

**Oakdale Civic Association
General Monthly Meeting
May 10, 2010**

2010 Officers

President:	Ray Carta	560-4650 - present
Vice President:	Stan Feldman	523-8835 - not present
Treasurer:	Pat Kassten	589-8222 - present
Recording Secretary:	Carol Schwasnick	589-7455 - present
Corresponding Secretary;	Marilyn Triolo	589-5981 - not present

Directors

Cathy Cohen – present

Minutes Recorded by Carol Schwasnick

www.OakdaleCivicAssociation.org

President Ray Carta called the meeting to order at 7:35pm with the pledge of allegiance. President Carta asked for motion to waive rules of meeting to accommodate guest speakers for the evening.

Guest Speaker: Islip Town Councilman Gene Parrington

Councilman Parrington noted he is here on behalf of Supervisor Nolan tonight to let us know about the Town's new plans to combat graffiti. Although Oakdale and Sayville do not have as much of a problem as some of the other hamlets, graffiti can affect all of us. Mr. Parrington noted that when he took office he did so to be able to address quality of life issues. This graffiti solution took about two years to get going. The Suffolk County Police have been identifying some gang members responsible and gang related symbols created. No city or town out there is going after graffiti the way you would think they would. Even major cities - their programs have not succeeded. The Town has purchased an anti-graffiti truck with a power washer and computerized paint matching. There are two part-timers who will be working with the truck. Some of the local Assembly people had some volunteers painting over graffiti, but volunteers are not that dedicated and hard to schedule. The Town now has a system that is pretty well set and we are getting to the point where we are going to be out advertising in the community. As a resident, you can call the Town and they will send out a code enforcement person who will take a picture of the graffiti. This is then sent to the 3rd precinct and the Town. If it is blatantly offensive we will get out there as soon as possible to eradicate it. It's still just one truck and two people, so we will do as much as we can. A lot of materials are gained through donations. Home Depot has donated paint, and brushes. It is going to take a lot of paint and donations and time, but the Town has made an investment and is looking to make a difference. This is a free service. The process for clean-up will be 1) verifying the graffiti 2) contacting the property owner releasing Town of liability to correct. 224-2772 is the hotline number just for graffiti and will be activated in the next day or two.

A member asked a question about trash collecting along the shoulder of Sunrise Hwy., especially at stop signs – which can also be offensive along the lines of graffiti. Member Joanne Festa noted that on Earth Day there were some young people walking around with a clipboard asking about clean up – representing the Town. Councilman Parrington noted that if we give him the locations of the litter he will look into it. Residents can also contact KIC (Keep Islip Clean) and they send out teams to handle this.

Guest Speaker: Connetquot Superintendent Dr. Alan Groveman

Dr. Groveman spent a few minutes speaking about the recent incident that was reported in the media where a former student made threats against the High School. Dr. Groveman reassured the membership that the district has been very aware of this individual and all of the right steps are happening to make sure the district and schools are safe.

Member Denise Conte posed the question, "What is being done in the schools to combat this?" Dr. Groveman replied that the district has a very extensive anti-bullying program, which has been going on for 4 years now. He stated that it is difficult to keep kids out of social networking trouble because it is very limited as to how involved the schools can be. He noted that they are getting a lot less of the pushing shoving and teasing in the school, but more online. As a district it is hard to manage, but they are dedicated to work on it.

The next topic Dr. Groveman chose to address is this year's school budget. A couple of months ago the OCA was asked to participate in a survey, which came back with some reasonable results despite some technical problems. The majority of people came back and said they wanted programs to continue and they like what we are doing with the children. For 2010-2011 we are looking at a 2.1% expenditure increase. The cost of living has gone up a little over 2%. To take the budget from one year to the next and do nothing new it will cost us 6%. This includes TRS, insurance rates, and new textbooks as required by the state. If I change one textbook for one grade its \$75/book times many students. The State stopped printing certain tests, now we print them locally, another cost we have absorbed. We have shrunken the budget down to 2.1% from 6%. A couple of years ago we passed a capital reserve. This is used to lower the budget. This year we are able to bring the tax rate increase in at just about 3%. The State cut our budget by \$4M. We lost 19 positions by attrition, though we did lay off temporary staff and part timers. We try to work things out progressively. The State is going to be in the same fiscal position next year as this year. We would like a tax decrease, but a minimal increase is not so bad to not reduce the quality of life and reduce programs. It's critical we do not have people lose faith in the district.

Member question: what happens to the tax rate if the budget doesn't pass? Dr. Groveman noted that this is an anomaly of State education law. Up until about 10 years ago, if a budget was voted down the district could have replacement budgets as high as they wanted to, but with some guidelines. Now they can only raise the rate to 20% above the cost of living. If this budget is defeated, the following year if you are on austerity it will cost you more to put those programs back. Then we will have a 14% increase and never come off contingency and be faced with extreme issues such as closing schools to close the budget gap. Look at Hempstead and Wyandanch: they can't fix a building or paint a hallway. Once on contingency if you don't have the funds for coming off, it's a downward spiral. All the students would lose enrichment, and class sizes would increase. Dr. Groveman stated that he is unhappy with some of the cuts we have had to make. The district has not refilled positions to save \$1M in teaching salaries. He stated he is angry at the bind the state puts the local taxpayer in. Also, when bus and lunch contracts are renewed we have to renew them at the northeast cost of living rate – which is higher than other regions.

Member Terry Naimoli questioned whether districts without reserves can have high tax increases. Dr. Groveman responded that Shoreham Wading River last year had this happen. Connetquot has a Moody's bond rating of AA, one of highest rated districts on LI. This allows us to borrow money to cover the state aid lag at a lower interest rate. We paid less than .25% interest on \$20M. This is an excellent position for us to be in. Another question was, "With 19 positions not being refilled: how do class sizes stay low with fewer teachers?" Dr. Groveman responded that the district has reduced electives at the high school level as well as some services in the middle and elementary school. Next year we may need to do teacher excessing and class sizes might go up. Town Planning Commissioner Gene Murphy asked if enrollment is going down. Dr. Groveman responded that it is going down at the elementary level; we might lose 100 kids this year. However, that trend could easily reverse in the near future. Dr. Groveman encouraged everyone to get out and exercise their right to vote next week. *[Editor's note: the District budget was passed at the budget vote on May*

18].

Guest Speaker: Gene Murphy, Commissioner of the Planning and Development, Town of Islip

Mr. Murphy noted that it is always a pleasure to come here to the most beautiful session location of any Civic Association – in the Bourne Mansion.

Mr. Murphy wished to review a few activities happening around Oakdale recently. First, some large trees were recently cut down on Locust Ave. These were very old and unstable and needed to come down. The reality is the trees are not coming down because of sidewalks, which is a frequent question. However he is still working on trying to transfer a \$50K grant from Oakdale-Bohemia Rd. to Locust with Assemblywoman Fields. The Town recently received a letter from the State that says it's approved, but the contract has not come in, meaning we cannot commit to sidewalks this year.

The Oakdale Vision Plan, which was developed a few years ago, suggested the demolition of Bronco Charlie's, which has since happened. A couple things have resulted from that. First, the lot is now being used informally as valet parking for Maninno's Restaurant. Also, the Town did send a letter to the VP of Dowling encouraging him to find a developer for the project to move it along and build something beautiful. The Town provided a sketch plan for them to show developers to begin to think about how to proceed.

The next topic is the Peters property. The Vision Plan stated concern over development of the eastern end of the property. Certainly this was confirmed when recent rains flooded the parcel. The Town's priority is to move on something that is ugly and fix it such as the Bronco's parcel rather than the Peters property. As a result this land is not on the front burner. The Town would rather push for reoccupation of empty stores and development of Bronco's first.

The plans to replace the gas station on the corner of Oakdale-Bohemia Rd. were approved by the Board, but the Town has not yet received site plans. The plans include a new service station and convenience store. The health dept. has given the owner a deadline to put in the new tanks, (replacement of outdated tanks is a requirement that applies to all gas stations) beyond the original deadline which was the end of December 2009. Since it is a busy intersection with lots of traffic, they have come up with a good solution but need to also come up with an easement.

Next, Mr. Murphy spoke about the tale of two shopping centers. The major center on Montauk Hwy (Lighthouse Commons) was a tremendous focus by everyone to get up and going. Best Yet is doing OK. They are bigger and have more capital than Corbisiero's which was the grocery store there previously. A member asked the question, "What is the chance of getting a drug store in there like a CVS?" Another member mentioned that some neighbors having a problem with kids on a walkway in the back, who are disrespectful to residents and property. Mr. Murphy responded that there are preliminary discussions with the shopping center owner to have a free standing drug store where the bowling alley used to be. Mr. Morrissey is the property manager, and is good to work with. Must have a business decision made between the shopping center and a potential tenant. A freestanding structure over 10K SF requires a special permit.

Member question: "Why do a freestanding CVS if there are so many vacant stores?" Mr. Murphy noted that there was a very intense hearing in Islip Terrace recently on a similar issue. CVS likes the freestanding business model. Taking already vacant space would be best, but it's still good to have that use in there if a freestanding store would get it in. Mr. Murphy noted that typically the bigger the corporation the more likely they will be using a freestanding model with a drive through pharmacy and other amenities.

The other shopping center – which contains the Post Office - continues to have a lot more problems. They were allowed to put in their lights and never followed up with site plans. They have not made a lot of progress. Lots of band aids are in place, but it needs a lot of renovation. The Town has tried

to work with the owner on small items to date. In other news, the Town has had a preliminary meeting with Sunrise Toyota. They have plans to renovate their site and consolidate into one building. One building they have now is pretty blighted. The big picture will be an improvement/upgrade, but they need to work out how to phase in cars.

Oakdale Golf Center: no proposals have come to the Town Board recently, and the business is still operating. If it continues to operate, that's fine with us too at the Town. A new building would be 160' setback from sunrise hwy. A preliminary plan is available in the Planning Dept. and there will be a second public hearing if that plan does go ahead.

Member Linda Hart brought up Pig Wallow Pond. This is a success story; the Town came in with equipment and cleaned it out as an Idle Hour beautification project. Gene Murphy noted that there is an agreement between the community and the Town as to who would maintain this water body, and stated he would review the language and respond. Ms. Hart stated that routine maintenance may be the responsibility of the Idle Hour Beautification Society, but the equipment is not working and the water is not aerating at all. It is still cool and early in the season but no aeration will become problematic as the weather gets warmer. Mr. Murphy suggested Ms. Hart call him and discuss the final agreement.

Member Lisa Vaccaro noted there are trees coming down behind Bosti Elementary School. President Carta noted that the School District is expanding the fields. The district owns that property and has leased to the Town who has contracted with local organizations to build fields on the site. Town laid off 37 people last year and another 60 left on their own.

A member asked the question of why we are waiting for somebody to apply to address the Bronco Charlie's parcel. They continued, "Does the Town ever go out and approach anyone to come in and address." Mr. Murphy responded that it is a difficult area to convince businesses to move into, when you do a radius map of population, "half the customers are fish." This is why we lost King Kullen years ago and Wendy's took a lot of convincing. Their numbers have been successful for Wendy's and have surprised us.

Member Joanne Festa noted that she has lived in Oakdale for over 20 year, but that shopping center on the left (with the Post Office) is an embarrassment. Also it took 20 years to take down the building at Bronco Charlie's, but that parcel is still problematic. Mr. Murphy responded that Bronco Charlie's is a difficult property because it has high ground water and no sewers. You can't force the property owners make improvements. They are inside the law, if they were not they would go to court, and it is better and a positive step that the building is not there.

Member Bob Irwin asked if there is a ground water problem in the area of the Oakdale Golf Center, and suggested the Town needs to make sure it is engineered right. He also noted the Oak Creek Development on Oakdale Bohemia Road looks nice but 100% vacant. How can we get some momentum because it looks like a Hollywood set. Mr. Murphy responded that the market has been difficult so this may take some time. Mr. Irwin asked that as with the Bay Shore Community: can we encourage Dowling to make the Bronco Charlie's parcel a park, at least for a while? Bay Shore has a lot of pocket parks. Mr. Murphy noted that there was federal money that helped this happen. Bay Shore had close to 43% vacancy. Mr. Murphy stated he would review what could be done in terms of getting Keep Islip Clean involved in at least maintaining the parcel better.

Treasurer's report: Pat Kassten

Total income from dues for May: \$140.

Paid members for 2010: 192. For 2011: 3

President's Report: Ray Carta

Minutes have been distributed in hard copy. The OCA email has been having issues so they were

not emailed this month but are available on the website. President Carta asked for a motion to accept the minutes, a motion was made and seconded.

President Carta offered a clarification on the "milk" situation with the school district. The district was alerted of milk being wasted because students had to take it when buying lunch. President Carta stated that Dr. Groveman did correctly state the law of the land on the milk at the time that he spoke about it a few months back. Now less milk is being wasted because the requirement has changed. President Carta also reported that the issue came up with the flooding at the middle school. The school district got together with the Town and is trying to work a solution up with them. For now the school has to keep pumping so the building is usable. The Town and school district are now working together.

President Carta reported that the Massage parlor – Relaxation Body Works - that had been on Sunrise Hwy. is now gone. Rose spa was eliminated a few months ago, this new one has been removed with the assistance of the Police Dept.

President Carta addressed the LIRR crossing at Locust Ave. He noted he once saw a rubber piece from a crossing shoot off and break somebody's leg. President Carta did get some information from the LIRR on replacing rubber crossings with cement. The program started 9 years ago and 227 crossings have been completed with 400 left to go. It may be a while, but if we can put something together and are loud enough we might get to move higher on their list.

This year's community planting event will take place on Sunday May 23 at the Oakdale train station. If you are interested in attending it will start at 10am. We expect help from the cub scouts, and possibly the girl scouts. Rakes, shovels, etc. will be provided. President Carta requested a motion to approve a \$200 donation to provide plants for this year. A motion was made and seconded by the membership. We will have the Civic banner up at the event, please come and show your support.

President Carta said a few words about the anti-bullying program in the Connetquot School District, in reference to the earlier discussion with Superintendent Groveman. Mr. Carta noted that a lot is done in the schools to teach kids that bullying is a negative - it's a very active program, and it helps. If it was not for the Connetquot Bullying program, there would be more issues in the school than we see. Programs like this have to be continuous and hit hard to have staying power with the kids. It is now built into the PTA as a standing committee and policies have been put in place in the district.

Open Floor

Denise Conte provided an update for St. John's Episcopal Church, as the Junior Warden. The Church property lost a huge old tree that came down with one of the storms and as a result the fence is taken down now. The Church is looking for volunteers to help cart the wood away. Ms. Conte stated that in general St. John's would like to get the community more involved. She reported that they should have a historic site sign in 2 months. Over this past weekend they hosted a bus tour that was chartered to visit historic churches. Another way people can participate is adopting a grave to do plantings on them. The reason they have been clearing land recently is because they must cut down a lot of scrub to strike a fence. They will soon be able to inter cremated remains, and will be building a wall around back of the cemetery. She reported they still have shingle program for \$25/each to help with the residing project. They have final bids in hand and are going through them now. The church has a fragile and significant window, which must be addressed and likely removed to accommodate the siding project. They will also be looking to fix up the other windows in the coming months, rather than replace them which would be expensive.

Member Linda Hart reported that she and Nancy Flynn decided to put some flags up on the phone poles for Memorial Day and 4th of July on behalf of the Oakdale Improvement Society, starting with 17 of them. They will hang them starting at Bayview and moving west. Members Mike Vaccaro and Bob Irwin volunteered to help attach the brackets and hang the banners. A time will be arranged for

this installation. *[Editor's note: the installation has been completed and looks great!]*

A member addressed the car show that occurs in the Lighthouse Commons shopping center every Thursday. Now that the Chase Bank is in place they are operating in a smaller space, and they are right up against the east side of the shopping center which backs up to residential property. The cars use that east entrance and create a lot of noise for nearby residents. Discussion ensued highlighting pros and cons of having the car show in this location. Member Denise Conte suggested that maybe one solution is having the show coordinator speak to people about the noise, and not revving engines on the way in and out of the lot.

President Carta asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:30pm, a motion was made and seconded. The next meeting of the Oakdale Civic Association will take place on Monday June 14, with guest speaker Suffolk County Legislature Presiding Officer Bill Lindsay.