

**Oakdale Civic Association
General Monthly Meeting
March 9, 2009**

2009 Officers

President:	Ray Carta	560-4650
Vice President:	Stan Feldman	523-8835
Treasurer:	Pat Kassten	589-8222
Recording Secretary	Carol Schwasnick	589-7455
Corresponding Secretary	Marilyn Triolo	589-5981

Board Members

Cathy Cohen
John Eder

Minutes Recorded by Carol Schwasnick

www.OakdaleCivicAssociation.org

President Ray Carta called the meeting to order at 7:30pm. Minutes were presented from last month's meeting. These have been posted on the website and hard copies are available up front. President Carta requested a motion to accept minutes as posted and presented. Motion by membership, this was seconded.

Pat Kassten gave a 2 month treasurer's report. \$700 income from dues, \$720 total income. Paid members to date: 124. Pat thanked everyone for their kind cards and beautiful flowers that we sent to her in memory of her husband.

Vice President Feldman asked how many members were signed from the quarterly advertisement; Pat replied that three new membership applications came in from this ad.

Connetquot State Park

By Members of the Friends of Connetquot Organization and Park Employees

Linda Kasten, park employee gave a talk on park history.

The Sectacogue Indians lived on the River and named the river Connetquot.

William Nichol made a deal with the Indians to own 50,000 acres, the size of Islip Town. He put in for patents on the property. He built his homestead where Hecksher State Park is now. The mill was built in 1750. The mill has a horizontal wheel which is very unusual, very few of these mills still standing. Some say this was the first mill built on LI. The homestead dates from 1701. The original homestead was 890 acres with pond was leased to Lith Snedecor. He built Snedecor's Inn, which was a stagecoach stop for travelers heading out to Montauk. The newer part of the building is from 1878, which has a cellar with a beehive oven. Snedecor had a barn built, and an ice house. The ice house was built in 1840. They filled the ice house from the ponds, and had ice through the summertime. The Connetquot area was written up for its fantastic fishing. This is what brought people to Snedecor's Inn. Steve Murray became a guide when it became the Sportsmen's Club. In 1866 a group of very wealthy men got together and decided to buy the Inn and chartered it for 300 members. Usually, though they ran around 80 members. They moved the billiards room, and built a three level section in 1868. It had been redecorated a few times. The two upper floors were all bedrooms, heated by wood stoves. A few of the men decided to build their own place, 4 families built an annex in 1878. A second annex was built in 1899. Isaac H. Greene designed this latter one, he was from West Sayville. In 1870 they created a hatchery. It did very well, but burnt down. They tried a few other locations, but they did not take. In 1890 they rebuilt the hatchery in the original location. Poaching at the

hatchery was a problem. Food was hard to come by, and poachers who were caught were prosecuted. By 1868 the mill was shut down. It was left in place because it was picturesque. In the bathhouse, they filled the tub from the spring, where the water was 52 degrees. A carved marble tub was eventually installed, given by the Cuttings. There is a portico, where women were allowed into the building. Josh Verity was also one of the well-known guides, he was the great great great uncle of Richard Baldwin. Daniel Webster used to spend his time at Caleb Smith State Park at the Wyandanch club, also a hunting club. The Friends of Connetquot brought back the original stove and a few other items, to return the site to its original conditions. The Club had a bar, but in these times, it was too costly to hire bartenders. There were liquor cabinets, where each member kept their own under lock and key. The kitchen floor was concrete – and they used to pour bleach and water on it to clean it. The building itself was handsome, but simple. The bedrooms were simple, there was a rod room. Ladies had a separate dining room and a sitting room with unusual rounded corners and French doors opening to the pond. The Fish Hatchery had runs, and they would pick out the best quality male and female brook trout (indigenous to this area) for cultivating the year's new population. New York State assumed control of property in 1963, and leased it back to the Club for another 10 years, during which time it was known as the Connetquot Club, in 1973 it became a preserve. The membership asked about the difference between a Park and a Preserve. Ms. Kasten explained that a preserve has a higher status and activities in it are more limited. For example, picnicking is not allowed at Connetquot.

Mill Restoration

Jeremiah McGiff is overseeing the restoration of the mill. He is a professional antique furniture restorer and came to this project through Richard Remmer. The floor section was just restored by a millwright and historical architect. The next step is to get into the vertical members and to work with the state to replace windows and doors. Walter Helene has drafted plans for sluiceways - once restored this will be the only working mill on LI, built in the post and beam method and done in the way that they used to be. Walter Helene – in making and executing the working mill - will use vintage machinery in the restoration. The mechanical parts will also be vintage. Another project will be converting the icehouse to an archive center to accommodate lots of archive work being done by Keith Snedecor, a descendant of the Lith Snedecor.

Connetquot Today

Robert Labuski gave a slide presentation of how the park is today, a beautiful natural resource in our community that everyone is encouraged to visit.

There is a large osprey population in the summer, only this year we don't know what will happen with fewer fish to sustain them. Canvas back ducks come in the wintertime. Hooded Merganser's also. Quail were just populated in the park – with over 1000 released last year. Many forms of wildlife populate the park including deer, turtles, and foxes. Mr. Labuski took the impressive photos in the presentation himself with his Nikon. There is so much to see with spring coming now. Mr. Labuski encouraged the membership to take advantage of this beautiful resource.

Connetquot Hatchery Update

Dr. Richard Steinberger gave an update on the fish hatchery. In 2005 there was an outbreak of a virus in Lake Erie and Ontario, a nasty virus killed many fish in these lakes. The 5 states bordering these lakes got together and formed a commission to determine how they were going to combat this disease. There was no uniform policy, and each state retained its own right to enforce environmental laws. The NY State Dept of Conservation decided they would require every licensed hatchery in the state to confirm their fish are free of the disease and fish health inspection certification would be required. Albany decided to take a list of about 15 other diseases and add them to the list to be tested for. Although our hatchery had never been tested for anything but whirling disease, at the end of 2006 as per regulations they discovered the fish have IPN, a different disease which set off this whole unfortunate chain of events. You do not get a permit to stock fish unless they are free of

disease. In 2007 they determined that they would not restock north of the hatchery. The only fish that will go into the system are the ones that are at the hatchery or below. Existing 1 year old fish and fingerlings were euthanized; the 2 year olds stocked the lower areas. In 2007, the hatchery got some eye trout and raised them in new water in a deep water pond. Hatchery raceways have natural gravel bottoms and spring seeps. Many decades worth of fish swam around in there. Raised these fry in 2007 and in Nov 2008, they took two lots of fish out, and tested in the lab. Unfortunately 46 out of 60 brook trout were positive and 1 out of 60 rainbow trout. Disease is highly resistant to digestion. It passes through bodies of predators and still lives. Also it is very resistant to desiccation. The cold virus dies in 48 or 72 hours. IPN lives a long time without a host – up to 4 months in moist environments, and is also resistant to UV light and semi sensitive to iodine type compounds. Most watersheds that are exposed have an immediate epidemic. Once it becomes established, it goes through periods of dormancy and epidemic. Vertical transition - parent to offspring – is common. Horizontal transition is also common – this is when fish eat infected prey. In a normal stream, where there is a lot of water flow, it takes a lot of virus to infect a clean fish. In a hatchery much less virus is needed to cause an infection. Most mortalities happen in newly hatch fry. Over time, this lessens. Where we are at is that we were forced by NY State DEC to close as of Dec 1, 2008. We have to try to preserve the place for historical, educational and recreational reasons. We do not have millions of dollars to build a modern facility. How do you keep using a historical hatchery, on the register of historical places, and work to eradicate this disease. This is an enormously difficult and complicated problem. Enough data has not yet been collected. Until we have that no rational decision can be made and it makes no sense to spend all that money to remedy if the fish may get re-infected right away. Parks says 1)they intend to keep the place open 2)they will buy fish from outside sources to allow for fishing. So far there have been meetings with two environmental consulting groups and the proposals given by those two groups will be considered by the DEC. The DEC is going to perform a trout survey this July, where they will evaluate natural food in the River, the health of the stream, and use it as a basis for determining how many fish should be able to provide a normal trout fishing experience. The DEC catch rate is 1 fish every two hours. Unfortunately at the park, they have an assigned system, the average angling person who goes there is unwilling to spend \$20 and stand on a platform to fish so the parks may purchase additional fish on their own. The DEC cannot tell the Parks Dept what to do with their Park. The DEC is refusing to allow them to feed the fish in the River, but the food makes them hang around. If there is no supplemental feeding, they may not hang around. They will probably go out in the estuary.

Ann Castagna asked that now that the state has limited funding to put into these things, what will happen. Mr. Steinberger's answer: until the consultants can show there is not enough of the virus in the water, it is up to the DEC to take action.

Gary Forcher from Wild Birds Unlimited

Mr. Forcher passed out some coupons and hobby guides. He used the analogy that if there is not enough food, the fish will move on. Similarly, if you have a desire to attract backyard birds, all you need to do is provide quality food on a consistent basis. He can show us how to keep away grackles and other pest birds. They are looking for food and water, places to hide from hawks, and nesting sites. We have consumed so many natural cavities by building that nesting boxes are very important. Mr. Forcher invited all to stop by the store for more information.

Member Denise Conte: Protecting Open Spaces

Ms. Conte commented that NY's environmental protection fund is going broke. Gov. Paterson needs to hear from us, this open space fund will dry up as of the end of this fiscal year, on March 31. Recharge basins, beaches and other natural lands are at risk. The EPF is being cut by 31%, putting Long Island's environment at risk. Her Information came from the NY State Conservancy and we are encouraged to get involved and to let our voices be heard.

President Carta mentioned that the Bosti School entered a contest to have the most people reciting the Gettysburg Address at once. Pam Burner went down there to verify this and acted as a judge representing the OCA and St. John's Landmark Church. They did succeed in breaking the record. Also of note in the School District - The Connetquot High School Varsity Cheerleaders entered a competition with 400 teams and came in 21st.

BAC Update

Secretary Carol Schwasnick is the current representative to the Connetquot Budget Advisory Committee, President Carta is the alternate. Secretary Schwasnick provided an update.

- The budget was presented to the Board of Education by Administration on 2/24. Power points were delivered by the Asst Supt. of Personnel, Business and Instruction.
- The budget draft indicates a total budget of \$158M for 2009-2010, compared to a budget of \$155M for 2008-2009. This represents an overall increase of 1.6%, and an overall property tax increase of under 4%. The reported goal of the budget development has been to keep the tax increase low.
- Notably, like last year, this is one of those years where a contingency budget would actually carry a higher tax increase than the proposed budget. In addition, if the budget is rejected we will reportedly be limited to exactly to the amount of the budget, and will not be able to use any stimulus dollars that find their way to us.
- We have also learned that there is a conscious effort to balance the budget and not cut too much, because lowering the baseline is dangerous. If you lower the baseline, it will put us in a position next year or the year after where further cuts could be devastating. This budget represents a conscious effort to take dollars out – and they did take out the amount of the reported funding loss for the district – which is about \$3.4M.
- Highlighted budget areas – which we need to gather more information on and discuss further to possibly form recommendations.
 - Elementary sections reduced due to reduced enrollment (4 sections).
 - Elementary computer instruction will be modified via moving the computer teachers back to the classroom, and having the classroom teachers assume direct responsibility for computer instruction.
 - The enrichment program in the middle schools will be replaced by independent study periods.
 - Several high school electives will be cancelled due to low enrollment.
 - Summer school will be eliminated.
 - JV9 teams would be eliminated.

In addition to the budget itself, the BAC did address the issue of administrative salaries and whether Dr. Groveman and the other administrators would be considering a pay freeze or cut. As your representatives we want your input on the issues that are important to you regarding the Connetquot Budget. Please send your comments to Carol or Ray.

Vice President's Report

Vice President Feldman provided some Florida perspective. Properties in Florida are reassessed every year. There are less tax dollars coming in because of this. Schools enlarge the classes, cutting raises, lower tax base. The papers are saying with the stimulus dollars coming down it's a two-year savings window. Then what? Mr. Feldman advised that as members we all go to a BOE meeting - there is one tomorrow night (March 10) at 8pm. We have to tell our representatives and the school board that we expect the cuts to be made and that we expect them to operate as is fitting in this tight economic environment.

Anthony Segreto stated that here in NY you have a fundamental problem, there is busing here. You are paying for busing like it is a rural area and you are doing it for integration. All the busing should be converted to public buses. Mr. Segreto mentioned that he has three houses in California, and the taxes are lower for all three than his one house in NY. As an Adjunct Professor of Mathematics at Dowling College he has been involved in many conversations of how to bring money into this area. At 8pm tomorrow night there is a meeting at Dowling on this subject.

Fix LIPA Coalition

Secretary Schwasnack gave a recap of the Fix LIPA Coalition Platform, put forth by the CCE (Citizens Campaign for the Environment) discussed last month. The main points of the platform are fighting for a ratepayer rescue plan, planning Long Island's energy future, and LIPA governance and oversight. Having the OCA join was put to the membership for a vote.

A member suggested that discussion of this organization is fragmenting this organization to improve the quality of life in Oakdale. Other members disagreed. VP Feldman stated that LIPA was formed by converting LILCO to right its wrongs - and we have been sold out to this other company. By joining the cause it gives us a bigger voice. One of the biggest forces in power generation is Saudi Arabia. They are building a giant solar power field. In Florida and Brookhaven National Lab they are also building solar power farms. President Feldman then stated that if the folks at the CCE can go out there and make it easier for us then we should support this. A motion to join was made by Vice President Feldman, this was seconded by Anthony Segreto. A vote was held, results were 12 for, one against. We are officially associating ourselves with Fix LIPA. Secretary Schwasnack will send in the paperwork and keep you updated on the progress of the Coalition.

Opening up membership

President Carta stated that there are parts of West Sayville, Bohemia, etc. that overlap with Oakdale. The idea is to allow folks that live on the outskirts of Oakdale to join the OCA as associate members. We have had people that wanted to join and help out, but fell outside the zip code. Question from membership: are we including abutting hamlets? The Bohemia Civic meets in Oakdale at the Jr. HS. Member Ann Castagna stated that she felt this threatened the concept of the community. Our definition in the OCA's constitution is "the hamlet of Oakdale." John Eder asked if anyone wants to make a motion that says we will form a committee to define the boundaries open to our organization and make a recommendation. Mr. Segreto advised that we should decide what our goals are, and decide if this helps you meet your goal. Motion requested, motion made, seconded, vote was held - 10 for, 2 against. The Committee: John Eder, Buddy Cohen, Ann Castagna volunteered and will report back at a future meeting.

Town Report: John Eder

Mr. Eder emailed the Town last week and just received a response.

- Traffic light at OB road: still working on that.
- Gas station on Montauk Hwy adjacent to the Ockers property: There is a March 19th public hearing, asked for change of zone.
- Fire hydrants, working on that.
- Fences at the shopping center by Wendy's. Spoke to Jim Dalto Jr., the shopping center landlord. He said 2 things. The fence at the back (on the side of Best Yet) the kids are destroying it. He did not give an explanation of why the fence in the front isn't there anymore, but stated he would look into it.
- Low curbs and sidewalks: The Town sent an explanation by email, stating that the developer of the townhouse property agreed to fix the sidewalks. However, remediation of the drainage problems are beyond the scope of the developer as it would require rebuilding of the road.

Nothing further is going on, which is a function of the economy, according to Gene Murphy at the Town.

John Eder also stated that Steve Israel will be our guest speaker for the next meeting, tentatively.

President Carta stated the floor is open at this time.

Member Anthony Segreto mentioned that he bought a beautiful piece of property in Oakdale, and the papers have been covering his dispute with the Town over drainage and an encroaching lakebed. He would like to report on the research that he has done at a future meeting. The property is an old estate; it actually is part of the Pepperidge Hall estate. President Carta stated he will be in touch and will set something up.

A member has noticed that several closed dumpsters around town, collection sites. Wonder if people who own these and drop them. There are two at Bronco Charlie's property – which is not even occupied. VP Feldman stated that there is Town Legislation on this, and to call Chris Bodkin. Steve Levy had made some comments on this in the past, and we need to find out where the legislation is. We hope that there would be a permit number on them and placed behind one's business.

Motion to adjourn by Ann Castagna.

Motion seconded by Vice President Feldman, at 9:39pm.