

October 2010

**progress through
participation**

epoa news

**The Official Newsletter of the Eastern Property Owners' Association
Garden City, New York 11530
www.gcepoa.org**

Public Meeting Tuesday, October 12, 7:30 pm, Garden City Library

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President's Message by Walter McKenna

As the summer comes to an end and the EPOA begins its 2010-2011 term, I welcome our new directors, Joseph Moody, Edward Welch, Robert Rymers and Benjamin Murolo. I appreciate their willingness to volunteer and look forward to their input on the many issues that we will discuss in the months ahead. We continue to monitor many issues and make progress on prior initiatives.

Once again, the future of St Paul's has been a topic discussed at board meetings and public hearings over the summer and throughout the month of September. As I write this message, the EPOA is involved in providing its residents with information on the issue at hand, so that you can comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The comment period for this DEIS ends on October 12, 2010. Please see the EPOA website for information on the DEIS document, as well as how to comment. I am hoping that the entire Board of Trustees (BOT) realizes that this issue is important to each and every resident and moves forward in an appropriate manner that will allow ALL residents to vote in a public referendum so that an official opinion as to the future of St Paul's is determined. Regardless of one's opinion on the St Paul's issue, if some trustees do not vote in favor of holding this referendum, it is the EPOA opinion that they would be disenfranchising all residents of their right to vote on this issue.

On other initiatives, I am pleased to report that the Citizens Budget Review and Advisory Committee (CBRAC) has continued to make progress on many of the items suggested in their report to the Finance Committee from last March. This committee, with EPOA representatives Tom McArdle and Joseph Courtade, has continued to meet over the summer months while working with Village staff to review and implement new reporting formats and organize efforts to review many large budget expense areas prior to entering the next budget cycle. An expenditure currently being focused on is the Village insurance obligations. As you will recall, this committee and their recommendations were well received by the Mayor and the entire BOT, which publicly commended them for their efforts. Many of the items suggested by the committee have been considered and are in the process of being implemented. If you have expertise in a particular area of finance or budgeting and would like to volunteer in this or other efforts of the EPOA, feel free to contact me via the www.gcepoa.com website.

Another very important issue that we are continuing to follow and act upon as needed is the Nassau Hub Study (www.nassauhub.com). Nassau County was the recipient of numerous federally

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Newsletter Editor
 Christine Mullaney

St. Paul's

As Village residents know, the controversy over what to do with the St. Paul's School main building has been ongoing more than 17 years, without finding a viable use for the building at a reasonable cost to the taxpayers.

Trustee Donnelly and I, along with several other Village Trustees, as well as the Board of Directors of the EPOA, believe that it is time to hold the promised referendum to float a bond issue for demolition. Not holding the referendum would disenfranchise the people of Garden City who have long awaited the St. Paul's controversy to end.

The public opinion poll conducted in December, 2008, by the Eastern and Estates POAs, as well as the Adelphi poll sponsored by all four POAs several years earlier, showed that a plurality of the thousands of participants in both polls wished to demolish the building.

After considering the results of both polls, the Board of Trustees (BOT) embarked on a course of action to put the decision in front of the taxpayers by means of a formal referendum for an up or down vote that would authorize the BOT to issue municipal bonds and accept bids for demolition, which would not have to be done immediately. Availability of funds and bond market conditions, coupled with their effect on taxes, will be intensely examined by the BOT before any action is taken to issue bonds.

The BOT Must Vote to Allow the Referendum

We, along with several other of your present Trustees, believe that 17 years of proposed projects to save St. Paul's, none of which have proven to be affordable to the taxpayers or addressed long-range operating costs after construction, and some of which have been presented by the Committee to Save St. Paul's (CSSP), is enough. We believe that the referendum will finally provide the opportunity for residents to officially cast a straightforward vote for or against our floating a bond issue in a specific amount for the purpose of demolition. We think this is only fair. Unfortunately, not all of the current Trustees agree.

Although many of you have personally told us that you favor our allowing a referendum because you want to vote, it is critical that you tell the entire BOT. Please send letters or emails to the BOT simply stating whether or not you want a referendum to be held. All comments must be received not later than October 12, and should include your name and address to show that you are a Garden City resident. Non-residents are sending messages and attending our BOT meetings in opposition to our allowing a referendum while they advocate saving the building, which

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Trustees' Update



**by Nicholas
Episcopia
and Dennis
Donnelly**

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Trustees' Update

is at Village taxpayers' expense and not theirs. You may address your referendum comments to Mayor Rothschild at mayor@gardencityny.net or by sending a letter to the mayor at Village Hall, 351 Stewart Avenue, Garden City.

If Garden City voters pass a bond referendum authorizing the BOT to issue bonds for the purpose of demolishing the St. Paul's main building and Ellis Hall, demolition will not include the Field House and Cluett Hall. A positive vote would create approximately seven acres of cleared land which could be used as a park for all residents, additional playing fields, or for some other purpose. At present there are no plans in place for a specific use.

Procedure to Hold a Bond Referendum

The State Environmental Review Act (SEQRA) requires that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) must be completed before the BOT can authorize bond counsel to prepare the referendum for a vote.

Following procedure, at our June 19 meeting, we accepted the St. Paul's School Demolition for Additional Open Space Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), scheduled public hearings, set October 12 as the deadline for receiving oral and written public comment, and made the DEIS available in the Library and on the Village website. The first public hearing was held on August 19, and the second session was rescheduled for September 30.

We expect the SEQRA process to be completed by mid-November when the Final Environmental Impact Statement, along with the Findings Statement encompassing all public comments received by the BOT, will be issued. If the BOT votes to allow the referendum, the referendum timeline will then be set in motion.

A Referendum Enables Everyone to Vote

It should be noted that even though NYS law permits BOTs to issue bonds without a public vote, in view of the polarization created by St. Paul's, there are those of us who have publicly stated that a bond referendum is the fairest way to resolve the 17-year saga.

The amount of the bond issue, which has not yet been officially determined, must be on the ballot.

The Committee to Save St. Paul's (CSSP), which opposes demolition, has stated that the cost is approximately \$8 million or more. However, the Village recently received two preliminary proposals from reputable and experienced demolition contractors that estimate the cost to be between \$1.8 million and \$3 million.

The time to campaign for or against passage of the bond referendum is AFTER the BOT votes to allow a referendum. The issue at hand right now is whether or not you want the BOT to hold a bond referendum in the first place—not whether you are for or against demolishing the building. If the BOT allows the referendum, there will be time to campaign for your point of view before the vote takes place.

The CSSP's Newest Proposal

On June 29, at the request of the CSSP, the BOT held a special meeting so that the CSSP could present their newest proposal for "The Preservation of the Historic Main Building." Their plan does not address historic preservation but calls for modest patch repairs to certain parts of the exterior that are planned to last for approximately five years.

When asked by members of the BOT, the CSSP provided no concrete answers as to what their plan for development of the main building is to be at the end of five years, and, therefore, at this time, there can be no projection of the long-term financial liability to the taxpayers.

When asked if he would allow the Village to review and verify his estimated cost for the repair work he tentatively included in the five-year plan, the CSSP consultant who prepared the proposal declined.

In other matters, the conclusion of the first quarter of the budget year shows that each Village department has done an excellent job of holding expenses and overtime to an absolute minimum. With the support of the Citizen's Budget Review Committee and a new initiative with Adelphi University, all financial systems within the Village will be modernized and made more user friendly. The Public Works Department has been repaving roads and replacing sidewalks and curbs. The resurfacing of parking lots 7N and the Medical Center has begun and the pool lot is scheduled for later in the year.

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President's Message

funded grants to review the regional transportation needs within the defined HUB area, which includes Garden City. They have selected a consultant to manage this process and are currently seeking input from the public. You can visit their website and provide your comments as well as register to receive emailed notifications to stay informed on this important study. I have been in contact with the lead consultant on this project and communicated to him that we are interested in developing a dialogue as to our concerns and suggestions. We are in the process of setting a date for him and the county to speak at a public forum hosted by the EPOA in November. We will communicate the date of this event to you via email and in the local papers.

You may also have noticed the ongoing work at the Middle School and High School. This work was part of the Bond Resolution of the Garden City School District that was approved last October. Projects initiated over the summer included the re-configuration of the Middle School parking lot and the roof replacement at the High School. All projects are moving along according to the proposed timelines. Please visit the School District website at www.gardencity.k12.ny.us for information on these projects and all district wide activities.

The residents of the East should be assured that your fellow residents who volunteer their time to serve as members of the Board of the EPOA, as well as on the various committees and commissions in the Village, remain committed to protecting your interests and concerns. If you have any questions or concerns, or would like to become involved, I encourage you to contact the EPOA via the contact link on our website at www.gcepoa.org so that we can hear from and respond to you.

Please support our efforts by becoming a member of the EPOA. Joining is easy by going to our website at www.gcepoa.org. You can also go to our website for updates on other Village issues and to email us with your comments or concerns.

An Interview with Garden City Fire Chief William Graham



Bill Graham is serving his second term as Chief of Department. A Garden City resident for 17 years and active as a volunteer for 14 plus years, he is retired from New York City Ladder Company 169. Chief Graham answered questions from EPOA Director Christine Mullaney.

Q: The Garden City Fire Department is 90 years old in 2010. It is a unique combination of volunteers and paid fire fighters. How did this arrangement originate and how is it structured?

A: Interestingly, the fire department commenced as part of a real estate promotion. With the sale of each parcel of real estate, founder Alexander T. Stewart and his successor, The Garden City Company, contracted to provide essential services, including fire. The employees of the company all doubled as firemen when necessary, even though they might be regularly employed as clerks or gardeners. In 1899, after the devastating Garden City Hotel fire, the Garden City Company promoted the formation of a regular volunteer organization staffed by the residents of the community. The Fire Department officially incorporated in 1920, and was brought within the Village government.

Q: How big is the department, both volunteers and paid?

A: The department is composed of four volunteer fire companies and one paid fire company. We have a current roster of 134 firefighters, consisting of 100 volunteers and 34 paid members.

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Q: Do the volunteer and paid members perform the same functions within the department?

A: All our firefighters are trained as first responders. Our firefighters provide various functions in our day-to-day operations. All firefighters, both volunteer and paid, are offered training in all facets of structural firefighting as well as specialty training including vehicle extrication, hazardous materials and apparatus operations. All firefighters receive NYS mandated training from accredited Fire Training Academies. In addition, our paid firefighters are stationed in our three fire stations in the Village 24 hours a day and provide apparatus, equipment, station maintenance and fire inspections.

Q: The department website indicates that GC is one of only two fire departments on Long Island that can depend on a “fast initial response 24 hours a day.” That surprised me. I assumed that all fire departments can respond 24 hours a day. Could you expand on that statement?

A: With our complement of both volunteer and paid personnel, we are able to bring apparatus and manpower to the scene efficiently. While our headquarters (paid) company firefighters respond to the emergency scene with certain apparatus, our volunteer members can respond directly to the scene without having to stop at the firehouse first. (Contractually the paid firemen drive the “first due apparatus,” except for the heavy rescue vehicle that the volunteers operate.)

Q: Chief Graham, what are your responsibilities and what is your professional background?

A: As Chief, I am the commander of the department, both volunteer and paid. It is my responsibility to ensure that our department is prepared for the emergencies that may present themselves. I am fortunate that I have three Assistant Chiefs as well as a full complement of line officers, both volunteer and paid, that assist in the day-to day-operations. They do an excellent job of coordinating regular training, as well as conducting equipment and apparatus maintenance and fire inspections.

Personally, I have been involved in the fire service for nearly 30 years. I am a retired firefighter from the Fire Department of the City of New York where I served for more than 20 years. I have also served for more than 14 years within the GCFD, where I have acted as a company officer and Assistant Fire Chief. In addition, my education, training and experience as a business owner and Certified Public Accountant have served me well in my management role in the department.

Q: Are the volunteers exclusively from Garden City? Are there any women among them?

A: In order to become a volunteer firefighter, you must be a resident of the Village, so all of our Volunteer firefighters have community ties with the Village. Most of our volunteer firefighters reside within the Village, while some have moved to nearby areas such as Mineola, but remain active in our department and live very close to our Village. We have one female firefighter serving currently.

Q: How and where do the volunteers train?

A: Our volunteer firefighters receive extensive training. We conduct weekly in-house training sessions and attend the Nassau County Fire Service Academy for a full complement of training courses. In addition, our firefighters attend local, regional and national seminars. We also have our own training facilities and mock-ups in both headquarters and at our Village yard training site. Last year alone, our volunteers put in over 5,000 man hours of training.

Q: How many fires each year does the department typically respond to?

A: Our department responds to over 1,000 calls for assistance annually with a mix of both residential and commercial calls. Fortunately, we have only one or two serious fires that occur in the Village each year, but we handle many other calls, including fire alarm activations, automobile accident spills, vehicle extrication calls, mutual aids to surrounding departments, brush fires, car fires and more.

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Aircraft Noise Pollution

The three main culprits of aircraft noise pollution in Garden City: increased air traffic volume, low-flying aircraft and the excessive amount of time the landing gear is in its deployed position.



by Leo Stimmler
EPOA Liaison to Garden City's Environmental Advisory Board

Gina Fornasar of Garden City has been working for several years to mitigate aircraft noise. Her children cannot watch television or talk on the telephone with the windows open without aircraft noise disturbing them. "The din from low-flying aircraft is one of the most disturbing sounds in our environment and increases the stress level on my family and that of my neighbors. Even with ear plugs we are frequently awakened from the noise of planes in the middle of the night," she said. Fornasar has spoken with neighbors, attended meetings of the Village's Environmental Advisory Board and met with Congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy.

Other residents concur with Fornasar and say the communities of East Williston, Mineola, Garden City, Floral Park and Franklin Square are bearing a disproportionate burden of air traffic. For the calendar year 2004, there were 25,338 arriving flights over Garden City into Runway 22L at JFK. By 2009, that number had dramatically increased to almost 60,000 flights. *That is a stunning 142 percent increase in aircraft and their associated noise over our area in only five years.*

Because Long Island skies are so densely crowded, in order to fit into JFK's crowded traffic patterns and to maintain a safe distance from one another during descent, aircraft engines are throttled up and down. These abrupt throttle adjustments significantly increase noise pollution.

In addition to a staggering increase in the number of arrivals to JFK Airport, Peter Damiano of Garden City discovered that over 7,500 of the 9,695 arriving flights in May and June of this year flew below 2,000 feet over Garden City. Almost 400 of them were below 1,700 feet with some as low as 1,100 ft. In response to Damiano's research data, the Federal Aviation Administration's Eastern Regional Office in Jamaica, NY, was contacted about minimum altitude restrictions. The FAA said their regulations indicate that there is no minimum altitude requirement when in the process of landing. It is left to each pilot's discretion.

Laurence Quinn, a member of Garden City's Board of Trustees and chairman of the Village's Environmental Advisory Board (EAB), has been focusing his attention on the landing gears of commercial aircraft, which, he said, contribute significantly to the total aircraft noise in the landing process. According to NASA, the landing gear—including the flaps—creates almost as much noise as the aircraft engines on approach to landing. "If a jet needs to slow down quickly, they will throttle down *and* put the landing gear down early," explained Trustee Quinn, whose email is lquinn@gardencityny.net.

Quinn stated that the National Business Aircraft Association (NBAA) recommends that aircraft not deploy their landing gear down until they are within four miles of the airport. Sewanhaka High School in Floral Park, just over the western border of Stewart Manor, is approximately four miles—as the crow flies—from JFK airport. Thus, if the airlines accepted the NBAA recommendation, no flight over Garden City would have its landing gear deployed.

In June one Garden City resident counted 6 of 31 jet aircraft—almost 20 percent—with their landing gear deployed over his home in the Mott section. By the time the planes reach the other side of Garden City, many more jets have their landing gear and wing flaps deployed. On some days residents of Garden City's Western POA say half of the flights have their landing gear deployed.

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Aircraft Noise Pollution

What about the NBAA recommendation that landing gear not be engaged until pilots are within four miles of the airport? Unfortunately, despite the NBAA’s suggestion, the FAA stated that there is no set altitude or distance when a commercial airliner should deploy its landing gear and set its wing flaps. It is “left to the discretion of each airline.”

Not everyone agrees that aircraft noise is a problem. “JFK was built in 1948, many years before most of us moved into Garden City. And it is 10 years since the last Concord rattled our homes. With a new generation of quieter jet engines, it is 100 percent better today than it was 20 years ago” one resident said.

A more typical response is one of resignation. Given the clout of the Port Authority and the FAA, some residents grouse that nothing can be done about loud aircraft noise.

Still other residents offer two strategies for change: (1) filing a complaint with the FAA with a copy to your elected officials and (2) working cooperatively with other Long Island communities to effect change.

To file a complaint about aircraft noise, Trustee Quinn has suggested emailing Paul Laude, FAA spokesperson, at paul.laude@faa.gov. Please provide as many facts as possible, including your name, address, time and date of the disturbance and a description of the aircraft if it is visible. And in a tough election year for many incumbents, you might go to Senators Schumer, Gillibrand and Congresswoman McCarthy’s websites and let them know about your position on low-flying aircraft.

A second strategy, proposed by Peter Damiano and others, is for the Village of Garden City to join the Town of Hempstead-Village Aircraft Safety & Noise Abatement Committee (TVASNAC).

This Committee, which has monthly public meetings, concerns itself with inordinate aircraft noise and is made up of a dozen or so villages in the Town of Hempstead, along with the town’s presiding supervisor. Speak with your Village trustees—Nick Episcopia and Dennis Donnelly in the East—about this committee if you believe working cooperatively with other communities will improve the Village’s chances of reducing aircraft noise. And tell your EPOA President, Walter McKenna, if you believe it would be worthwhile for our Village to be part of this committee. About 75 percent of the committee’s expenses are picked up by the Town of Hempstead, which would leave the Village with a fee of about \$1500 to \$2000 per year.

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Interview with Fire Chief William Graham

Q: October is fire prevention month. What is on this year’s agenda?

A: In an effort to better educate communities throughout the U.S. about smoke alarm recommendations, the nonprofit National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) is promoting “Smoke Alarms: A Sound You Can Live With!” as the theme for this year’s Fire Prevention Week campaign, October 3-9, which the Garden City Fire Department is supporting locally. Our annual Open House & Fire Prevention Day will be held on October 3rd this year. Each year we educate hundreds of residents on the importance of fire safety and have a full agenda of fire safety demonstrations, as well as demonstrations of what we do as firefighters. It’s a great day to spend with our residents. Also, our paid firefighters conduct a “learn not to burn” program in headquarters where each year hundreds of pre-school children learn about our jobs as firefighters and the importance of fire safety. It’s wonderful that all of our firefighters engage in fire safety and fire prevention education.

Save the Date

Tuesday, October 12, 7:30 pm

EPOA Public Meeting

Garden City Library, Lower Level

**Trustees Nick Episcopia and Dennis Donnelly
will answer questions and update residents on St. Paul's
and other important issues.**

**Please check our website—www.gcepoa.org—and the
local papers for additional topics and speakers.**

Bring your ideas and questions. Participate with your neighbors.

epoa news

**Eastern Property Owners' Assoc., Inc.
P. O. Box 7525
Garden City, New York 11530**

DATED MATERIAL

Or Current Resident