



Old Astoria Neighborhood Association (OANA)
www.OANA-NY.org

Meeting
March 16th, 2015

Presentation by Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance. With Michael Porto and Jose Sregaard

At 6:30 pm, Mr. Richard Khuzami, President OANA, commenced the meeting by announcing update status on an ongoing participatory budget process by council member Costa Constantinides. Items on the ballot, which were handed out, one in particular attention was item #13 - Dog Run in Astoria, which is already being supported and will build under the Triborough Bridge. Item 12 -Redesign 21st at Astoria Blvd, however, was strongly against this because of causing even more traffic congestion, especially during rush hour. A press release regarding these two items, supporting the dog run and against the resign on 21st, was approved by all the members present.

It was also announced that a 77 story residential/commercial tower in the community board district is in the works of being constructed near the clock tower on Queens plaza, but the community and community board would not have any input on the project. Mr. Khuzami stated to he would go the next day to the community board meeting and advise them of OANA's position that the Community should have input and a say in the matter.

Waterfront Presentation

The director of Outreach and Planning of Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance, Michael Porto, and his partner Jose Sregaard, began the presentation by showing a few PowerPoint slides explaining the company, maintaining and operating the waterfront. Then going into WEDG (Waterfront Edge Design Guidelines) which is available online, and how they are trying to balance public access into and out of the water; balancing resiliency, access, and ecology, getting people into the water where possible. He also talked about how they are looking for 10-15 pilot projects that have a real interface with the waterfront, as the one here in Astoria.

Mr. Khuzami questioned since the Domino sugar factory was certified under the WEDG



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program, what about Hallets Point and Astoria Cove? What is their status? To which Mr. Porto responded that Astoria Cove is in the process of being certified. And Jay Volgara, the architect, is a friend of MWA.

Joe Vacarro asked who was responsible for maintaining the open space on the Domino site? Mr. Porto answered that zoning guidelines dictates how it's maintained, and that he was pretty sure the Domino site was under parks management and they were responsible for it. Mrs. Diane Kontzoglou, treasurer of OANA, questioned who was responsible for maintaining/cleaning the Waterfront? To which Mr. Khuzami responded that it was debatable - Like the Astoria Park waterfront was under DOT (Department of Transportation) where Shore Blvd is. West of Shore Blvd is under park management. Mrs. Kontzoglou added beyond the sidewalk where the rocks are, the entire waterfront from Astoria Park all the way down towards Long Island City and you see garbage touching the shore - who is responsible for all this? Mr. Porto answered that there was no one in particular responsible for the cleanliness of the entire waterfront property; he believed that over a dozen or so city/federal/state entities that have some form of jurisdictions on the waterfront of New York City. He also encouraged the New York doitt website (<http://maps.nyc.gov/doitt/nycitymap/>) which indicate who's owns a specific property.

Mr. Khuzami explained how most would be interested in hearing about the new transportation ferry service that is to be in the year 2017 right by 9th street. Mr. Porto responded that the facts are not all available at this point - as part of the agreement to approve Astoria Cove, the city committed capital funds to build the docks in part of the 55 million dollar figure. He also added that many of the locations already contain infrastructure that can accommodate ferry landings, only six new sites are going to be build, including the one in Astoria. The purposed route of the ferry would start in Astoria to Roosevelt Island then come back to Long Island City North and then go to East 34th street. Though many would argue the location of the landings, one reason is very few amounts of parking locations - needing to have suitable water depths in order to accommodate the ferry and the dock is something that is ultimately considered. Mrs. Irene Guisti remarked on the amount of congestion this ferry would soon generate on her street.



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Claudia Cogar of Astoria Houses commented that LaGuardia airport passengers would be taking the water taxis rather than the buses to get across. Mr. Porto answered that as part of a separate track from the one spoken earlier; the governor announced an express ferry service from the East side of Manhattan to LaGuardia airport. Depending whether or not the individual lives closer where the ferry is set to dock or not will determine which they ultimately take. Mr. Khuzami asked what the intended size of the vessels would be; would there be seats or standing only, how long would it take? Mr. Porto replied the city would put a call to private companies that operate ferry transit in the region - estimating somewhere in between 200-300 passengers, similar to the East River ferry; those have seats, first and upper deck. The private operators will have a final say on the matter. He also stated that between the entire route from Astoria to Manhattan would take about 15-20 minutes in total. The terms of transportation after arriving at 34th street was also discussed, since there is no subway at the location, there is the M34 selective bus service and the New York waterway which operates the East River ferry have private busses.

Claudia Cogar asked if it was 100% sure that this water ferry was going to happen where stated and when, to which Mr. Porto responded that there was nothing standing in the way at the moment to prevent it from happening and 2017 was the project start date for most of the routes.

Mr. Khuzami asked to know more over the echo dock pier on the verge of being renovated near the Astoria Houses and the playground, and what does that mean for the area. Mr. Porto noted that the councilmember has been very proud and supportive of what would be a project that would bring an environmental uplift to the cove, as well as create infrastructure for docking vessels and bring education programming to the community. He also mentioned creating a facility for storage to keep power boats, such as canoes and kayaks, which would be used by the community.

Claudia Cogar asked about the filtering of the water, is there anything design to help with this process considering our advanced technologies. To which Mr. Porto replied that's what the waste water treatment plants are supposed to do, for which there are 18 of these throughout the five boroughs, and when there are storm/rain events, if city sewer system isn't capable of handling the wastewater/storm water - they have many combined sewer outfalls across the waterfront to help with the management and filtering where possible



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Mr Khuzami commented on the Durst Organization's takeover of the Hallets Point project and how they are very progressive in terms of energy and water conservation, and green construction.

Diane Kontzoglou then stated she felt developers should not be allowed to proceed unless they institute green construction.

Kevin Hernandez then stated that we should not hold the developers responsible. Dealing with city agencies forces them to take the most cost effective route.

Mr. Khuzami then stated that this reflected back on MWA's position that environmental standards must remain high, but the city's permitting process must be streamlined to cut costs.

Kevin Hernandez then provided examples of how difficult it is to deal with city agencies.

Diane Kontzoglou and Irene Stathakos then discussed the locking of the promenade at Shore Towers.

Mr. Khuzami thanked the presenters and those who attended.