

White Plains Council of Neighborhood Associations
June Meeting

Tuesday, 9/9/2025

Location: Board of Education

Time: 7pm

Attendees: Michael Sanchez, Michael Dalton, Ellen Berger, Ben Brown, Jeremiah Frei-Pearson, Anthony Fiorenza, Beverly Kahn, Robert Kahn, Charles Katz, Fatiha Makloufi, Michael Matarese, Tom Osbeck, Evelyn Santiago, John Sheehan, Valerie Simmons, Holly Villanueva, Allen Weintraub, Peter Wilcox, Mike Zygmunt,

Guest Speakers: Lenny Lolis – Republican Candidate for Mayor of White Plains
Justin Brasch – Democratic Candidate for Mayor

1. The Meeting was called to order by President Sanchez. President Sanchez welcomed our guest speakers Lenny Lolis and Justin Brasch. M. Sanchez asked Mr. Lolis to address the attendees first.
2. Mr. Lolis explained that he has lived in White Plains all his life. He grew up in the Fisher Hill neighborhood on Highland Ave and later in Gedney Farms. His Dad ran a Texaco station on East Post Road. Mr. Lolis worked for the W.P. Building Dept. and was responsible for implementing the City's first city-wide computer system. He was responsible for introducing a city-wide fiber optic network linking Police, Fire and other City Departments. He was recruited to work for Emigrant Bank as a technology leader for the Bank.
3. Mr. Lolis said that the City's infrastructure is falling apart. Public Safety is a growing concern. The next administration needs to boost funding for Police and Youth Mentorship.
4. Mr. Lolis explained that Real Estate Development in the City needs a new direction. His administration will be run with an "Open Book Policy" with "No Back Door" deals. New apartment development needs to emphasize "Ownership" (Condos) versus rental apartments. We need to create "True" affordable housing. His administration will create a new parking plan & work with the BID to improve Downtown conditions.
5. Mr. Lolis shared an inspirational story of a teenager that he worked with.... who later went on to become a NASA scientist.
6. Mr. Lolis closed his remarks by saying, "I will lead with transparency."
7. Pres. Sanchez thanked Mr. Lolis and then asked Mr. Brasch to address the attendees.
8. Mr. Brasch explained that he has been engaged in Public Service since he was 17 years old...being an aide to his congressman on the upper west side of Manhattan. Mr. Brasch has worked for the Westchester County Budget Office & the W.P. Planning Board. Mr. Brasch is a member of the White Plains Common Council and has served as the President of the Common Council. Mr. Brasch has served as Chair of the W.P. Youth Bureau. Mr. Brasch is a practicing lawyer with his own office specializing in Landlord/Tenant and Criminal Law.
9. Mr. Brasch explained that he led the successful effort to hire a staff person to assist Common Council members. He has led the legislative effort to expand the Affordable Housing mandate for new development...which requires developers of multi-family rental and mixed-use developments to designate a portion of units to tenants whose annual income is between 40% and 60% of the Area Median Income (AMI) in Westchester County.
10. Mr. Brasch stated that he and other Common Council members have been working with the Developer of the Galleria redevelopment to expand the number of affordable rental apartments to 12% of the total proposed units and to possibly add up to 500 additional affordable units to the project...bringing the total of affordable units up to 27% for the project.

11. Mr. Brasch said that the Common Council is currently working to figure out the fair-market value of the existing parking garage at the Galleria Property.
 12. Mr. Brasch explained that White Plains needs a new Inter-generational Center that will require finding a new site for the Center. The Inter-generational Center is a place where Grandpa's and kids work together... and a new Center can help bring our City together.
 13. Mr. Brasch stated that he is dedicated to "Sustainability" ...and he believes in "Climate Change". He said that "Transparency" is vital, and the City needs to create a new office for Public Information.
 14. Mr. Brasch stated that he had the endorsements from every elected official in White Plains.
-

15. T. Osbeck asked the candidates several questions. Tom described seeing a man driving a motorized bike on a sidewalk with a passenger perched on the bike. He pointed out that motorized bikes are capable of speeds equal to cars...and yet...there has been no licensing or insurance requirements for these motor vehicles. Where do you stand on this issue? T. Osbeck had heard from a friend that rents for the Juliette Apt. project (built on the former YMCA site) will be \$5000+ per month. How are projects like this helping with housing affordability?

Mr. Brasch answered the affordable housing question by saying that 12% of the units at the Juliette project will be "affordable units". Mr. Brasch said that he supports the licensing of motorized bikes.

Mr. Lolis remarked that he had heard the same complaints about the "affordability" of housing in the new apartment buildings being constructed throughout the City. Mr. Lolis noted that in the past the City enforced even a skateboard being used on a sidewalk. He supports the requirements for motorized bike users being licensed and insured.

16. C. Katz responded to Mr. Lolis's assertion that the City is crumbling by asking, "the W.P. Hospital has begun a major new expansion project after completing a new ambulatory surgery and a new cancer building on its campus. Thousands of new apartments have been created in new building the past few years and more are being constructed...where exactly is the City "crumbling"? Mr. Lolis responded by saying that the City Center complex, areas of the Transit Center, Fire Station #2 & the W.P. Library are all in need of major repairs. Mr. Lolis also questioned whether the City's utility infrastructure could support all the new apartment units being built. Mr. Brasch said that the situation at Fire Station #2 was not acceptable and that the Transit Center Garage underwent extensive repairs this summer. Mr. Brasch reported that the Slater Center has applied for a grant to make repairs to its building.
17. M. Sanchez reported that Fire Station #2 was not designed to be a fire station. He asked why developers cannot be compelled to build a new Fire Station to serve Battle Hill and the Downtown? M. Sanchez suggested that if developers are offered a "density bonus" as part of their projects...then they should be doing more for our City.
18. Mr. Brasch took issue with Mr. Lolis's assertion that the City's utility infrastructure was not adequate to support the City's growth. He pointed out that the City's existing utility infrastructure supports a daytime population of between 200 -250K persons. The City's nighttime population...even after the current growth...is approximately 60k persons. The W.P. School system carefully examines population growth and its impact on the total student population. W.P. School enrollment is expected to be "Flat" over the next decade. The City's utility infrastructure is generally in good shape.
19. Mr. Lolis responded by saying that the City has been putting on "Band-aids" to our infrastructure. How has the City allowed public assets to decay? The traffic light systems allowing the traffic lights to be synchronized to speed Fire and Emergency vehicles to a fire has decayed and is not functioning properly. Mr. Lolis reported seeing a motorized bike repair shop operating inside a City owned parking garage with impunity. The City's needs to develop a new plan for our infrastructure.

20. M. Matarese stated that Fire Station #5 in Battle Hill has been closed for far too long. New Rochelle compelled the Capelli Development Company to build a new Fire Station in New Rochelle as part of a development project...why can't White Plains do the same?
 21. B. Kahn suggested that the City work with Food Delivery apps and motorbike Delivery Persons to develop a plan that designates places in the City where the motorbikes and their drivers can congregate while waiting for food delivery orders.
 22. A. Weintraub agreed with B. Kahn's suggestion that the City develop a plan with designated areas for Food Delivery persons and their motorized bikes. Mr. Lolis said that he believed in "Planning" ...instead of letting things get out of hand. He questioned whether the City had any idea if Food Delivery people were being fairly compensated.
 23. J. Sheehan questioned the whole premise of the City's need for higher "density". He said that the City is just 10 square miles. Many of the City's residents came to White Plains because they did not want to live in an urban environment like Manhattan. Also...the Mamaroneck Water Treatment plant is already running over its capacity. Regarding the Galleria redevelopment project....do we really need 40 story buildings in White Plains? He also questioned the City's promotion of all the new high density residential construction. The Office Market is currently "down" but, this will change...the City needs to plan for new office space.
 24. On the creation of more affordable housing.... Mr. Brasch has spoken with the property owner of 60 South Broadway and reported that the property owner expects the entire building to be "affordable units".
 25. H. Villanueva reported that the Hispanic community of White Plains has a feeling of almost "terror" resulting from the immigration policy coming out of Washington. People in her community just want to be able to go out, send their kids to school and be able to report crime to the police...but fear is hindering or preventing all of these actions. She asked the candidates to respond to this situation.
- Mr. Lolis stated that he does not agree with "mass round ups of people" ...but, to start a war with the federal government would only lead to a stronger response.
- Mr. Brasch stated that the City of White Plains functions as a sanctuary City. We should do all we can to protect immigrants.
26. M. Sanchez asked the candidates if they supported term limits for elected officials. Mr. Lolis & Mr. Brasch both said ... they support term limits for elected officials. Mr. Lolis suggested an 8-year term for the Mayor of White Plains.
-

27. Fatiha Makloufi & Peter Wilcox of the Battle Hill neighborhood presented a video documenting a pilot program of a free Shuttle Service that had recently been tested over several weekends in Battle Hill. The Shuttle Service is meant to improve the transit options for residents who don't have automobiles or who would rather not drive their own car for a short trip to Central Ave or to other areas of White Plains. 1 year ago...the Battle Hill Association started to explore "low cost" transit options that exist in other cities in the USA and Europe. The Association conducted an on-line survey of Battle Hill Residents...75% of respondents supported the idea of creating a "micro-transit" service for Battle Hill. The Westchester "BEE Line" is also studying "micro-transit" options.... they have done a great deal of research into "micro-transit". The Shuttle Service pilot project was funded with a grant as a "demo project". Over the two – 3-day weekends in August that the Shuttle Service operated it was very successful. Micro-Transit Shuttle Services are in operation in several cities in the USA and more cities are developing plans for Micro-Transit Services. The vehicle that was used in the pilot project was a 6-passenger electric mini-bus.
28. M. Dalton asked what was the cost of the 2-weekend pilot project and what was the size of the grant that

funded the project? F. Makloufi & P. Wilcox did not know the cost of the pilot project or the size of the grant that funded the project.

29. B. Brown of the Coalition for Addition Without Subtraction (CAWS) summarized areas of concern and comments regarding the redevelopment of the Galleria Property.
 - 2022 - The Mayor's office began its effort to redevelop the Galleria Property
 - 2023 - The Mayor's office seeks approval from Albany to sell the existing Galleria parking facilities
 - 2024 - The City needs to amend legislation to sell the existing parking facilities
 - 2025 - In May, the Developer proposed 500 additional affordable housing units...above the 12% requirement
 - 2025 - In July, the Common Council accepted the FEIS (Final Environmental Impact Statement)
30. B. Brown noted that the FEIS that the Common Council accepted as complete...did not include any reference to the proposed addition of 500 affordable housing units to the project. He noted that the Common Council did approve the requirement for 12% affordable units at 40% -60% of AMI for new residential projects in the City.
31. A. Weintraub stated that the City's "Public Notice" for meetings held by various City Departments from the Common Council to the Planning Board is Poor. The poor Public Notice makes it nearly impossible to understand how the Common Council operates.
32. President Sanchez thanked both Mayoral Candidates and all the attendees. He then closed the meeting.