

White Plains Council of Neighborhood Associations
February Meeting

Wednesday, 2/11/2025

Location: WP Board of Education – 5 Homeside Lane

Time: 7pm

Attendees: Michael Sanchez, Michael Dalton, Tom Osbeck, Veretta Addison, Ellen Berger, Anthony Fiorenza, Bob Friscia, Robert Kahn, Michael Matarese, Alan Weiberg, Shawn Woodford, Debra Zipf, Michael Zygmunt

Guest Speakers: Amy Geiger – WPHS Community Service Program Coordinator
Justin Brasch – President of the Common Council & 2025 Mayoral Candidate

1. The Meeting was called to order by President Sanchez. President Sanchez welcomed the guest speakers and introduced Amy Geiger – WPHS Community Service Program Coordinator.
2. Amy Geiger explained that she is a White Plains High School grad and the mom of a WPHS graduate. In her role as WPHS Community Service Coordinator she acts as a “bridge” putting together High School students (who volunteer their time) with community organizations & groups that need volunteers to help with projects or events they are conducting. She wanted to speak to the CNA membership to let us know that the Community Service Program is a resource available to our neighborhood associations. The range of services that the High School volunteers is broad....it could be the labor to help set up and clean up for an event...or it could be a musical group of students entertaining at an event. It could even be “tech help” for a group of seniors. The students who are part of the Community Service Program are a very positive group of youngsters.
3. President Sanchez thanks Ms. Geiger for attending our meeting and letting us all know about the Community Service Program. M. Sanchez then introduced Justin Brasch – Common Council member since 2017 and a candidate for Mayor of W.P. in 2025.
4. Mr. Brasch stated that he has been active in public service since he was a 17-year-old student. He believes that government can make a difference in our lives. As the current President of the Common Council, he has prioritized helping the most vulnerable in our Community. He has a track-record of accomplishments:
 - He led the fight to create a Common Council Office with a staff person to assist council members.
 - He is the Chairman of the WP Youth Bureau...which is the 2nd largest youth bureau in the USA.
 - He led the effort to “kill” the Accessory Dwelling Units in the new Comprehensive Plan
5. Regarding “Affordable Housing” Mr. Brasch stated, “we should do all we can to assist in making more affordable housing available. That said...the problem is a “National Issue”and the City of White Plains will not solve this problem on its own.
6. B. Friscia raised the issue “that the current administration has not held developers to create more affordable housing in their projects.”
7. Mr. Brasch explained that there are no easy answers to the shortage of affordable housing. The cost of developable property in our area makes creating affordable housing very difficult. For example....the City is working with the Owners of the Galleria Mall property to re-develop this property. Mr. Brasch stated the cost estimate for just “demo’ing” the existing parking structure at the closed Galleria mall is \$30 million.
8. A. Fiorenza suggested that perhaps the reason housing and rental costs are so high....is that the developers and property owners are engaged in “price fixing”. Mr. Brasch responded, “that he did not think that was the case.”

9. Mr. Brasch went on to say, "that the City needs create a "state of the art" inter-generational community center and a good place to create that center might be to re-imagine and re-hab the City's Slater Center
10. Mr. Brasch stated that the City needs to create a "world class" cultural center...like a museum.
11. Mr. Brasch stated, "that he believed in fiscal responsibility...the City of White Plains is run by a responsible and honest government...and it should try to help as many people as possible".
12. B. Friscia asked, "what changes would you make as Mayor?" Mr. Brasch responded, "White Plains needs a new City Hall.... the existing facilities are lacking."
13. S. Woodford stated that the Common Council chambers are just too small and often "jamb packed" at a Common Council meeting...which makes it difficult for neighborhoods to be informed. Mr. Brasch suggested, perhaps the new development at the closed Galleria site could incorporate a new City Hal with a larger public meeting space/auditorium.
14. D. Zipf commented, "any new City Hall should be easily accessible thru public transit. Many seniors over 80 years of age do not drive...we need a way to travel to and attend public meetings."
15. Mr. Brasch added..."I have worked to have the City's public meetings televised...making the meetings accessible to all."
16. M. Sanchez asked, "if elected.... how would you change the senior management of the City's?" Mr. Brasch responded, "if elected.... there will be changes at the senior positions in the City departments".
17. M. Sanchez asked, "what are your plans for term limits?" Mr. Brasch responded, "I believe in term limits for elected officials. No public executive should be in office for more than 12 years. No legislator should be in office for more than 16 years. If elected.... I would serve for no longer than 8 years."
18. V. Addison asked, "is the City planning to put together a trolley system?" Mr. Brasch responded, "in general I am a big supported of public transport...but I am not aware of any plan for a City run trolley system."
19. B. Friscia asked, "would your administration be more transparent about the financial condition of the City? Mr. Brasch replied, "while we have many people in our City government.... most do not know much about the condition of the City's budget."
20. Mr. Brasch was asked if he knew the number of folks on the list for affordable housing? Mr. Brasch said, "he did not know that figure. Call Chris Gomez – Planning Commissioner for those numbers."
21. Regarding affordable housing.... with an AMI of \$109k in White Plains.... developers believe that 80% of AMI 'works' in providing affordable housing units. 80% of AMI is too high....to make a dent in the backlog of affordable housing applicants....60% of AMI should be more frequently used as the benchmark.
22. Mr. Brasch stated that if elected, "I will be an advocate for the business community of White Plains...that said.... the retail sector will continue to experience strong headwinds. In White Plains we need to encourage more experiential venues."
23. D. Zipf remarked that a large number of small businesses have left White Plains. The City needs to do more to help small businesses.
24. Mark, of Battle Hill, asked, "the events sponsored by the City in the summer are a lot of fun.... can the City do more events? Mr. Brasch replied that he supports more City run events...many of which are now run by the BID.

25. E. Berger described how sleepy town of Beacon, NY was transformed into a regional, national and international “destination” after the creation and opening of the DIA museum. White Plains needs to create a “world class” museum.
 26. With no further questions for Mr. Brasch.... President Sanchez thanked Councilmen Brasch for attending the CNA and taking questions from its members.
-

27. President Sanchez announced that the CNA will hold its first “CNA Workshop” on Tuesday, March 11.
28. M. Sanchez will be emailing the CNA members Workshop flyer to promote the CNA Workshop.
29. M. Sanchez has prepared a Power-Point presentation for the Workshop.
30. The goal for the Workshop is to have 10 committed participants attend the Workshop.
31. Alan Weintraub stated, “White Plains is governed by a lack of procedure and public access. It takes 4 votes in the Common Council to stop or pause any piece of legislation or proposal. The Mayor sets the agenda for Common Council meetings. Justin Brasch stated tonight and at other times that the Common Council is often “in the dark” or not informed about initiatives from the Mayor’s Office. Well... if it was important to Mr. Brasch...all he needs is 4 votes to override a proposal of the Mayor. The agenda for a Common Council meeting is published on the Friday prior to the Monday Common Council meeting. This is not proper notice. The public does not have time to prepare or react to what is on the agenda.”
32. President Sanchez returned to the Workshop agenda...and walked thru the Power-Point presentation.
33. A. Fiorenza described the procedure for making a neighborhood association a 501c3 Tax Exempt non-profit organization.
34. R. Kahn suggested that “we need to put ourselves in the position of the folks attending the workshop. We need to make the idea of forming a Neighborhood Association “a relatively easy thing to do.”
35. T. Osbeck asked, “do we have a logo for the CNA? Do we have targeted neighborhoods? Is there a place where the workshop will take place? Is it possible to have a ‘junior status’ for a prospective neighborhood?” M. Sanchez replied, “yes.... we have a logo...it is on the Workshop Flyer. The targeted neighborhoods are the neighborhoods which have stopped being active CNA members and the neighborhoods which do not have associations. We will finalize the venue for the workshop in the next few days. And...sure its possible to have a ‘junior status” for a neighborhood...but, our CNA meetings are open to the public...if someone from a neighborhood wants to observe a CNA meeting and learn what the CNA does....they can attend a meeting at any time.”
36. B. Friscia asked that we look to City Officials to spread the word.
37. President Sanchez then thanked the attendees and closed the meeting.