

COUNCIL OF GREENBURGH CIVIC ASSOCIATIONS

Minutes of Meeting – Monday, February 27, 2023

A special thank you was extended to Carmela Greco-Acevedo who arranged this Zoom-enabled meeting which began at 7:30 PM. The meeting was chaired by CGCA Chair Madelon O'Shea (Old Edgemont). In attendance were CGCA Treasurer Dorrine Livson (Worthington-Woodlands), Tom Bock (Fulton Park), Mike Burdi (Suburban Manor), Paul Colten (Hilltop Farms), Lloyd Cort (Parkway Gardens), Alan Fishman (Northern Greenville), Alicia Ford (Parkway Homes), Ella Preiser (Beaver Hill), Ken Stahn (Sprain Road), and Carol Wielk (Secor Homes). Treasurer Livson stated the CGCA bank account balance as of January 31, 2023 was \$1,186.70.

CGCA REPRESENTATIVES VOTE UNANIMOUSLY TO REMAIN APOLITICAL

Ella Preiser reported that in today's mail she received the Friday, February 24 edition of *The Scarsdale Inquirer* which contains a letter she wrote on behalf of the Executive Board of the CGCA stating that the CGCA remains an apolitical organization. This letter was written in response to a letter appearing in the Friday, February 17 edition of the paper entitled "Saving Greenburgh Coalition formed to counter incorporation" which included as one of the 12 signatures, "Lloyd Cort, Council of Greenburgh Civic Assns." After receiving what she presumed was a draft of this letter to the editor, CGCA Chair Madelon O'Shea advised Mr. Cort in a February 7 email to remove reference to the CGCA and to ask that such reference be retracted if any communication had already been sent. Mr. Cort acknowledged the CGCA's position in his February 11 email reply and indicated he would refrain from using the CGCA name. Alicia Ford noted that she is also on the Saving Greenburgh Coalition. Mrs. O'Shea said she values the freedom of speech and sees no problem with Mr. Cort or Ms. Ford expressing their opinion or the opinion of groups they represent. However, the CGCA has not discussed this issue and the Executive Board thinks the CGCA's biggest asset is staying apolitical - seeing both sides of the issue at this point, but not taking a position with any side.

Carol Wielk suggested that a vote be taken supporting the Executive Board's decision. Mrs. Preiser recommended if there is a vote, a copy of the resolution should be sent to our officials in Albany. Ms. Wielk amended her suggestion and Mrs. O'Shea made a motion that a copy of the CGCA's position be sent to Albany legislative leaders. The motion was unanimously adopted without further discussion.

DOES HMP ADEQUATELY ADDRESS AREA FLOODING ISSUES?

Ella Preiser reported that she recently discovered the Westchester County Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) that the Town of Greenburgh participates in along with 45 other municipalities. Such an HMP is required by FEMA in order to apply for funds. While some other municipalities gave notice to their community members and encouraged public participation, she can find no record that the Town ever held a public discussion or hearing or even discussed this at a work session. While the Greenburgh section of the HMP includes information on some flooding events, she feels some data is missing. She noted there are 18 initiatives listed to address not only flooding but other potential/existing hazards. She said some of these initiatives appear to minimize the real problems - stating e.g., "some Beaver Hill residents feel stranded," or "damage to an apartment complex near Kensico Road." These initiatives do not specifically address all the repetitive flooding and damage that occurs to residents and businesses along the Saw Mill River or the Bronx River in Alicia Ford's neighborhood at Edgepark Road, or the Manhattan Brook in Tom Bock's neighborhood along Old Kensico Avenue, or the recent flooding in Dorrine Livson's neighborhood caused by an unnamed tributary or in Madelon O'Shea's neighborhood caused by the Edgemont Circle Drainage District.

The Plan indicates that FEMA made total loss payments of less than \$5 million as of July 2021. It is unclear what event(s) caused these losses. We know flood insurance does not cover everything. However, if total losses in the entire Town amount to less than \$5 million, it is unlikely a cost/benefit analysis will ever allow federal funding for the multi-million dollar flood abatement initiatives necessary to stem the Greenburgh area flooding issues. Mrs. O'Shea said she had a visit with a FEMA representative, and she offered to take him into Rod's office to

show him the water marks but he did not want to go anywhere but the garage. The compensation didn't even pay the bill for the company that dried out the place and threw things out. She said she is hesitant to invest money in permanent repairs for fear flood damage might happen again. Mr. Bock noted that last fall Town officials along with Westchester County Legislators toured through his neighborhood but no action has been taken other than the Town approved a resolution to hire a firm to study the Manhattan Brook.

ROUTE 9A BYPASS UPDATE PLANNED

Ella Preiser reported that thanks to Westchester County Legislator Jewel Williams Johnson, who was on vacation and out of the country, she nevertheless was able to obtain a copy of the state DOT Power Point presentation made to selected government officials in September 2021 regarding the Route 9A Bypass. The public has not been privy to this latest plan which would create a direct link from Route 1-287 and Route 119 for those trucks planning to head north on Route 9A, thus reducing traffic in the Village of Elmsford. The Bypass would connect to the southern portion of Warehouse Lane, near the animal shelter, for all trucks headed north, not just those headed to Warehouse Lane. Trucks headed to places like the new Fed Ex building, Coca Cola, and Poland Springs in the adjacent Fairview Corporate Park, or further north to places like Grainger's or Home Depot, would exit at the Warehouse Lane intersection and travel north on Route 9A. Mike Burdi added this will also include trucks headed to Sam's Club and the new ShopRite soon to open. Mrs. Preiser noted the Route 9A/Warehouse Lane intersection already is a very busy truck intersection with UPS, Thaile Construction, and other vehicles, and it also is the intersection for the 100+ families who live in the Beaver Hill neighborhood. She noted the Plans fail to mention that the intersection is in the 100-year flood zone and it doesn't take a 100-year storm event to make this intersection impassable (under three feet of water). Dorrine Livson mentioned the DOT original plan for Route 9A. That plan called for widening the road to seven lanes (from its current four and/or five lanes at some intersections) from Route 119 in the Village of Elmsford 1.6 miles to Dana Road in the Town of Mount Pleasant. Many structures would have been demolished and businesses ended. Mrs. Preiser noted this area of Town provides a huge tax base, and many jobs at a number of businesses and warehouses. Most deliveries to our homes arrive via UPS, Fed Ex, and Amazon vehicles from distribution warehouses in the immediate Route 9A area.

The Town has scheduled an update with DOT representatives at tomorrow's (2/28/23) Town Board work session at 5:30 PM. Mrs. Preiser said we'll have to see what brilliant thoughts the Town will have.

UTILITY RATES COSTLY

Ken Stahn mentioned there is much chatter on Next Door about the problems that people serviced by Central Hudson Gas & Electric (in the Poughkeepsie area) are facing with outrageous utility bills caused by estimated readings for gas and electric service. Apparently the company estimates usage at least every other month and estimated readings have been extremely high. Users are being urged to read their own meters and call in the numbers. Mr. Stahn noted that Con Edison takes actual readings remotely each month and so far Con Edison rates for electric supply have been lower than those charged by the ESCO in which the Town Board enrolled all residents and small business owners who did not opt out. Carol Wielk who did "opt out" agreed that the electric supply rate, while higher than in past years, was not too bad, but noted the rate for natural gas resulted in the highest Con Edison bill (\$720) she has ever received.

ARDSLEY ROAD CURB CAUSES DELAY - NO WORK ON ARDSLEY BRIDGE

Ken Stahn reported that recently area residents faced a traffic problem for three days as a new curb was installed along Ardsley Road. He noted that work started at 8:00 AM and about 50 cars were backed up heading toward Central Avenue to the train station. He mentioned that he received an email from Supervisor Feiner that work was going to start on the Ardsley Bridge the week of February 20, but so far no action has taken place. Mr. Stahn said it was lucky that we have not had one snow storm on top of another this winter, as the Jersey barriers on either side of the bridge left no place to plow piles of snow. If multiple snow storms had occurred, traffic would have been interrupted as it would have been necessary to bring in front-end loaders to haul away snow from the entire length of the bridge.

SECOR HOMES NEIGHBORHOOD COMPLAINTS FINALLY ADDRESSED

Carol Wielk reported good news for her neighborhood and gave a shout out to Greenburgh's new Building Inspector, Frank Morabito, who addressed a problem her community had faced for a number of years. The problem was caused by Westchester Greenhouses, not the retail outlet at the corner of West Hartsdale Avenue and Secor Road, but at a long deep property further down Secor Road they own. Nothing had been done regarding numerous complaints about wood boilers that polluted the neighborhood. Recently the business also began running a wood mulching operation illegally six days a week starting in the early morning. The previous Building Inspector had begun an action by issuing a notice of violation of the Zoning Ordinance. However, for some unknown reason he left the position.

Ms. Wielk noted she was alerted to watch the January 24 Town Board work session for an update on this issue. At that meeting, the Building Inspector said he had gone unannounced to the site along with the Hartsdale Fire Chief and a representative from the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and found all sorts of problems, including a smoldering wood pile that the fire department doused with water because there are homes within 50 feet. A "Stop Work Order" was issued and the DEC issued a summons for operating an illegal transfer station. Ms. Wielk said she has been in touch with Mr. Morabito and hopefully he will follow through on this issue that has negatively impacted the community for many years.

SPORTIME MOVING JEEP CAR DEALERSHIP COMING TO ROUTE 9A

Tom Bock reported that a car dealership is going to replace the now closed Sportime USA and Goodwill Industry businesses on Route 9A, just north of the new ShopRite store. He said people on Next Door from various villages are claiming that Route 9A does not need another car dealership. Mr. Bock said he believes a car dealership will be a cleaner operation with less traffic. He noted the Sportime site saw a lot of activity with its arcade games, hosting birthday parties and gangs hanging out. Sportime is moving its operation further south on Route 9A to the Ardsley area.

Mike Burdi said the 70-year old Dodge, Chrysler franchise from White Plains will be moving to the five acre site with its 59,000 sq. ft. building. He noted there will be more than enough space for employee and customer parking and loading and unloading of vehicles on-site. Dorrine Livson mentioned that the Pepe dealership further south on Route 9A near the Little League Field loads and unloads vehicles on its site, unlike the car dealerships on Tarrytown Road and Central Avenue which block lanes of the roadways with car carriers. Mr. Burdi noted he used to work for Pepe and you could set your clock that when the business opened at 7 AM, trailers would begin delivery of Infiniti and Mercedes-Benz vehicles. Ken Stahn noted Pepe no longer services his Infiniti and he will now have to go to Greenwich Connecticut. Several people mentioned there is another Infiniti dealership on Central Avenue.

Ella Preiser said at last week's Town Board work session, a rendering displayed the words "JEEP" across the existing dome on the front of the building (a long ago bowling alley). At that meeting, Councilman Francis Sheehan said multiple times the owners should commit to no loading/unloading on Route 9A. Mr. Burdi said Toll Brothers were scooping up property to build rental units where the Chrysler Jeep Dealership was located near the White Plains Diner, across from the Westchester Mall in White Plains.

GOVERNOR WANTS TRANSIT-ORIENTED HOUSING & ADUs

A brief discussion took place about New York State Governor Kathy Hochul's plan for transit-oriented housing developments including affordable units. Paul Colten mentioned a recent article in *The White Plains Examiner* that said some communities are putting in "home rule" requests in an effort to maintain control over what gets built and their tax structure. He suggested Greenburgh would be wise to try to protect large tracts of land against future multi-family developments if there is not the necessary infrastructure to support such growth. It was noted the Governor's plan includes not just high density development near train stations but also mandating accessory

dwelling units (ADUs) on single family homes. Carol Wielk questioned whether establishing “home rule” could ever stop a state law that would override a municipality’s single family zoning requirements and allow such accessory dwelling units. Tom Bock reminded of the lawsuits filed and former County Executive Astorino’s fight regarding a required 750 affordable units to be built in Westchester County.

PARKING AUTHORITY CHANGES RATES & USE IN GARAGE

Paul Colten mentioned that the Hartsdale Parking Authority had changed rates at its garages and he learned when his wife went to the city last week, long-term meters in the garage behind the stores on the south side of East Hartsdale Avenue have been removed. He noted that such parking is now east of the train station so one has to deal with stairs to get a southbound train. However, when you return, you can walk right off the train to your car. Mike Burdi questioned whether there were rule changes for over-night meters used by local residents. It was unknown, but those spaces were always available on the mid and upper level floors. Dorrine Livson suggested the merchants might have needed more spaces. Carol Wielk agreed and said it would be necessary to make changes to keep businesses alive.

It was noted that the change in parking rates was noticed. All agreed that it would have been helpful to also give public notice of the use change. It was suggested the change could be because many people continue to work remotely. Mr. Colten noted his wife works remotely about 99% of the time. Ms. Wielk mentioned that she used the garage for years and found it necessary to circulate around to find a parking space. Mr. Colten suggested there is not as much revenue. Mike Burdi noted at last month’s CGCA meeting, we discussed people double-parking on East Hartsdale Avenue. He said if long term meters have been removed from the lot, there are more spaces to accommodate those picking up orders. Mr. Colten noted he often picks up orders from the Chinese restaurant and has always found plenty of parking spaces in the lot. Ms. Livson asked if the elevator project at the train station was complete. The answer was “no.”

NEW BUSINESSES LOCATE IN GREENBURGH.

Mike Burdi pointed out several new commercial developments coming to Greenburgh along Central Avenue. The former Walgreens near Scarsdale Ford is going to be a virtual golf center. The Jennifer furniture store across from the now closed Ben’s Deli is another virtual golf center. Just before Marion Avenue, there is now a Happy Cat Hotel with 25 rooms to board felines. After an eleven year absence, Barnes and Noble is returning to Greenburgh at the site of the former Turco’s (Morton’s or Mrs. Green’s) market. Also Crumbl Cookie is now open in the Dalewood Shopping Center.

MISCELLANEOUS

Town’s Verizon Cable Channel now Operating. Mike Burdi reported that he just checked and the Town’s public cable channel (Verizon 35) is now working. All three of the Town’s cable channels were out of service for over two weeks. Madelon O’Shea said meetings of the various boards were also not streaming on the Town’s website last week. Apparently there was no problem with service for those who have Optimum (Channel 76).

Laundromat Idea Receives Little Support. Madelon O’Shea mentioned that she spoke with a member of the Hartsdale Contextual Review Committee who told her the group was not in favor of a laundromat locating on East Hartsdale Avenue.

Concern Expressed about Possible Edgemont Incorporation. Lloyd Cort apologized for being late to the meeting as he had to attend a funeral in New Jersey. He noted that there was nothing new to report about his community except that neighbors are very concerned about the potential impacts if Edgemont incorporates as a village. He said they are working diligently to see what, if anything, can be done to avoid possible devastating consequences to unincorporated Greenburgh.

Does Your Insurance Cover Volunteer Work? Madelon O'Shea suggested that CGCA representatives might want to check to see if their home owner's insurance policy covers them for volunteer work. She noted because of an incident many years ago, she has peace of mind knowing that her policy covers her participation as a CGCA leader.

Thank You Dora. CGCA representatives again extended their thanks to Dora Ashley who maintains the CGCA's website. <https://cgca.info>