

West Norwalk Association March 2020 Board Meeting

Date: March 2, 2020

Members in attendance: Stephen Galyas, Anthony Carrano, Ken D'Arinzo, Brian Forschino, Rob Notley, Kristin Clemens, Ted Stepanoff

Guests in attendance: Ton Livingston, Dave Davidson, Kathy Garrett, Chris Sanders, Peggy Holton

The meeting commenced at 7:31pm.

Old Business

Speeding

Anthony briefly informed the guests in attendance of the “community feedback” email that the West Norwalk Association sent to their email distribution list several months ago. In addition, Anthony informed the guests in attendance of the New Canaan Traffic Regulation issue and “Waze issue” that has contributed to an increase in traffic in West Norwalk, as well as Anthony’s proposal to install a No-Right-on-Red sign for traffic exiting the Merritt Parkway on Rt. 123.

Tom provided the attendees with an update on the traffic issues mentioned above. The City of Norwalk has been engaging in back-and-forth communication with the State of Connecticut. The State does not want to make any changes to the traffic flow that exits the Merritt Parkway. This week, the City traffic group will be meeting with a State traffic committee to investigate other ways that these traffic issues can be minimized.

In regards to the speeding issue, Tom said that the City of Norwalk can install temporary speed radars on the roads with high cases of speeding drivers. Anthony asked Tom if the City of Norwalk can install the radars on Weed Avenue and West Norwalk Road. Tom asked for more precise locations on these roads. Anthony said that a radar should be installed after the stop sign between the No-Left-Turn sign installed by New Canaan and the stop sign over the bridge in New Canaan. Ken commented that the speed radar should capture south-bound traffic on these roads.

Brian stated that we need to make sure the speed radars are not near congested areas, where there would be no speeding.

Rob commented that speeding on West Norwalk Road is very bad, especially because this road is narrow. Ken agreed.

Ken mentioned that the City of Norwalk should install another speed radar near the S-curve near the dentist’s office at the three-way intersection of West Cedar Street and West Norwalk Road, as well as near Maywood Road and West Norwalk Road.

Brian said that the speed radar should be near Watering Lane.

Dave asked if people are really picking up speed between the two stop signs on West Norwalk Road. Rob commented that most drivers roll through these stop signs traveling about 15-20 mph, making it easy for them to pick up speed.

Chris reminded the attendees that just north of Maywood Road, there is woods, and that there may be room in the woods to install one of the speed radars.

Anthony mentioned that he recently had a conversation with the SRO at Brien McMahon High School. The SRO told Anthony that the Norwalk police force does not have enough officers to properly monitor speeding. The SRO also said that on a given weeknight, only about 8 police officers are on call. Tom commented that the police department uses a formula to determine how many police officers should be on call.

Kathy commented that her brother, a police officer in another town, says that their town also experiences this issue with not having enough police officers on call.

Anthony said that the Norwalk Police Department is holding a “tip-a-special-person” event during which cops come out and work at Colony Pizza to raise money for community events such as the post-graduation parties for the high schools. Anthony said that we should promote this event.

Website Changes (“New Neighbor” Page)

Stephen said that he is planning to add a “New Neighbor” page to the West Norwalk Association website (this was discussed at our last meeting). He asked the attendees if they have any info that they think they should be added to this page. Tom said that we should add his contact information, as well as Lucy Dathan’s contact information. Stephen will include this information on the new web page.

Realtors and West Norwalk Collaboration

At our last meeting, Dave asked if the West Norwalk Association is working with realtors to promote the association. Anthony had told Dave that we will postpone this discussion until the March meeting, when Ken will be present to answer our questions. This discussion was resumed at this month’s meeting and is discussed in the remainder of this section.

Ken told the attendees that at the end of March, he will be attending a real-estate meeting during which realtors will discuss things that can be used to promote the towns in which they are selling homes. Ken thinks that we should have a page on our website for realtors so they can learn more about the neighborhood, so they can use this information while selling homes in West Norwalk.

Anthony asked Ken if realtors are promoting West Norwalk. Ken said that they are.

Anthony asked Ken what West Norwalk borders are being used by realtors to determine whether or not a home is in West Norwalk. Ken said that about ten years ago, the West Norwalk Association attempted to expand the West Norwalk borders (the association reached out neighbors, and they all consented to this change), but the borders were never extended.

Anthony commented that in the past, some meeting guests thought they they lived in West Norwalk, but they really lived in an area that was not designated to any neighborhood.

Rob also commented that during last month's meeting, the attendees look at several different maps of the City of Norwalk, with each having different borders for West Norwalk.

Ken informed the attendees that realtors are not allowed to say to an interested party "you shouldn't live in [neighborhood/town/city name]"; they are required to point out the positive aspects of the neighborhood.

Chris said that people consider West Norwalk to be "Darien Lite." (This is a positive comment.)

Dave asked how the West Norwalk Association can promote the neighborhood and association in a positive way. Ken said that realtors that want to do well in West Norwalk are going to our website and learning about our town, and that we should make sure our website stayed updated so realtors have all the latest information and pictures.

Dave asked if we should give realtors fliers with some information about the West Norwalk Association so new neighbors know that we exist. Ken said that this would be helpful to realtors.

Anthony briefly talked about our past experiences with Welcome Baskets.

Anthony suggested that we distribute a "Welcome to West Norwalk" letter to new neighbors.

Kathy commented that she discovered the West Norwalk Association via our street signs that were promoting the Holiday Party.

Anthony asked Ken if we can obtain a weekly list of house transactions. Ken said that we can go to the MLS website and find information about new transactions; however, the tax records on this website do not get updated right away. Anthony commented that the newspaper seems to be the best way to track property transactions. Ken agreed.

Dave asked if a realtor is aware of the association, can we include a list of new neighbors in a newsletter? Ken said that the management of this list by realtors would not be frequently updated. Ken stated that when he was at his last realtor meeting, he talked to the board members at the realtor's meeting about the best ways to get information to other realtors about neighborhoods. At the meeting he will be attending at the end of March, the attendees of this meeting will talk about what is going on in various neighborhoods.

Kathy commented that new homeowners should be aware that there is a neighborhood association.

Anthony said that he will create a draft of a "New Neighbor Welcome" letter that we will send to new neighbors.

Spring Social

At the last meeting, we decided that our spring social will take place on the last Friday of March at Oak Hills. Anthony asked if we think the weather will be warm enough for guests to be able to go outside during the party.

Ted commented that we decided on the last Friday of March because we figured that people would already be busy in April.

Anthony asked if we should push the event out to April to the Friday after Easter.

Ken reminded the attendees that some schools are on vacation during the week of Easter

Ken asked if April 24th would be a better date. Kathy commented that it will be much warmer on April 24th.

Anthony stated that he wants to verify that the restaurant owner has a band lined up for April 24th before we choose this date. He will talk to the restaurant owner.

Earth Day Cleanup

Anthony will reach out to Lucy for more details about what we need to do for this event.

New Business

P.O. Box

Anthony informed the attendees that he went to our P.O. Box and the lock was changed. They sent us three letters about overdue payments, but they were not sent to Anthony; instead, they were put in the P.O. box.

Anthony asked Ken how long our typical renewal is. Ken said one year.

Ken received an email about the P.O. box and assumed that Kristin had gotten the email.

Anthony will update the contact email address discussed at the board meeting.

While at the P.O. box, he was allowed to retrieve two checks that were in our P.O. box.

CNNA

Ted stated that did not receive an email from CNNA in regards to a February meeting, and he did not see anything on their Facebook page. Their January meeting was canceled.

Dave informed the attendees that the CNNA is planning to host a meeting on March 30th to discuss the economics of the city, and that we will be getting a notice about it soon.

Coronavirus

Peggy asked if there's anything we should do about the coronavirus to help neighbors prepare for it.

Tom stated that he can ask the City Health Department if there is anything the West Norwalk Association can do to help neighbors prepare for potential coronavirus issues.

Kathy asked what should be done about neighbors with elderly parents. Can we provide them with a phone number?

Kristin commented that we could put a link to the CDC on our website because they provide an unbiased explanation of the virus.

Constant Contact

Stephen informed the attendees that the West Norwalk Association has almost reached the maximum number of contacts that are allowed for the Constant Contact subscription tier that we use. He was able to identify 20 email addresses that no longer exist and removed them from our contact list.

Stephen commented that it is very difficult to determine if a contact is actively engaging in our emails because if they preview our email in the preview pane of their email client such as Outlook, the email is not registered to Constant Contact as “opened.”

Chris commented that if you put an image in the email, the recipient will need to open the email to view the image, so it will be registered to Constant Contact as “opened”. Stephen said the West Norwalk Association logo is included at the top of each email as an image, but we can add more images to our emails and see if this provides us with a more accurate understanding of contact engagement with our emails.

The meeting concluded at 8:43pm.