

# Minutes of the Coalition of Norwalk Neighborhood Associations Meeting

**Monday, February 13th, 2006  
City Hall, Room 231, 7:30 PM**

**Next Meeting: Monday, March 13th, 2006  
City Hall, Room A300, 7:30 PM  
(THIS WILL BE ANOTHER ROOM CHANGE)**

## Attendees:

Dan Grundman (NASH)	Maribeth Becker (ENNA)
Jill Montesanto (Save Cranbury)	Anna Mae Schaab (Silvermine Crossing)
Al Raymond (Spring Hill/Hospital)	Diane Witkowsky (Spring Hill/Hospital)
Dick Vicenzi (Shorefront Park)	Diane Lauricella (ENNA/LWV)
Jim DelGreco (Golden Hill)	Pam Garrett (Harbor Shores)
Ernst deFlines (RCA)	Don Nelson (TAC/Clean and Green)
Joseph Sette (West Norwalk)	Marija Bryant (Historical Commission)
Bob Wagman (West Norwalk)	Paul Littell (Village Creek)
Michael Mushak (Golden Hill)	Laurel Lindstrom (ENNA)
Jim Clark (Golden Hill)	Fulika Cassell (Spring Hill/Hospital Association / Norwalk Hour)
Paul Sotnick (Norwalk DPW)	David Shockley (Norwalk Neighborhood Improvement Coordinator)
Hal Alvord (Norwalk DPW)	

The meeting was called to order at 7:30p.m.

Minutes of the January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2006 meeting were approved.

Coordinator Change – Bob Wagman gave a brief history of the CNNA, which was formed just over 2 years ago by a small group of representatives from several neighborhood associations. Bob acknowledged 2 founding members who played an integral part in the organization – Laurel Lindstrom and Leigh Grant. Consistent with the by-laws, the coordinator can serve a maximum of 2 consecutive 1-year terms and so Bob is stepping down as CNNA coordinator. Maribeth Becker will become the new coordinator for the organization effective immediately.

Free Tree Program – Hal Alvord of the Department of Public Works (DPW) gave an overview of the City's Free Tree Program. The city has budgeted money for planting street trees to improve the streetscape and ultimately the quality of life for residents. The program started out with an individual approach where homeowners requested trees for their property. This method generated a great deal of interest, with over 200 residents requesting trees. Trees were prioritized so that residents living in "barren areas" received priority over those living in "Sherwood Forest".

The approach is now shifting toward a "neighborhood approach" where the neighborhood associations through their designated tree liaisons identify "blank spots" in their area as potential planting locations. Representatives of DPW, the Tree Advisory Committee (TAC) and the neighborhood association then make a site visit to determine if it is a good location for tree planting.

The Golden Hill Association recently proposed a planting location on Elmwood Avenue that would restore the street to its former grandeur as a tree lined canopy. The process worked very well for this project, and the TAC is hopeful that other associations will get involved to bring more greenery to their neighborhoods.

Hal indicated that even heavily treed neighborhoods can still help the City with tree issues by identifying dangerous trees in need of trimming or removal, alerting DPW regarding incidents of illegal cutting of City trees, and helping to count and map the City's 50,000 public trees.

For more information you can contact Hal Alvord or Paul Sotnick at 854-7791.  
(The tree planting presentation will be posted to the CNNA website [www.norwalkneighborhoods.com](http://www.norwalkneighborhoods.com))

DPW Overview - Hal then presented an overview of the DPW. In addition to learning all that DPW is responsible for maintaining for the City, we also learned how old much of the City's infrastructure and DPW's fleet is. Hal then had to run out to a budget meeting, so Paul Sotnick, a civil engineer and deputy tree warden for the City, stayed to answer questions pertaining to DPW.

A suggestion was made to alert neighborhood associations prior to street paving in their area so that they could help encourage residents to move vehicles in advance of the paving.

For specific issues, you can contact the City's Customer Service call center at 854-3200 or email them at [customerservice@norwalkct.org](mailto:customerservice@norwalkct.org). This is a great way of getting your issues dealt with – and also a great way for the city to track what types of issues city residents are experiencing most.

(The DPW presentation will be posted to the CNNA website [www.norwalkneighborhoods.com](http://www.norwalkneighborhoods.com))

"Get to Know Your Neighbors": Jim DelGreco - President of the Golden Hill Association presented an overview of their neighborhood and association that was founded in 1972 and represents approximately 400 homes. Their boundaries are Connecticut Ave, Flaxhill Road, Taylor Ave and Fairfield Ave.

"Focused Volunteerism" is the key to all that they do as an organization. They have 2 big events to generate interest and build a sense of community in their neighborhood. The two events last year were a neighborhood cleanup and a tag sale/block party. A couple hundred people attended these successful neighborhood events!

GHA does not collect dues from its members, but it holds fundraisers to generate money for the organization. Having a supportive organization allows Jim DelGreco and Jim Clark (VP) to focus on the forward thinking that keeps their organization moving ahead.

The GHA is currently focused on 3 major areas:

- Historic Preservation – Approximately 40% of houses in their neighborhood are over 100 years old, and an additional 30% are more than 75 years old. They are compiling a booklet to distribute to property owners that highlights the availability and benefits of using tax credits to rehabilitate historic structures.
- Illegal Apartments – The GHA area has a major problem involving houses that have been converted into more living units than zoning allows. The "illegal apartment" issue is a threat to public safety (fire and health department issues) and poses a strain on the city's infrastructure (more cars on street, more kids in the schools, etc). The GHA is currently documenting illegal apartments in order to bring it to the City's attention in a focused fashion. GHA also takes an active role when a neighborhood house goes on the market to ensure that the realtor is representing it correctly. Increased immigration and the high cost of Fairfield County housing costs contribute greatly to the illegal apartment situation.
- Cedar Street Business District - The GHA is currently involved in the City's Neighborhood Centers Revitalization Program which is funded by a CBDG grant and matching funds. This is a collaborative project involving the GHA, the 2<sup>nd</sup> taxing district, the local business district and the City to revitalize one of their neighborhood business districts. They have a video slide show presentation if anyone wishes to take a look at their proposal. Contact Jim DelGreco at 852-0357 or [jim.delgreco@hudson.com](mailto:jim.delgreco@hudson.com).

Updated Mission Statement: The CNNA board revised the organization's mission statement. It will be posted on the website. Please review and let us know if you have any comments on it.

Press Coverage: The CNNA is looking to increase our press awareness to spread our message and generate more citizen involvement in our organization. Please tell a friend or neighbor about the good work that we are doing together and encourage them to join their neighborhood association if they haven't already.

The CNNA board recently met with Fulika Cassell of the Norwalk Hour to discuss our mission and projects. Look for her column in the Hour this weekend. We hope to have an ongoing relationship with Fulika and the Hour to promote our organization. We have also suggested that the Hour publish a regular section on the various projects that are in the P&Z pipeline so that residents can more easily assess the status of developments slated for their areas. We would also appreciate any other press coverage we can get.

Neighborhood Cleanups / Citywide Cleanup: David Shockley, Norwalk's Neighborhood Preservation Coordinator discussed the different ways that neighborhood associations can join cleanup efforts to help improve the appearance of their neighborhood.

- Neighborhoods Cleanups – Associations can organize a cleanup that includes bulky waste (couch, refrigerator, etc) pickup along with litter removal – with the idea of encouraging residents to have these large items hauled away rather than dumping them. Due to the cost of hauling these large items away, David is only able to schedule a few of these type of neighborhood cleanups each year. Contact David if you are interested in having. Your association can do clean-ups that are primarily 'litter removal' at any time.
- Citywide Cleanup – Last spring the City had a successful Citywide Cleanup with almost 500 volunteers collecting 82 tons of litter and debris. The City will be doing a Citywide Cleanup again this year – on 2 different days in April and May, focusing on litter removal and beautification. Last year the cleanup was organized through the Anti-Litter Task Force; this year, David is asking for more help from the various neighborhood associations. In addition to gathering neighborhood volunteers, help is needed in the areas of gaining publicity for the event and reaching out to the business community. If you are interested in helping with this year's cleanup, please contact David Shockley at 854-7810 x6782 or [dshockley@norwalkct.org](mailto:dshockley@norwalkct.org).

Old Business:

- West Ave - Norwalk Redevelopment Public Hearing to be held Wednesday February 22<sup>nd</sup> at 6:30 PM in City Hall Council Chambers. The February 3<sup>rd</sup> document can be found at: <http://www.norwalkct.org/AgendaAction/WestAveCoorDev/draft1.pdf>

New Business:

- Save Cranbury/White Barn Theater – This is the last big piece of Open Space in the City at 16 acres and it is currently slated for sale. The Norwalk Land Trust is trying to purchase it or work with a forward-thinking developer to see that Open Space is preserved for the City. Save Cranbury Association and the Norwalk Land Trust are having an important rally at City Hall on Thursday February 15<sup>th</sup> at 7PM in City Hall's Community Room. This is a critical event. Please come and show your support!
- Slow Down Week - submit your neighborhood's most pressing speeding locations to Sgt. Andre Velez at 854-3197 or [avelez@norwalkct.org](mailto:avelez@norwalkct.org) by early March for inclusion in "Slow Down Week" to occur the week of March 20<sup>th</sup>. Encourage your neighbors to make homemade signs urging motorists to SLOW DOWN.
- Budget – Capital and Operating Budgets are now available for review. The department heads have been presented their requests to the Finance Director and the Planning Commission. The requests then go on to the mayor, the Board of Estimate and Taxation (BET), and ultimately the Common Council. We still have time to affect the City's budget by speaking for what we want. There is power in numbers. Diane Lauricella is organizing a Budget Task Force to compile and prioritize our requests. Contact Diane at 854-5315 or [dlauricella24@yahoo.com](mailto:dlauricella24@yahoo.com) if you are interested in having a voice on the City's budget.

View the proposed Capital Budget at: <http://www.norwalkct.org/Budgets/20062007CapBud/TOC.htm>

Contact Hal Alvord if you wish to see the proposed DPW operating budget in an easy to understand functional approach.

Adjournment was 10:17 PM.

Respectively submitted,

MB