



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

## **Old Astoria Neighborhood Association - Minutes**

March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2016

Richard Khuzami began the meeting by asking for a moment of silence to honor Bishop Anthony, who recently passed away. Bishop Anthony had served at the Greek Orthodox Church since the early 1980's. His son, Basil, who was present, spoke about the Bishop's ties to the neighborhood, mentioning that he didn't want to leave Astoria when he became ill.

### **PARKING: ISSUES AND POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS**

Mr. Khuzami reiterated that one of OANA's goals is to think outside the box and bring about new types of initiatives. He said he's like the organization to think creatively about ways to solve the longtime issue of parking problems in the neighborhood.

Several members brought up the problems they have with parking on their blocks. Richard suggested that Residential Parking Permits might be a creative solution for our neighborhood. It's something that has been used successfully in other cities but and countries has never been tried in New York City. Anyone who wants to work on OANA's parking initiatives should contact Richard. Possible strategies include petitions, resolutions, and investigating ways permits could be implemented. Richard emphasized that our neighborhood is growing rapidly, and now might be a good time to start discussing the issue.

### **WEBSITE**

Richard told the meeting that parts of OANA's new website are now up. (Work is continuing and some sections of the site will be uploaded soon.) One of OANA's missions is to educate the community and the website and Facebook will be a big part of this. There are sections on Astoria's history and information about local news and issues, meeting minutes and information about upcoming events in the neighborhood.

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### **PROPRIETARY BUDGETING; GUEST SPEAKER COUNCILMAN COSTA CONSTANTINIDES**

Richard announced that Councilman Costa Constantinides would be setting up a pop-up voting site for proprietary budgeting proposals at the end of the meeting and urged everyone to vote on the way out.



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Councilman Constantinides first gave an update on the problems with drug activity at the Sean's Place playground. He said he will soon be introducing a bill requiring the Parks Department to lock all children's playgrounds at night.

He then gave an overview of the participatory budgeting process, describing it as a way to bring "a little more democracy" to the way funds are allocated for local projects. He described how residents proposed over 200 ideas which were then cut down to the 20 proposals that appear on the ballot and gave an update on the progress being made on some of last year's winning projects like the new dog run and upgrades to local schools

#### SECURITY

Richard spoke about the neighborhood security, which was the theme for this month's meeting. Security has been an important issue for OANA for several years. A 2014 OANA resolution called for security cameras as part of the ULURP for the Astoria Cove development.

#### GUEST SPEAKER: DETECTIVE EDDIE NEGRON, 114<sup>TH</sup> PRECIINCT

Detective Negron addressed this year's spike in crime. He said that some of this is due to a change in the law that now classifies more domestic assaults as felonies and to overnight activities around some of the neighborhood's nightlife establishments.

Grand larceny and identity theft are also on the rise in the precinct. He urged everyone to check the legitimacy of unfamiliar websites before making online purchases. Fake IRS scams have also been targeting people in our community. He reminded people that the IRS usually doesn't contact people by phone. If you receive a call like this, hang up and call the IRS directly.

There's now a new online application process for street activity permits. If you or your organizations have any questions about this, please call Det. Negron at 718-626-9327 for assistance.

He reported that seven processions took place on Good Friday with not problems. The precinct is looking forward to Greek Orthodox Good Friday in two weeks.

He also spoke about the problems at Sean's Place. He said that he had met with Constantinides and a local parents group. The issues improved for seven months while auxiliary police officers were deployed to playground. He mentioned that he often learned about quality of life problems from posts on social media and urged community members to contact him first about quality of life issues.



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An audience member asked about neighborhood watch groups. He mentioned that there are some active groups, many of which focus on graffiti cleanup. Contact him if you'd like to start one in your area.

Another question asked how members of Astoria Houses NYCHA Safety Patrols can avoid retaliation when reporting issues to 911. Negron urged them to not give their names and emphasize that they want to stay anonymous.

Another question dealt with three recent violent incidents: a shooting on 9<sup>th</sup> Street, the murder of a liquor store owner on Astoria Boulevard and a shooting on 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue. He said that all three incidents are close to being resolved. The 9<sup>th</sup> street incident stemmed from an ongoing dispute between two people who know each other. The Astoria Boulevard murder and several other incidents on the same day are currently being addressed in court. Because of this, he's unable to provide full details, but he stressed that this was a very unusual incident with "mitigating factors" and reassured people that this is not something likely to happen again. The shooting of the livery driver on 36<sup>th</sup> avenue stemmed from problems at a nightclub and is close to being resolved.

**GUEST SPEAKER: FRITZ (KING VINCENT), PRIVATE SECURITY EXPERT**

Fritz introduced himself and gave some background on his company, On Point Security. They are a locally owned, cooperative company that 's monitored by Emporium Security, which is a partnership between public, private, and non-profit entities. He spoke about the company's proposed "Bigger Astoria, Safer Astoria" initiative. He said that as the neighborhood grows, it's important for the community to think about ways to improve security. Two solutions he proposed are cameras and organization.

An organized solution might include safety patrols organized by community groups in conjunction with a private security company. These patrols could keep an eye out for crime and could also address quality of life issues through tactics such as putting stickers on cars that are blocking residents' driveways.

Cameras can be installed quickly and often have an immediate impact on crime, as people change their behavior when they know they're being monitored. His company provided super hi definition cameras, charging \$950 for two units that can store 2 weeks of footage on a hard drive.

In response to questions, Fritz said that individual homeowners would pay for the cameras, but that a third party (such as a developer) may be interested in paying to establish a monitoring station. This station would keep tabs on all the cameras on the peninsula and would be in contact with the 114<sup>th</sup> Precinct.



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GUEST SPEAKER: TONY MELONI, PUBLIC SAFETY CHAIR COMMUNITY BOARD 1

Tony said that in the interest of time, he would come back at another date to outline all of the safety programs available in the neighborhood.

He mentioned that the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Hell Gate Bridge is this summer. He will be spearheading a celebration in Astoria Park, in conjunction with OANA, the Astoria Park Alliance, and other neighborhood groups. Activities may include a concert and fireworks.

Richard adjourned the meeting.