

West Norwalk Association February 2020 Board Meeting

Date: February 3, 2020

Members in attendance: Anthony Carrano, Brian Forschino, Stephen Galyas, Rob Notley

Guests in attendance: Dave Rich, Drew Wischer, Dave Davidson

The meeting commenced at 7:31pm.

Anthony briefly spoke to the guests in attendance about the purpose of the West Norwalk Association is, some of the work we have performed over the last few years, and what the Association's goals are for 2020.

Old Business

Treasurer's Update

Anthony Carrano provided the Treasurer's Update to the board members and guests in attendance. No financial transactions have occurred since our last meeting.

New Canaan Traffic Regulation

Anthony provided a brief summary of what the New Canaan Traffic Regulation issue is, what the West Norwalk Association has done in regards to this issue, and what the current status is of this issue.

Dave Rich asked if the West Norwalk Association would be able to contact Waze and ask them to re-route traffic in another direction to circumvent the traffic and speeding issues that have been reported by West Norwalk residents. Anthony stated that we have discussed this option in previous meetings and that the board members have concluded that it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to contact Waze and convince them to make this change.

Anthony informed the meeting attendees that Lucy Dathan is inquiring about the possibility of working with the State of Connecticut to install and enforce a "No-Right-on-Red" sign off the Merritt Parkway exit that morning work commuters take to cut through West Norwalk as a shortcut to I-95. We hope that this will cause enough traffic for Waze to re-direct this traffic away from the West Norwalk shortcut (Weed Avenue and Old Rock Lane).

Stephen asked if we should get back in touch with the residents living along Weed Avenue and Old Rock Lane that responded to our most recent email blast (see New Business section for more details) and ask for photos videos, and more info that we can send to the New Canaan Police Department as proof that their new traffic regulation (no-left at the stop sign on Nursery Road) has had a negative impact on the West Norwalk neighborhood. Brian agrees that we need more information if we (the West Norwalk Association and/or the City of Norwalk) are going to fight this issue.

Rob commented that, according to last month's email blast, residents are concerned about speeding on Weed Avenue and Old Rock Lane, especially during the morning work commute hours. If cops were patrolling these areas and pulling over speeders on a regular basis, then the amount of speeding on these roads would decrease.

Anthony asked the meeting attendees if we think some of these speeders and Norwalk Community College (NCC) students.

Dave Rich commented that cops are often told to not pursue speeders because if the pursuit becomes a high-speed pursuit, there is a chance that the cop to be sued for the high-speed pursuit.

Rob noted that if we were to push for an increase in police monitoring near these affected streets, some of the speeders that get pulled over may be West Norwalk residents.

Anthony asked the meeting attendees who they think we should get in touch with in regards to these issues that arose from the New Canaan Traffic Regulation. Stephen said that we should forward the email blast responses to Terry Blake. Brian said that we should carbon-copy Lucy Dathan and Harry Rilling on this email.

Brian reminded the meeting attendees that the City of Norwalk told the West Norwalk Association that they would install traffic counters to collect traffic data that may be used to fight the New Canaan Traffic Regulation, but traffic counters have not been installed in the affected areas. Dave Davidson asked why this did not happen. Brian told Dave that the City of Norwalk never followed up with us and never followed through with this decision.

Several meeting attendees commented that they rarely see police officers monitoring these affected areas during the morning work commute hours.

The board members in attendance agreed that Anthony shall write an email with neighborhood feedback that will be sent to Terry Blake, Tom Livingston, Lucy Dathan, and Harry Rilling.

New Business

Break-Ins

Drew informed the meeting attendees of an issue that recently occurred on Forbell Road (a car had been stolen). Rob commented that the car was found in Trumbull, and it was damaged.

Brian and Anthony stated that residents on Prince's Pine Road have also recently reported break-ins. At least one of the affected residents had a security system.

Dave Rich asked if there is a Neighborhood Watch in the Price's Pine neighborhood.

Brian informed the meeting attendees that the houses that were broken into were cased by the criminals.

Drew said that the risk of break-ins is very dangerous on streets that have no street lights, such as the street that he lives on.

Rob commented that the risk of break-ins is also heightened for residents with property that abuts wooded areas, as these areas are very dark on cloudy nights.

Dave Davidson stated that if the crimes rate are going up as a result of these break-ins (even if the increase in crime rate is not substantial), we should talk to Terry Blake and ask him to come to one of the West Norwalk Association meetings and talk to the meeting attendees about this issue. Rob responded that, unfortunately, this would not stop criminals from breaking into these houses.

Dave Davidson informed the meeting attendees that it is possible for residents to petition for the installation of street lights on neighborhood roads. Several years ago, residents on the street that he lives on petitioned for street lights to be installed.

Drew commented that these criminals are coming into the neighborhoods and looking for potential targets. This is dangerous.

January Feedback Email Blast

In January, the West Norwalk Association sent an email blast encouraging neighbors to send the West Norwalk Association an email with any neighborhood issues and/or concerns they have. Anthony received some of the concerns that were sent to us:

- Speed/traffic on/near Weed Avenue, Nursery Street, and Old Rock Lane.
- Light pollution from LED lights installed on houses
- Recycling improvements

- Concern about the diminishing number of single-family houses and the increasing number of multi-family/apartment houses/buildings
- Concerns about sidewalks in poor condition and/or not maintained by neighbors

Regarding the concern about recycling improvements, Anthony commented that only people that are tied into the city sewage system are allowed to receive city garbage pickup. If only a few residents on the road are tied into the city sewage system, then the city will pick up only their garbage.

Regarding the concern about sidewalks in poor condition, Drew informed the meeting attendees that a substantial problem for runners is neighbors not cutting back the overgrowth from their properties that encroaches on the sidewalks. Anthony commented that many people do not know that they are responsible for the maintenance of the grass, shrubbery, etc. overgrowth that encroaches onto sidewalks. Brian asked if these issues can be reported to the city, or if these issues can only be reported by cops notice it while on patrol. Dave Rich stated that people need to report these issues, as cops will never report these issues while they are driving around neighborhoods. Anthony will send an email to Harry Rilling and ask for the proper steps that residents should take to report these issues.

The board members in attendance agreed that they are not happy with the limited number of responses that were sent via the email blast. Stephen commented that, typically, only about 30% of our contact list opens our emails. However, Stephen is not sure if viewing an email in preview panes (such as in Outlook) are concerned to be “opened” by Constant Contact.

Dave Davidson commented that when he visited the West Norwalk Association website, he was bothered by the fact that the website does not look like its content is up to date, especially on the Home page. Drew agrees with Dave. The board members in attendance said that (thankfully) there have not been many issues in West Norwalk, so the website is not frequently updated (except for the board meeting minutes, which are uploaded each month).

Stephen will look into setting up a website traffic analytics service on the website so he can present website traffic data during a future board meeting.

Drew suggested that we add a “bulletin board” page to our website that lists community events. The board members in attendance like this idea. Anthony stated that we need to be careful with such a feature, however, as we do not want people and/or places to feel like they are being excluded from this feature. This topic will be revisited during a future board meeting.

Concerns about Idle Police Officers

Anthony commented to the meeting attendees that, on a recent weekend, he noticed that while construction workers were moving a post, he noticed that two cops who were in charge

of monitoring the construction area were sitting in their patrol cars on their phones while the construction workers were digging the hole to move the post. Anthony was bothered by the fact that these cops were not actively monitoring the construction area while they were on the clock for overtime/extra-duty.

Drew commented that he noticed similar situation such as this when he lived in Wisconsin.

Dave Davidson stated that to the city, it is more cost-effective to pay officers overtime/extra-duty than to hire more full-time officers, which is why situation such as this are tolerated.

Dave Rich informed the meeting attendees of how these officers get paid for overtime/extra-duty: the city pays the police officers for the overtime/extra-duty, then the construction company reimburses the city for the overtime/extra-duty.

Anthony commented that other towns use flaggers rather than pay overtime/extra-pay for police officers. Why does Norwalk not do the same?

Dave Davidson commented that this type of change would only arise from a change in the city's police contract.

Dave Rich stated that flaggers are cheaper than police officers working on overtime/extra-duty.

Realtors

Dave Davidson asked the board members in attendance if they would consider working with realtors so they would spread the word about the West Norwalk Association to their clients. Dave also asked why the West Norwalk Association no longer sends Welcome Baskets to new neighbors.

Anthony said that the West Norwalk Association is the most active neighborhood association, so we should make sure that realtors are promoting us. As for the Welcome Baskets, Anthony commented that our previous association presidents tried to do this, and no new neighbors responded to the baskets.

Dave Davidson asked if realtors have West Norwalk Association fliers to hand out to clients. Brian responded that this may help realtors, too, if they had a nice flier that describes all the things that we do for our neighbors. Anthony thinks this is a good point, and would like to discuss this at next month's meeting when Ken D'Arinzo is in attendance.

Earth Day Spring Cleanup

The West Norwalk Association is waiting for more information from Lucy Dathan in regards to

the Earth Day Neighborhood Cleanup that we will be hosting.

Spring Social

Anthony informed the board members in attendance that we are no longer considering LaKota Oaks as a potential venue for our Spring Social, as their pricing continue to rise and we cannot afford these higher prices.

Anthony commented that a potential venue for our Spring Social is the Station House; they have a room that can (supposedly) fit approximately 100 people. Dave Rich responded that this is a big room, but he's not sure if it as large as the dining room at the Oak Hills Clubhouse Grille.

Anthony informed the meeting attendees that he recently reached out to the owner of the Oak Hills Clubhouse Grille and the owner said that he would work with us on a price to use their dining room as the venue for the Spring Social.

Anthony commented that, on most Saturday nights, the Oak Hills Clubhouse Grille has live bands. He recently attended one of these events and enjoyed the event. He think that it would be a good idea to promote these events to our neighbors via email blasts.

Brian suggested that we host our Spring Social on a Friday night, which is one of the days that the Oak Hills Clubhouse Grille typically has a larger number of customers. Anthony responded that we should consider setting the date of our Spring Social for the last weekend of March.

West Norwalk Borders

The board members in attendance the discussed the West Norwalk neighborhood borders, as different maps found online show different neighborhood borders.

Anthony mentioned that, in previous meetings, we have the discussed the idea of expanding the West Norwalk neighborhood borders.

Drew found an article on Wikipedia that mentions the West Norwalk borders specified by the West Norwalk Association. The board mentioned in the article define a larger neighborhood area than the borders specified by the map on our website.

Anthony and Brian commented that this may mean that there are West Norwalk residents that have not been receiving our mailing.

Anthony stated that the West Norwalk Association by-laws specify the roads that mark the borders of West Norwalk.

Once the West Norwalk Association has confirmed that the borders specified in our by-laws are correct, Stephen will create a post on our website and send an email blast to our email distribution lists.

Zoning Discussion

Dave Davidson asked if the West Norwalk Association had gotten in touch with Steve Klepin in regards to him attending one of our meetings to talk about zoning (which types of businesses can and cannot be run out of someone's house). Anthony responded that he mentioned this issue to Harry Rilling when Anthony saw him in January, but Anthony has yet to hear back from Harry.

Dues-Paying Members Benefits

Dave Rich asked if the West Norwalk Association board members could connect with local businesses to provide dues-paying members with discounts for their services.

Stephen mentioned that we have discussed this idea in the past, but the board members were not confident with going through with this because we did not have at least one or two board members that would take the time to contact local companies, set up these discounts, create the membership cards, etc.

Anthony said that we may revisit this topic in the near future.

The meeting adjourned at 8:42pm.