This will help chart the way for planning for the future of Oakdale. Oakdale is the only town in Islip with a plan. Oakdale has declared itself a "sign-free" hamlet. In March 2007, a small group of volunteers started collecting signs stapled or bolted to poles and trees and have kept at it ever since. They have created a log of the offenders, and have started calling the people to notify them and asking them not to do it again. The group has taken down 400 signs since December, mostly done by Jamie Flynn and Mr. Krut. Jamie is working with code enforcement people at the Town. Process: we take the signs down and hold the signs, report to town. Town will give a warning and impose a fine. \$75 first offense. Then they go up from there. Steve Flotteron mentioned he spoke to the Town Attorney the other day on this issue. The Town Attorney is looking at changing the language on this, and looking at a rebuttable presumption. The Roundtable will continue to work with Town so this process happens.

Oakdale Bohemia Rd. – Montauk Hwy corner planning may include a new bus stop. Having a cutout for the bus, so it's out of the traffic lane. Looking at possibly changing design of the bus shed to look more like the train station. Membership asked why the bus can't come into the train station and avoid these problems. The train station area is Town property except for 20' out from the tracks.

Driving range applications are in to the Town (for housing development).

Walkway connecting north end of Town to South end of Town: Round table still in discussions with the Town - Paul Anaboli doing the sidewalks with the new development he is building next to OB Middle School.

Drawings have been submitted to the Town for Chase Bank at the old KFC pad.

Rumor of CVS at the east end of the shopping center.

There is a reported Sale of the greenhouses on Montauk Hwy to a developer. This is the parcel to the immediate east of the Ockers house. The membership heard Doug's gas station also for sale on the adjacent parcel – these might be connected.

Vice President's report: Ray Carta

Website: Suggestion was made to add to calendar on website, which has been done. You can click onto LIRR and town Calendar from there.

- Added links to hospitals.
- Added link to St. John's University.
- Took off Dowling picture. Added Bourne mansion from the back.
- Added Dowling Library link, Sayville.com, Life on Long Island
- Bricks – order form and information posted.
- Changed tab to "Local Government", with links to Town, County, State.
- Old pictures of Oakdale: Found a link run by Dowling. Has been added to useful links tab.

This month newsletters went out early due to the printer's vacation deadline.

This month the OCA organized a planting project in Oakdale. Participating organizations were the Oakdale Civic Association, Bosti PTA, Brownies, Cub Scouts and the Oakdale Improvement Society. The Bosti PTA donated excess plants from their plant sale. The group met and planted at Train Station, then went over to St. John's Church where they cleaned up and re-mulched their labyrinth. The kids had a fabulous time and got a great tour of the church. This was a great effort by all.

503c status: With this status, donations can be accepted and you can get a tax write off. This status is supposed to be created at time you incorporate, but given the advantages we might want to do whatever we can to make this happen. Ray noted that he can't stay on phone with IRS long enough during the day, and someone needs to get on phone to see if we can do it with an existing corporation, or do we have to form a second corporation. \$1500 initially for legal fees to incorporate. Keeping of books becomes even more important. Mr. Carta asked for a volunteer to help with this item. Anyone who can offer to work with the IRS please contact Ray.

Motion to adjourn at 9:40pm. Motion seconded.

Next meeting: Monday June 9, 7:30pm.