

COUNCIL OF GREENBURGH CIVIC ASSOCIATIONS

Minutes of Meeting – Monday, April 28, 2025

This Zoom-enabled meeting 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), Alex Anzer (Hunter Lane), Mike Burdi (Suburban Manor), Lorraine Cantori (Greenburgh Action Alliance - Hartsdale), Paul Colten (Hilltop Farms), Lloyd and Gwen Cort (Parkway Gardens), Alan Fishman (Northern Greenville), Ellen Foley (East Irvington), Alicia Ford (Parkway Homes), Maria Pecora & Bill Sullivan (Sprain Brook Parkway), Ella Preiser (Beaver Hill), Dylan Pyne (Edgemont Community Council), and Carol Wielk (Secor Homes).

Treasurer Livson reported that the balance in the checking account, as of March 31, 2025, remains the same at \$744.31. Dylan Pyne noted some corrections to the minutes of the February 24, 2025 CGCA meeting. The corrections will be made before the minutes are posted to the CGCA website (cgca.info). The minutes of the March 24, 2025 meeting were approved as written.

SAVING THE GAISMAN MANSION

Madelon O'Shea, who also chairs the Town's Historic and Landmark Preservation Board (H&LPB), provided a brief summary of the life of Henry Gaisman, a famous inventor, who was born in 1869 in Memphis to immigrant parents. He quit school at the age of 13 and at the age of 16 invented the glass enclosed bulletin board found in most hotel lobbies today. At age 25 he moved to New York City and sold his first invention, a belt that wouldn't slip. His most famous invention was the safety razor that the Gillette Company took control of, but when Gillette died, Gaisman gained control of the company and made his fortune. He continued inventing items and received patents for 84 inventions.

In 1932, Mr. Gaisman bought the 106-acre Ridge Road property in Hartsdale, owned by the son of the former Minister to Peru. He later purchased two other adjacent parcels for a total of 136 acres. He remained a bachelor until he married a 33 year old nurse when he was 82 years old. The couple sold the Ridge Road property to the Archdiocese of New York for \$600,000.00, with the proviso that they could live there forever. Mr. Gaisman died at the age of 104 and is buried in the Gate of Heaven Cemetery in Hawthorne. His wife moved out of the property and several acres of the property were given as a residence for retired nuns.

Mrs. O'Shea noted that New York State, Westchester County and the Town of Greenburgh bought approximately 123 acres from the Archdiocese and turned it into a passive park - Harts Brook Park and Preserve. The property includes a barn with a never used stable containing stalls made of mahogany. There is also a warming shed by the pond used for ice skating. The nuns continue to own 11+ acres, including the Gaisman Mansion. Two years ago the nuns sought a subdivision but that never happened. Mrs. O'Shea noted that roadway access to the nun's property and infrastructure is tied into the Preserve. She said last October the nuns sought a demolition permit for the mansion, but that has gone nowhere.

Mrs. O'Shea said H&LPB had received several calls about broken windows in the house. She noted several Hartsdale residents would like to purchase the 11+ acre property and lease it back to the nuns but preserve the house. She said several environmental and scientific groups would like to create outposts in this area and see the house as the perfect place to locate. Lorraine Cantori said she hikes four or five days

each week in the park and is glad to see broken windows have been boarded up. She is also glad someone is interested in preserving the house.

ZONING ORDINANCE IN DIRE NEED OF A RE-WRITE

Madelon O'Shea inquired if there was any information on a possible update to the Town's Zoning Ordinance. Ella Preiser responded that over a month ago, CD&C Commissioner Garrett Duquesne told her that the Town was working on a revision to the Zoning Ordinance and asked her to review it. She said she agreed to but has heard nothing lately. She said she thinks that more problems have recently occurred that the Town hopefully is trying to address. She noted one problem was the issue that East Irvington resident Neil Grunstein presented at last month's CGCA meeting about conflicting standards, with his property side yard being the neighbor's rear yard.

Also it was noted that something needs to be done to address the "driveway" issue that has been before the ZBA for several months. Mrs. Preiser said it is totally unfair that residents are being accused of violations for things that were done decades ago, before they bought the property. She said she has written two letters to the Town, outlining the actual wording in both today's (1980) Zoning Ordinance and the former 1957 Ordinance which included the absurd wording that a driveway could not "encroach on a required front yard." That obviously means that most residents in Greenburgh have illegally constructed driveways providing access to their homes. She noted that it also makes no sense that a driveway needs a Building Permit and Certificate of Occupancy since it is neither a building nor a structure.

It was noted that the Building Department has not moved ahead with the application process for variances for five cited driveways so these applications will not be on the agenda of the May 15 ZBA meeting.

PAYNE STREET DELI IS NO MORE

Ella Preiser reported that at the April 17, 2025 ZBA meeting, owners of the property on Payne Street sought a Use Variance and about a dozen Area Variances to legalize a deli, situated directly across Payne Street from the Town-owned Massaro Park. North Elmsford Civic Association President Lemuel Davis and another area resident spoke out against the variances. The ZBA voted unanimously to deny all of the variances. Mrs. Preiser noted the deli had been operating for decades and in recent years had become a serious neighborhood problem because men were hanging out at night in the Massaro Park parking spaces, drinking alcohol, smoking (including marijuana), arguing, and playing loud music. Despite complaints, nothing was done until there was a stabbing at the site. The Police got involved and the Building Department inspected the deli and found numerous building code violations and closed the place. The Town also reconfigured the parking spaces at the park and placed them behind a fence that could be locked at night. Because the deli was a non-conforming use in the R-5 one-family residential neighborhood and it was not in operation for more than six months, according to the Zoning Ordinance, it lost its non-conforming status. That is why it sought variances. There is also a single family home on the property. It was suggested the owner could tear down the deli building and construct another house on the site.

Alicia Ford mentioned that a lot of children frequent the park which has a swimming pool and basketball court. She said it is important that the children have a place to obtain something to drink. Paul Colten suggested the park's needs could be served by a food truck.

CFA GRANTED SIGN VARIANCES

Madelon O'Shea reported that Chick-fil-A (CFA) received its requested sign variances at the April 17, 2025 ZBA meeting. She noted that the CGCA had pointed out in a letter to the ZBA in May 2024 that sign variances appeared to be needed, but the ZBA totally ignored everything the CGCA said. She questioned if CFA had to pay for the new variance application. Ella Preiser assured Mrs. O'Shea that it was a separate application and there was a new Public Notice advertising the Public Hearing. A small price to pay!! Mrs. Preiser noted apparently something happened behind the scenes because CFA reduced the size of several signs and sought approval for seven fewer variances than had been advertised. She noted the ZBA denied part of the increase in size of the yard sign that was to be placed at the Tarrytown Road/Old Kensico Road intersection. The portion of the yard sign denied would have been a "message" board. The ZBA felt it would be a distraction to drivers.

Alicia Ford asked if the proposed CFA would include drive-thru or sit down service and whether any change was planned to the traffic light at the intersection which only allows three cars to exit Old Kensico Road. Mrs. Preiser noted that both drive-thru and sit-down service would be available and CFA will be required to pay for a new traffic light that will be timed to allow a few more cars to exit. The roadway at the intersection will also be widened to allow for three lanes - a right turn, a left turn and a straight across lane. Paul Colten suggested it might make more sense to encourage some drivers to use County Center Road to exit the area. It was suggested other alternatives for homeowners to reach their homes in Fulton Park are by helicopter or by broom once the site opens!! After CFA has operated for about six months (or sooner if necessary), a study will determine whether other traffic mitigation plans should be adopted.

CARLSON'S NURSERY - FOR SALE

Dorrine Livson provided an update on the Carlson's Nursery site on Dobbs Ferry Road. She noted when the owner passed away, the kids didn't want the site and had plans to sell to a storage facility. The site is located at the intersection of Dobbs Ferry Road and the southbound Sprain Brook Parkway entrance, opposite the site of the proposed 113 single family homes on the Elmwood Preserve, not far from the Elmwood Day School and the Golf Driving Range and The Chelsea assisted living facility. It was decided it was not a viable site for a storage facility and the firm from Texas walked away.

Cortlandt Farms then bought the property but decided to keep the Carlson's Nursery name because it was well known. The plan was to have a little food store selling fruit, packaged goods and some nursery products such as trees, shrubs, house plants and soil in bags. The facility opened up but only sold nursery products last year. Mrs. Livson said she kept asking Commissioner Garrett Duquesne about plans but received no response. This year it was noted the place was empty, but again she received no response from Mr. Duquesne. Mrs. Livson said a week ago a sign went up advertising that the property is for sale.

ESCO ONCE AGAIN IS COSTLY TO THOSE ENROLLED

Ella Preiser reported that Supervisor Paul Feiner had the luxury of informing the public for two months in a row that the price per kWh for electricity was lower for the thousands of residents and small business owners that the Town Board enrolled in a one-year contract with an ESCO than the Con Edison rate. However, that has changed. The average Con Edison price was 10.85 cents per kWh for the month of March, or 1.33 cents per kWh less than the ESCO price of 12.18 cents per kWh. Mrs. Preiser said her price and that of the Livson family was a bit lower - 10.41 cents per kWh, and Ken Stahn's price was even lower - 10.05 cents per kWh (2.13 cents per kWh cheaper).

Mrs. Preiser noted that the current contract expires with meter read dates in December and the Town has already told Sustainable Westchester that it will participate in another contract with an ESCO at the 50% renewable option.

Mike Burdi mentioned the recent Town Board work session with Sustainable Westchester Executive Director Noam Bramson who gave a hard sell pitch about how prices fluctuate. Mr. Burdi noted he would like to see more transparency so that people know they are signed up in the ESCO and can get out.

PROPERTY TAXES - A CONCERN

Mike Burdi noted at last Tuesday's Town Board work session, the Mayor of Ardsley appeared and discussed a piece of property the Village of Ardsley purchased in 2018. She asked the Town Board to waive a \$69,000 penalty owed on the property for the late payment of taxes. She noted that come May 1, an additional sum will be due. Mr. Burdi noted that Councilman Francis Sheehan said he opposed the request because waiving the fee would set a precedent.

Mr. Burdi noted his tax bill increased over \$900 this year. Gwen Cort said she, too, was astonished how significant the tax increase was this year.

Lorraine Cantori also expressed concerns about the high taxes in Greenburgh. She suggested there are too many tax exempt properties in Town and mentioned a mansion on West Hartsdale Avenue. She noted every Greenburgh owned vehicle seems to be brand new. Mr. Burdi said he understands that the Town is considering a new plan of leasing rather than purchasing vehicles which is what they do in New York City.

HISTORIC DESIGNATION SOUGHT FOR PARKWAY GARDENS

Lloyd Cort expressed concerns about the work he and his wife Gwen have done collecting information about famous residents of Parkway Gardens. The Parkway Gardens information would be presented to the Town as part of a request for historic designation of the area. He said he was surprised to learn in a recent email that some people would be in charge of curating all the information from both Parkway Gardens and Parkway Homes. He said he is not aware that Parkway Homes has gathered any information. Alicia Ford, who is President of the Parkway Homes Civic Association, said she has received no information. She said she would recommend that Judith Beville be involved since she was a long-time resident of the area. Mrs. Cort agreed that Ms. Beville should be involved. Ms. Ford noted that Ms. Beville was disturbed that Parkway Homes has not been involved. Ms. Ford suggested they should all get together.

TRAFFIC SAFETY - A CONTINUING CONCERN

Lloyd Cort asked about the status of the proposed Citizen Safety Committee. Dorrine Livson said she has been in touch with Lucas Cioffi who said he's been busy but promised to call her two weeks ago. He will be sending out a flyer discussing speeding. Mrs. Livson said she notices on Town Board agendas that more neighborhoods are having their area's speed limit reduced to 25 mph. She questioned why that shouldn't be the standard town wide.

Carol Wielk said her neighbors solicited the Town and the Town responded by lowering the speed limit to 25 mph on Jean, Jennifer and Barbara Lanes. She noted she hand delivered flyers to the neighbors so everyone should be aware of the lowered speed limit. However, she noted the law is not working.

Paul Colten said the problem seems to be lack of enforcement. He said he does see police cars out doing details and has seen an unmarked police car on Route 9A but police are often not available where they are needed. He said he is constantly disturbed by a hot rod with a modified muffler which seems to regularly explode in his neighborhood. Madelon O'Shea said the Town needs more police officers. It was noted Supervisor Paul Feiner recommends noise cameras. Mike Burdi said he had a lengthy conversation with Supervisor Feiner who is also recommending noise meters. Paul Colten noted that noise meters have to be calibrated and measurements must be taken within a certain number of feet by a person who is trained and certified. Mr. Burdi said he suggested that Mr. Feiner hand out copies of the noise ordinance to landscapers. Mr. Burdi also suggested that the state police could be asked to pull over landscaping trucks and ask to see if they had valid permits.

DOG POOP CAN ONLY BE DEPOSITED ON OWNER'S PROPERTY

A lengthy conversation took place about dog "poop." It was noted many people walk their dogs along local roads on a leash but allow them to also wander onto the property adjacent to the streets where they often defecate or urinate. Most pet owners promptly pick up any deposits. However, it is impossible to assure that nothing remains and this can be a problem if young children are playing in the grass or someone steps through a little smear and carries it on their shoes into the house. Some of those present at the meeting were surprised when Carol Wielk informed that the Town's Animal Control law specifically states that one cannot allow an animal to defecate or urinate upon property they do not own. Section 310-14 specifically states that a person walking a dog or other animal where the public congregates must "curb" the animal. The law specifically states that this means between the curb lines of a street and does not include the road right-of-way which is owned by the Town. Any feces must be promptly picked up and properly disposed of. Failure to obey any provision of the law can result in a fine of \$50.00 for a first offense and up to \$250.00 for subsequent offenses or even imprisonment. However, it was noted this is another law that is not enforced.

Alicia Ford said she sends emails and personally hand delivers flyers to neighbors in Parkway Homes informing them of Town laws. She noted people do not even walk their dogs in front of her house. Alan Fishman said the problem is not animal behavior but animal owner's behavior. He noted once people are informed of the consequences, they generally behave appropriately. Mike Burdi said he stresses TEE - Training, Education and Enforcement. He noted dog owners are required to get a new license every year and the Town should use the opportunity to inform them of the law.

Lorraine Cantori said she saw a woman walking 14 dogs in the park and after a 30 to 45 minute walk the woman emerged without a single litter bag. Dorrine Livson mentioned a professional dog walker was surprised to learn the law says one can only walk three dogs at a time in the park. She said one woman on a board doesn't think it is fair that her dog can't be walked with other dogs in Rumbrook Park. Ms. Cantori suggested trail "cams" to be placed throughout the parks as an inexpensive way to identify through tapes, those who fail to respect our Town laws. Lloyd Cort praised Ms. Cantori's suggestion.

MISCELLANEOUS

Noise from Car Alarms Disturbing. Alex Anzer said he will be writing a letter to Supervisor Paul Feiner with a copy to the Police Chief about the noise he endures each day with car alarms being sounded multi times so the workers can locate which car to service in the parking lot at the auto dealership on Route 9A (former Sports Time) north of Elmsford.

No Word re Con Ed Delivery Rate Hike. Madelon O'Shea reminded that at the March 2025 CGCA meeting, Leslie Davis said she was going to send the CGCA a packet that we could deliver to our membership regarding the proposed rate hike Con Edison is seeking from the Public Service Commission. So far we have received nothing. Mike Burdi noted the Governor is now involved with the PSC rate hike so he sees no reason for the Town to have to pay \$5,000 for an attorney to represent Westchester.

No Word re ADU Law. Madelon O'Shea reminded that the Town Board was supposed to send post cards to single family home-owners telling them about the proposed Assisted Dwelling Units (ADU) law. So far nothing. Ella Preiser said at a recent Town Board work session Supervisor Paul Feiner said it was Dorrine Livson who recommended that post cards be sent. The next hearing on the ADU law is scheduled for May 28, 2025.

Suggested Road Repairs List Draws Thanks. Dorrine Livson mentioned that she read that the Town was going to spend \$7 million to fix Town roads. She noted she surveyed her community about roads that need repair and sent a list of the roads mentioned to the Town Board and DPW Commissioner Rich Fon. Commissioner Fon responded with a "thank you" for doing the "engineering." She encouraged other civic groups to survey their membership about local roads needing repair.

Con Ed Continuing to Update Gas Connections. Lloyd Cort mentioned that Con Edison is doing a lot of excavation of gas lines on all the streets in the Parkway Gardens neighborhood. Mike Burdi said that is happening in many neighborhoods.

Marijuana Smell Permeates the Neighborhood. Lorraine Cantori mentioned the strong smell of marijuana that permeates the air every time she steps into her front yard on West Hartsdale Avenue. She said she would rather listen to the noise from boom boxes.

Are Town Trucks Checking on Landscapers? Maria Pecora mentioned that she has been noticing a lot of Town of Greenburgh trucks - white pickups containing the Town logo - which seem to be looking at landscaping vehicles in her neighborhood.

Next CGCA Meeting. Everyone was reminded that the next CGCA meeting is scheduled for the third Monday in May because the fourth Monday is Memorial Day. Hope all can attend on May 19, 2025, starting at 7:30 PM. Dorrine Livson mentioned that Terri Tori has been invited to discuss food composting at this meeting. Mrs. Livson is also working to schedule a guest from the Greenburgh Nature Center at a future meeting, but there are conflicts with meeting dates.

Thanks again Dora and Shelly. The CGCA greatly appreciates the work you do maintaining the website and arranging meetings.