

VVPA minutes—March 20, 2007

No treasurer's report this month.

Police report from Captain McDonough: There was an assault on Mar 4 on York St, and a purse snatched. No cars were broken into. There were reports of 3 cars stolen, but this is misleading—one reappeared unharmed the next day exactly where the driver had parked it; had he just forgotten where he parked it? The other stories were equally problematical. Warning: If you have a new and expensive car, don't leave the owner's manual in it. A thief will break into the car, get the bar code from the owner's manual and from that get a duplicate key from the car company. With the new key, the thief will return and simply drive your car away. There have been complaints about late-night problems in Van Vorst Park—the new fence has not been installed yet, so the park can't be closed at 10 pm. Police issued 1272 summonses last month. 60% of them were for speeding. They're using radar on Columbus Drive and other streets. A resident reported an incident of graffiti. Captain McDonough said the police would follow up on it.

Jim Ganley, Code Enforcement Supervisor of the Neighborhood Improvement District: We had vigorous discussion pro and con garbage containers on the street; some people wanted more of them, as people leaving McDonald's get about as far as Mercer St. before they finish eating, and have no place to throw the trash but on the sidewalk. Some people liked no trash cans, as householders and businesses overload them, and in any case they are not emptied often by the Incinerator Authority. The issue was unresolved. As for flyers on poles, ads for moving men, etc., the NID will take them down, but not in freezing weather when workers are at risk of falling on ice. Ready, Willing & Able is the outfit that chips ice off storm drains, not the NID.

VVPA Pres. Laura Fraschilla announced the 32nd Annual Meetball Dinner at St. Peter's Prep April 14, 7-11. Tickets \$15 in advance, \$20 at the door. Take posters and put them in your window. Thank you to Leon Yost for the poster.

Also, Laura said that Robert Vivian, of the Newport Neighborhood Assn, wants VVPA support for his applying for funds from the Hudson Open Space Trust Fund to create a park on PATH property. PATH has agreed to this use. Steve Gucciardo said Hamilton Park has already written

such a letter, and, after a unanimous vote of our membership, Laura will write one from the VVPA.

Joao D’Souza, Director of Traffic and Transportation Maintenance described the department’s role—it maintains City traffic signals and street lighting systems, handles dumpster and driveway permits, road markings and signs. Dan Webber asked if the department would install Yield to Pedestrians signs if the VVPA paid for them. He said it was the department’s responsibility to provide the signs, and he would look into different locations for them. Intersections, such as Jersey/York and Grove/Columbus, were suggested. The department is working on synchronizing lights to ease traffic flow on major streets. The synchronization at Kennedy and Montgomery was cited by a member as a big success. There was much discussion of the results of the new construction around the 14B entrance to turnpike. The construction solves the problem of traffic turning left into oncoming traffic on Montgomery, but introduces new problems—a roundabout, inconvenient and restricted route to Grand Street and a limitation on routes in and out of Downtown. The plastic barriers have been removed, but the concrete Jersey barriers will be permanent. Two new U-turns are planned to help ease traffic flow, D’Souza said. The neighborhood concern is that Jersey Avenue be used as a “stealth highway” to get quickly from the turnpike to the Holland Tunnel. D’Souza said they were aware of this and were working on the problem.

Joe Curran, Assistant Director, Jersey City Parking Authority addressed issues raised by members. He said you can pick up a guest permit at no cost for visiting friends for a couple of days—just provide registration and license plate info at 394 Central Ave. Over the Christmas week, guests can probably be unticketed for up to a week. The practice of simultaneous ticketing and booting for overstaying the 2-hour parking limit aroused strong feeling. Mr. Curran said that if you object to a ticket, in all likelihood it will be dismissed by the judge in traffic court, so do contest any tickets you think are unfair. If we wish to extend the 2-hr limit, get Steve Fulop involved, and get together a petition from our neighborhood. Hamilton Park, one resident noted, has chosen a 1-hour limit, to keep non-residents from parking on streets and just shifting locations to beat the system. It was decided to table this discussion and talk about it further before taking action.

Mr. Curran said to call the Mayor’s Action Bureau, Jack Carley and Judy Reilly, for problems we can’t get solved by regular channels.

A question was raised about it being OK to park in the City Hall parking lot after working hours. Mr. Curran said he had never heard of that, but they didn't in practice ticket after working hours.

Discussion of parking on Bright Street, which is now unzoned, to allow teachers to park there. But Curran said any teacher can get an Itinerant sticker, so this is unnecessary. Speak to Steve Fulop about getting Bright Street back in the zone.

If you're having any problems with parking, first call the office number: 201-653-6969. You can reach him from 3:30-11:30, but the phone goes off at 10:30, so after that, try his cell phone, 201-832-0180.

For finding out when alternate-side-of-the-street parking is suspended for snow, call Incinerator Authority, as they make the decision. Number is TK. Also, the number is shown on Channel 1.

Steve Giardino, for the Embankment Coalition spoke about the recent setback when the City Council voted against applying for a bridge loan. From the New Jersey Environmental Infrastructure Trust (NJEIT). This loan would provide funds for the city to acquire the open space portion of the Harsimus Stem Embankment. The NJEIT loan would provide almost \$5 million to the city, 75% at no interest at all, and 25% at the lowest market-rate interest (about 1%) for 20 years. The loan would provide instant money that can be repaid by reimbursable grants already raised (\$3.2 million), a pledge (\$500,000), and additional highly likely grant monies. Look at the Embankment website for more details. The application for the loan would have been non-binding, there was no down side at all to applying, and it was a real shame that the Council didn't take this essentially no-risk way to finally make the Embankment the City's own property at last. The long lawsuit concerning the Embankment's ownership is now about to be decided by the State Transportation Board. To get the property, the City must act with the money it has (open space), not the money it wants but does not have now and may never have (light rail). This bridge loan would allow the City to step forward and close the deal immediately. The grants and loans promised are contingent on the City owning the land; they will come through promptly once the City shows its good faith in this project by using the loan money to buy it.

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“Stealth Highway”—Mia Scanga spoke out against the “stealth highway” plans that would run the risk of two lanes of cars smashing into the light rail at Jersey Avenue, as well as encouraging the use of Jersey Avenue as a quick way on and off the turnpike. April 30, 2007 at 6pm there will be a meeting at City Hall to discuss the Downtown Traffic Circulation Study, including the Jersey Ave issue and much else. Please attend.