

**Oakdale Civic Association  
General Monthly Meeting  
January 10, 2011**

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**Officers**

President:	Carol Schwasnick	Present
Vice President:	Stan Feldman	Not Present
Treasurer:	Pat Kassten	Present
Corresponding Secretary:	Brian Bast	Present
Recording Secretary:		
Directors:	Cathy Cohen	Present
	Ray Carta	Present

Minutes Recorded by Bob Mirro

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**Meeting called to order:**

President Carol Schwasnick called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance at 7:34 pm. President Schwasnick presented the meeting minutes from the December meeting and asked the membership if they had any corrections to offer, and there were none. A motion was made to accept the minutes as presented. President Schwasnick requested to suspend the order of the meeting for the benefit of the membership and two guest speakers. A motion was made to accommodate the speakers.

**Guest Speaker: Lou Malerba, Assistant to the Superintendent for Special Education - Connetquot School District**

Mr. Malerba appeared to discuss the bond vote which is taking place on February 1<sup>st</sup>. He stated that the Connetquot Board of Education has worked to develop a five year plan for necessary repairs and maintenance of district buildings. Mr. Malerba mentioned that the district is composed of twelve buildings that need to be maintained and explained that if critical repairs and maintenance are not done then problems could develop and possibly become more pronounced. He stated that the bond will not result in a tax increase, and will not cost taxpayers any more money out of pocket. One of the reasons for the timing of the vote is that currently about two-thirds of committed capital project cost is refunded by New York State, and the district wishes to initiate required while this is still in effect. Mr. Malerba said that passing the bond helps the district stay up and running and in good physical condition.

However, Mr. Malerba pointed out, if the bond is not approved by the voters then there are still that the much needed repairs would eventually need to be done anyway, but these costs if incurred in the future would be and then the maintenance would have a tax impact.

Mr. Malerba said that the High School was running out of educational space and needed to address this by adding science class rooms. However, a member pointed out that the elementary school population is shrinking and projected to further decrease. It was then asked what the current population was like at the High School and it was stated that the High School population is expected to be flat for the next several years and that the High School would not see the declining from the elementary schools for a few years. It was pointed out that this could potentially help keep some of the district's classified kids currently educated elsewhere to be educated in-district. The administration is bound by law to educate in the home environment and in the least restrictive environment.

A member remembered that the graduating class of 1983 was 850 or 950 students and today the totals are much lower. The total bond amount is for \$13M, an additional \$7M would come out of a reserve fund for a \$20M total.

A question from the membership was made with regard to the possibility of closing one (or more) of the smaller elementary schools in the district and either selling or leasing that property to another party. Mr. Malerba said at this time there were no plans to close any schools. There was a follow up question from the membership with respect to the potential of shifting school grades around and this led to a discussion on the topic of a 10<sup>th</sup> grade center – which is a model that has been used by other districts. Mr. Malerba mentioned that the district has looked at several grouping models, one of which is the Cambridge model that groups K-1-2, and 3-4-5 etc... Mr. Malerba said he would pursue further information and report back to President Schwasnick.

The membership asked Mr. Malerba to explain the types of projects the bond would attempt to initiate. Mr. Malerba noted that the list of projects being considered included the following:

- Sound system upgrades
- Electrical service upgrades
- Parking lot expansion
- Replace playground at an elementary school
- Replace boiler at an elementary school
- Replace HVACs in several LGI rooms throughout the district
- Gym floor replacement at the high school
- Pool filter upgrade at the high school
- Dust collection system in wood shop
- Field lighting
- Two (2) Astro-turf fields at the high school
- Work to some elementary school kitchens
- Portable generators for each school in the district
- Sound-proofing of high school music room
- Purchase of ten buses and vans

The question came up as to why this bond vote is happening now and not in the general election in May. Mr. Malerba noted that the money in question that is being fronted by the district was actually approved and set aside in a previous year; this vote is simply for permission to use that money.

As mentioned earlier, if we don't do some of these things in the bond – it will eventually need to be done and that might have an impact on taxes in the future. It was also stated that the bond money cannot go back into the general fund to offset property taxes. A point was made that this bond is sitting as a liability on the districts balance sheets. The membership voiced concern over the situation changing at the State level, and the State not being able to cover the amount of money that this anticipates. Mr. Malerba stated that if changes do become evident at the State level that work would still be accomplished, only the number of projects that could be addressed would be curbed.

**Speaker: Kim DeCristofaro, Director - Connetquot Public Library**

Ms. DeCristofaro noted that she has been Director since 2003, and that she has always loved working for the library. Director DeCristofaro began by explaining that a few months ago the library administration oversaw the upgrading and changing out of old carpeting an asbestos abatement to upgrade its facilities for patrons. Ms. DeCristofaro stated that computer classes were ongoing and that many resources were available online for access at home. She stated that all that was needed was the library card bar code number to check out a book or to take advantage of other online offerings. Ms. DeCristofaro stated that there is even a live tutor service available on the library website and that reading material such as eBooks can be downloaded free of charge.

Also, Ms. DeCristofaro pointed out that there are several new programs which include Sunday music programs, craft classes, and music for toddlers. There are also Zumba, yoga and other exercise classes starting up soon so be sure to check the library newsletter and their website: <http://www.connetquotlibrary.org> for a complete listing. Recently there is a genealogy program, a memoir writing class, and family book discussions that have been very popular.

A member asked about the defensive drive program and questioned why it was not available to all members and just seniors. Ms. DeCristofaro mentioned that it was really due to logistics. There is such heavy demand from the senior community that to expand to include other residents would mean doing so at the expense of other programs. It was also pointed out by a member that the Connetquot Council of PTAs runs a defensive driver course for all and that there may be a way that the library and PTA Council could work more closely to assist one another getting the word out to better serve the community in this area.

Ms. DeCristofaro stated that there are monthly local and regional meetings at the library attended by the director and the library board so that they may be informed on many of the current trends in the larger library community within the county. Board meetings are typically scheduled for 6pm and are open to the public. Please see the website for the meeting schedule. A member brought up a question about using the Library's Community Room. It was stated that the Community Room is available to non-profit groups and space is made available after the calendar for Library programs is set. There is a form to submit a request for use of the room, patrons can ask at the main circulation desk.

[edit: add 03-07-11]

Member Rita Kushner thanked Library Director DiCristofaro for the services the library offers and the good work and concern of the employees, which should be commended.

#### **Treasurer's report: Pat Kassten**

Financial highlights this month include income from dues of \$200, and disbursements of \$159 for the purchase of a recording device, \$92 for the postal box, \$185 for the Oakdale Postmaster permit. Paid membership to date is 162.

#### **President's Report: Carol Schwasnick**

President Schwasnick reported that the OCA board was in the process of updating the membership email and discussed removing previous members from the mailing list that haven't been a paid member for the past four years in order to save on postal costs. She noted that emails are generally retained as long as they are operational.

President Schwasnick mentioned that next month's guest speaker will be Richard Baker, commissioner of the Department of Public Works and that she would like to collect a list of issues the membership would like to discuss with Mr. Baker prior to his appearance. President Schwasnick also noted that she was working on getting Mr. Jon Lasher, the Director of Music arts for the Connetquot School District, to come speak at the March or April meeting along with some students from his program to provide some entertainment.

#### **Town Report: Cathy Cohen**

After 36 years with the Town of Islip, Planning Commissioner Gene Murphy has retired. Dave Genaway has assumed this role going forward. Her update this month is as follows:

- The gas station on the corner of Montauk Hwy and Oakdale Bohemia Rd. received approval from Zoning and from the Health Department. There is a small snag in that the railroad has easements that run North/South as well as East/West along the property lines which encroach on the necessary space required by the gas station. To get the easement they will look to land bank the curb cut so the permit can be issued and they can begin work while this is resolved.

- Oak Creak Commons is seeking a zone change to no longer be Senior Restricted and is to include Non-Age Restricted. The split would be roughly 50% restricted/50% not. The reason this is being requested is that the developer is having a hard time filling the properties. The town is looking at the traffic impact. Planning Dept is looking to recommend this change for approval by the Town Board.
- Gordon and Jack - owners of the strip of stores on the West side of the Lighthouse Commons - have approached the town for assistance to bring the property into compliance with the many code violations that have existed over the past several years.
- Dowling College has approached the Town about closing Central Ave – and to retire the dedication of this street. They cite the reason is student safety, however there are concerns about access back into Idle Hour, which would be unduly limited by its closure and raise other safety concerns. The position of the Civic is that Dowling is operating a campus in an active residential community, and this must be a consideration for them.

**Community Update: St. John’s Episcopal Church – Denise Conte**

St John’s Landmark Church is still open and viable. New signs were put up and the small congregation of 8 or 10 members still run outreach programs. However, new volunteers are always welcome and needed. Ms. Conte said that they could use donations of bedding, animal toys, towels, blankets, etc. Ms. Conte noted that St. John’s would like to continue to integrate into the Oakdale community. To that point, she mentioned that the membership would like to work with the rest of the community to put together an anti-drug youth group. Ms. Conti stated that St. John’s also has a community room available for use that will accommodate 16-20 people. Worship is every Sunday at 10am.

**Open Floor**

A member pointed out that the bricks on the Oakdale Train Station are sorely in need of re-pointing. There is so little grout left that there appear to be bulges in the walls. President Schwasnick noted she would follow up and ask the Chamber of Commerce who is responsible for maintenance since they meet in the building.

Members indicated that they have recently witnessed supplies located near the Locust Ave RR crossing, and groups of workers busy around the site. It seems that they are preparing to relocate the rubber crossing material, President Schwasnick to follow up and confirm if possible.

Members brought up the previously discussed idea to upgrade the landscaping surrounding the Oakdale sign on Locust Ave. President Schwasnick noted she would follow up with VP Stan Feldman when members reminded that he spoke about contacting a local landscape contractor.

Member Lisa Vaccaro spoke about the drainage issue on Stuyvesant Rd. Since all the drains are located together at the far end of the street, all the water – and leaves – run down the street. Many times she has gone out to unclog the drains so the street does not flood, and would like to see the situation addressed. President Schwasnick noted that the DPW Commissioner is schedule to appear as guest speaker in February and will be sending a list of discussion topics to him ahead of that date.

Member Joanne Festa mentioned the condition of the bus stop on Montauk Hwy in front of Best Yet, and the drainage issues along Montauk Hw. President Schwasnick to follow up on the status of the drainage and sidewalk project that the County had dedicated funds to for this year.

Members brought up the condition of the white vinyl rail fence along Montauk Hwy. When the plow goes by the rails falls off. Another member mentioned he would work on a fix in the spring once the snow is gone.

Motion to adjourn meeting at 8:55pm, motion seconded, meeting adjourned.

Our next meeting will take place on Monday February 14, 2011 at 7:30pm.

